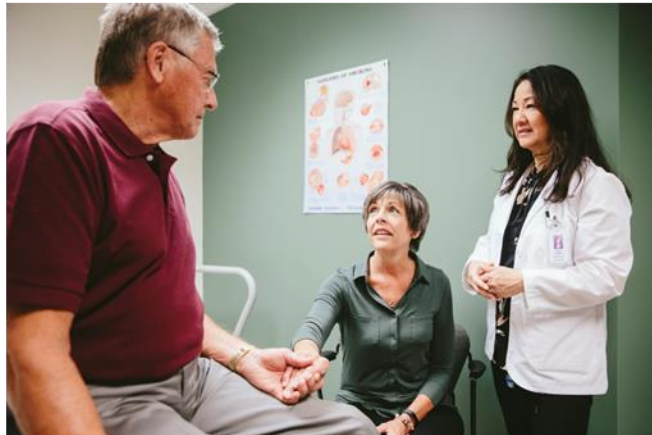
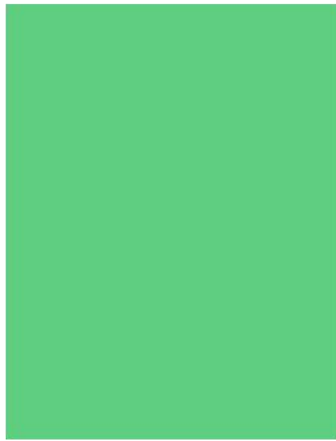


# Age Strong Vermont Year 1 Highlights

January 2025



 **Age Strong VT**  
Our roadmap for an  
age-friendly state.

# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
Affordable Aging .....	7
Spotlight on Fighting Ageism: How Age Strong VT is Changing the Story of Aging .....	9
Healthy Aging for All .....	10
Spotlight on Building Connections to Save Lives: How Age Strong VT is Strengthening Suicide Prevention .....	12
Social Connection is Key.....	13
Spotlight on Bridging Generations: How Age Strong VT Promotes Meaningful Connections Across Ages.....	15
Infrastructure for the Future .....	16
Spotlight on Housing: Creating Homes for Life in Vermont .....	20
Valuing Family Care Partners.....	21
The Fight for Justice .....	23
Strengthening Systems of Support .....	25
Looking Forward .....	28
Appendix A. Tracking our Progress Through Data .....	29

## Land Acknowledgement

First, we must acknowledge that Vermont is part of the homeland of the Mohican people and the Alnobak, the Western Abenaki people. We are all part of the circle of creation and the health of our human communities has an impact on all our relations, human and nonhuman.

We want to take this moment to recognize the land itself, Mother Earth, and the many blessings that we are given. We hope you will take the time to think about your relationship to place and what land means to you.

*Vermont Truth and Reconciliation 2023*

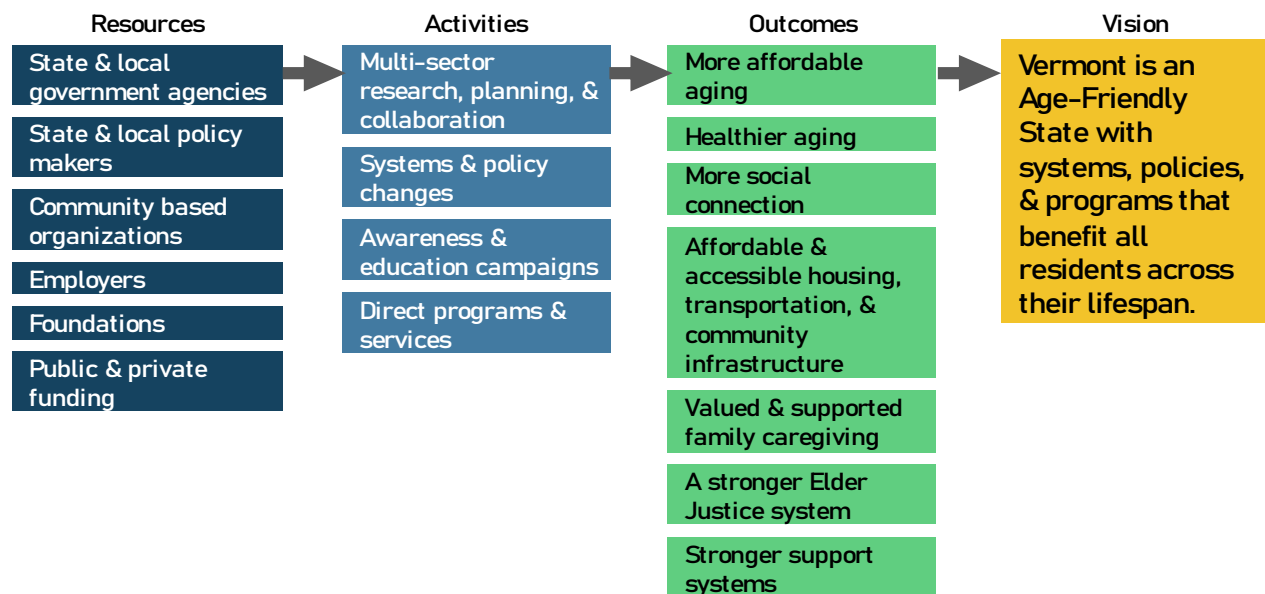
# Introduction

In February 2024, Vermont launched Age Strong VT, joining a small group of pioneering states developing comprehensive strategies for their aging populations. This ambitious 10-year multisector plan aims to make Vermont a state where all residents can thrive as they age. [The plan](#) responds to Vermont's significant demographic shift - by 2030, one in three Vermonters will be 60 years or older. As one of the first five states to develop a Multisector Plan on Aging (MPA), Vermont is demonstrating national leadership in using this evidence-based approach to support aging residents.

Age Strong VT sets forth objectives across seven priority areas, creating a roadmap for transforming Vermont into a state that supports residents of all ages:

1. [Affordable Aging](#)
2. [Healthy Aging for All](#)
3. [Social Connections](#)
4. [Infrastructure for the Future](#)
5. [Supporting Family Caregivers](#)
6. [Strengthening Elder Justice](#)
7. [Strengthening Systems of Support](#)

Age Strong VT is built on the principles established in the [2020 Older Vermonters Act](#) and reflects input from thousands of Vermonters through surveys, listening sessions, and focus groups. The plan follows a clear logic model that illustrates how our resources and activities work together to achieve our desired outcomes:



# Executive Summary

Age Strong VT made significant progress in 2024 through strong leadership and community engagement. Regular involvement with the Governor's Office demonstrated high-level commitment, while successful engagement with agency secretaries, frontline staff and community organizations built cross-sector support. With the Vermont Community Foundation's support, the initiative secured evaluation and communications grants, created a full-time project manager position, and gained active AHS Leadership involvement. Key accomplishments across priority areas include:



## Affordable Aging

- Expanded Medicare Savings Program eligibility
- Enhanced workforce support via HireAbility and GetSetUp
- Increased Meals on Wheels access



## Healthy Aging

- Started implementing arthritis physical activity programming at Area Agencies on Aging
- Launched campaigns for brain health and wellness
- Implemented 988 suicide prevention line
- Expanded falls prevention programs
- Enhanced mental health integration through Blueprint for Health



## Social Connection

- Created [Social Connection Map](#) to assist care coordinators and caregivers
- Expanded GetSetUp online classes statewide
- Developed intergenerational programming including Adult Day/childcare center planning
- Enhanced culturally appropriate meal programs



## Infrastructure

- Launched Act 186 housing pilots for developmental disabilities
- Secured \$9.9 million for nursing home stabilization via Act 113
- Allocated \$3 million for Carbon Reduction Transportation
- Enhanced micro-transit while updating State Design Standards



## Family Caregiver Support

- Implemented TCARE assessment tool for caregiver support
- Made permanent policies allowing family caregivers as Medicaid providers
- Expanded support groups and respite services



## Elder Justice

- Aligned Adult Protective Services state statute with federal rules
- Created Ombuds pilot for individuals with brain injury or developmental disabilities
- Launched multi-agency fraud prevention partnerships
- Expanded financial exploitation prevention education



## Systems of Support

- Assessment of VT211 and Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) Helpline practices
- Improved emergency housing coordination
- Expanded home and community-based services access

This progress has been achieved through efficient use of available funding and strong partnership development, including legislative support. Partner organizations provided significant in-kind support while state agencies advanced Age Strong objectives within existing programs. Age Strong VT has established a coordinated, multi-sector approach that positions Vermont for collective impact in addressing its aging population's needs and aspirations.

# Year 1 Implementation

The achievements highlighted in this report represent coordinated efforts of state agencies, elected officials, community organizations and other partners. Despite limited funding, these significant accomplishments were made possible through creative use and leveraging of existing resources, successful grant applications, and strong cross-sector collaboration.

## Leadership and Partnership

Key partners driving implementation progress include:

- State Leadership: Vermont Department of Health (VDH) and Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL)
- Community Organizations & Service Providers: AARP VT, Vermont Alzheimer's Association, Vermont Association of Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs)
- Philanthropy: Vermont Community Foundation

This broad-based support has helped build momentum and demonstrates Vermont's readiness for sustained financial investment in becoming an age-friendly state.

## Four Pillars of Implementation

Our activities fall into four main categories that work together to create comprehensive change, depicted here. The following pages detail specific accomplishments in each priority area during Year 1.



## Data and Evaluation

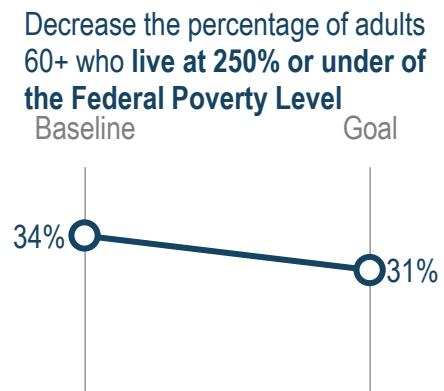
Through funding from the Vermont Community Foundation, the Age Strong VT Steering Committee partnered with Professional Data Analysts (PDA) and the VDH data team to develop an evaluation plan and comprehensive outcome measures for tracking progress. These measures establish clear baselines and 10-year goals across all priority areas. Selected measures are highlighted in each objective area in this report. The full list of measures can be found in [Appendix A](#) and on the [Age Strong VT webpage](#).

# Affordable Aging

Financial security is fundamental to aging well and directly impacts health outcomes. An age-friendly state must ensure older adults can maintain adequate income for a reasonable quality of life, whether through continued employment, retirement savings, or other financial supports.

## What do we want to achieve?

1. Increase the amount of income available to older Vermonters.
2. Increase Vermont's 60+ workforce participation rate.
3. Support opportunities for retirement education for all Vermonters.



## What progress did we make to achieve these goals?



### Systems and Policies

- A coalition of advocates, including members of the Age Strong VT steering committee, led by the Healthcare Advocate from Legal Aid successfully advocated for changes to the **Medicare Savings Program** that will increase income eligibility for financial assistance for Medicare beneficiaries.
- [Vermont Saves](#) establishes a workplace retirement plan for Vermonters not offered a plan through their employer. The program will help tens of thousands of Vermont workers achieve economic security and retire with dignity.



### Direct Programs and Services

- Support for older adults who wish to stay in the workforce was expanded through programs at **HireAbility Vermont** (Senior Community Service

Employment Program and employment counseling for those with chronic conditions), and classes on **GetSetUp** via Vermont Association of Area Agencies on Aging, along with supports offered to workers via the Employee Assistance Program in Vermont.

- All of the five Vermont Area Agencies on Aging offers **New to Medicare Classes** for community members and providers who are trying to navigate the various programs within Medicare. These classes help to ensure that people are enrolling in the best, lowest cost options. Over three thousand Vermonters were helped by Medicare counselors during Open Enrollment in 2024, a 47% increase from 2023.

## What are key gaps and opportunities to move forward?

Gaps	Opportunities
<p><b>Workforce Development</b></p> <p>Only 34% of Vermonters 60+ participate in the workforce, despite having nearly 100,000 people aged 60-69 - the state's largest age group - who could help address labor shortages.</p>	<p>Develop coordinated support programs focusing on digital skills training and employer engagement to tap into this experienced talent pool, benefiting both businesses facing workforce shortages and older adults seeking meaningful work.</p>
<p><b>Financial Security</b></p> <p>34% of older Vermonters live at or below 250% of the federal poverty level, with many eligible individuals not accessing available support programs.</p>	<p>Enhance program participation tracking and outreach efforts to connect more eligible older adults with existing Medicare Savings Programs and property tax credits, especially critical as Vermont's 60+ population grows to one-third of residents by 2030.</p>

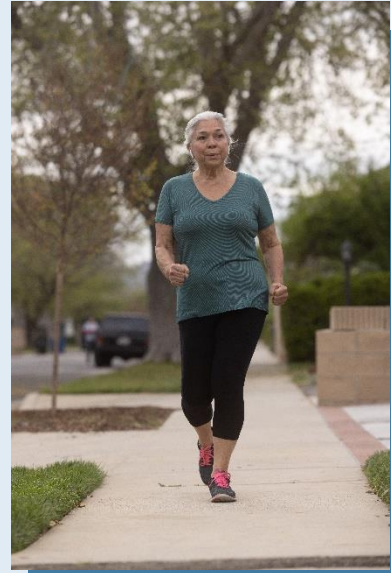


## Spotlight on Fighting Ageism: How Age Strong VT is Changing the Story of Aging

In Vermont, as across America, aging is often viewed as a problem to be solved rather than a natural part of life to be embraced. Age Strong VT is working to change this story by helping partners recognize and address ageism - discrimination based on age - as a fundamental barrier to creating an age-friendly state.

### Understanding the Impact

Research shows that ageism has real consequences for health and wellbeing. Older adults who internalize negative views about aging live an average of 7.5 years less than those with positive views. Ageist attitudes can prevent people from seeking healthcare, pursuing employment opportunities, or participating fully in their communities. The impact is even greater for those who face multiple forms of discrimination, such as New American elders, Indian American or LGBTQ+ older adults.



### Breaking Barriers in the Workplace

Age discrimination remains a significant challenge in employment, despite the wealth of experience older workers bring to the job market. Age Strong VT partners are working to combat this through multiple approaches. The Department of Labor is providing training for employers on recognizing and addressing age bias in hiring practices. HireAbility Vermont is helping experienced workers showcase their valuable skills, while innovative workplace programs are demonstrating the benefits of age-diverse teams.

### Building Inclusive Systems

The initiative is helping organizations examine how ageist assumptions affect their work. Healthcare providers are receiving training on recognizing age bias in diagnosis and treatment decisions. Senior housing providers are reviewing policies to ensure they respect older adults' autonomy and dignity. Through Age Strong VT's coordinated approach, Vermont is building momentum to create a culture that celebrates aging and recognizes every person's inherent value, regardless of age.

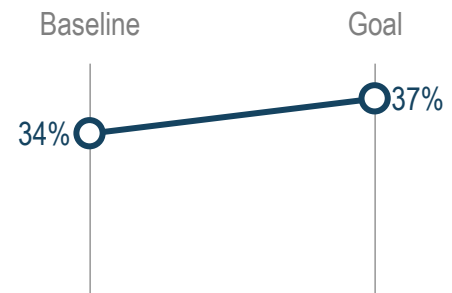
# Healthy Aging for All

Optimal health and wellness enable older Vermonters to live independently, engage with their communities, and maintain quality of life. This requires accessible and affordable options for physical activity, nutrition, preventive care, and mental health support.

## What do we want to achieve?

1. Reduce chronic diseases and comorbidities among older Vermonters.
2. Increase physical activity for older Vermonters.
3. Reduce food insecurity for all Vermonters.
4. Reduce fall-related deaths.
5. Prevent suicide among older Vermonters.

Increase the percent of adults 60+ who **engage in physical activity** in their leisure time



## What progress did we make to achieve these goals?



### Multi-Sector Planning

- The Vermont Department of Health is working on the next phase of **3-4-50** addressing three behaviors (poor diet, physical inactivity, tobacco use) that lead to four chronic diseases causing over 50% of deaths.
- The **Falls Free Vermont Coalition** was reconvened with Age Strong VT partners to coordinate statewide falls prevention efforts.



### Awareness and Education

- The BOLD program at VDH launched campaigns promoting brain health and the benefits of using the Medicare benefit called **Annual Wellness Visit**.
- The Alzheimer's Association Vermont Chapter educated over 500 participants through 29 programs on dementia awareness and risk reduction.
- OneCare Vermont and the **Cardiovascular Disease Program** at VDH hosted hypertension management learning sessions.
- Vermont Health Care Association (VHCA) launched education on long-term care planning options.

- The **Vermont Tobacco Control Program** expanded work to reach older adults.
- The Vermont Department of Health started a new **Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)** program through a new CDC grant.
- VDH and Alzheimer's Association Vermont hosted the first **Alzheimer's and Brain Health Symposium** for clinical and community providers.



## Direct Programs and Services

- Age Well piloted **CAPABLE** (Community Aging in Place—Advancing Better Living for Elders), an evidence-based falls prevention program.
- Support and Services at Home (SASH) implemented **PEARLS** (Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives), combining arthritis management with mental health support.
- **Senior centers**, many with funding provided by AAAs, offer wellness programs including exercise classes, foot clinics, and falls prevention.
- Extended accessibility assessments and modifications for 142 shared living homes through additional DAIL funding.

## What are key gaps and opportunities to move forward?

Gaps	Opportunities
<p><b>Falls Prevention</b></p> <p>Vermont experiences 28 fall-related deaths per 100,000 seniors annually. A recent pilot program reached only 142 of 600+ shared living homes needing accessibility modifications. Fall risk screening remains inconsistent in primary care settings.</p>	<p>The CAPABLE pilot program shows promise for statewide expansion through healthcare partnerships. The Falls Free Coalition provides a framework for coordinating prevention efforts and expanding home modifications through AAAs.</p>
<p><b>Food Security</b></p> <p>Food insecurity affects 6% of older Vermonters, with limited fresh food access in rural areas. Despite 34% of seniors living at or below 250% of Federal Poverty Level, only 24% of eligible seniors participate in 3SquaresVT.</p>	<p>Vermont can leverage its agricultural system by coordinating between healthcare providers, Meals on Wheels, and food banks. Farm-to-senior programs through meal sites would increase fresh produce access while supporting local agriculture.</p>

# Spotlight on Building Connections to Save Lives: How Age Strong VT is Strengthening Suicide Prevention

Age Strong VT is strengthening Suicide Prevention efforts for older adults in Vermont by supporting current initiatives and fostering new cross-sector connections to create a more comprehensive support system tailored to older adults.

## Foundation of Crisis Support

Establishment of the 988 Suicide prevention line in January 2023 provides a foundation for crisis support in Vermont. Building on this, the Age Strong VT plan is helping partners recognize how their different roles contribute to prevention.



## Training Trusted Community Members

Meals on Wheels volunteers and SASH Coordinators - trusted faces who regularly interact with older adults - are being trained to identify signs of suicide risk. Mental health services are expanding through both traditional healthcare settings and innovative approaches like telehealth and wellness hours in senior housing communities.

## Fighting Social Isolation Through Community Connection

The plan also highlights how different community spaces and programs work together to combat isolation - a key risk factor for suicide. Senior centers and other community organizations provide exercise classes and social activities, while community gathering spaces such as libraries foster natural interactions across generations. New screening tools help identify those at risk of isolation, while volunteer programs create opportunities for meaningful engagement and purpose.

## Creating an Integrated Support System

By bringing these initiatives together under one coordinated plan, Age Strong VT helps partners see how their work connects - from healthcare providers to transportation services, housing programs to social services. This integrated approach recognizes that preventing suicide requires a community-wide effort where every sector plays a vital role in helping older Vermonters stay connected and supported.

# Social Connection is Key

Social isolation affects health outcomes and quality of life for older Vermonters. Building meaningful connections across generations and communities is essential for an age-friendly state.

## What do we want to achieve?

1. Increase awareness and identification of social isolation and loneliness among all older adults.
2. Increase the availability and accessibility of high-quality programming for older Vermonters.
3. Increase volunteerism of older Vermonters.
4. Increase the number of intergenerational engagement opportunities for all Vermonters.



## What progress did we make to achieve these goals?



### Multi-Sector Planning

- The University of Vermont Medical Center (UVM) Center on Aging [Student Advisory Board](#) brings together students with a shared interest in gerontology and geriatrics to develop community engagement initiatives.
- The Thompson Senior Center in Woodstock launched a monthly [Community Connections](#) program connecting local leaders with older adults.



### Awareness and Education

- DAİL is planning a [social media campaign](#) on social isolation and loneliness.
- All 5 of Vermont's AAAs now provide [GetSetUp](#) online classes and social engagement opportunities.
- The UVM Center on Aging launched a series of [film screenings](#) and intergenerational discussions focused on the importance of social connection.



## Systems and Policies

- DAIL and VDH are exploring implementation of the **U-SIRS-13 (Upstream Social Interaction Risk Scale)** tool to assess social connectedness among older adults.
- The **Social Connection Map** was launched to help older Vermonters identify resources and places to engage in their communities.



## Direct Programs and Services

- Generations Vermont was formed to design and develop a **new multi-generational Adult Day Center** and childcare center in Central Vermont.
- AAAs and senior centers are expanding meal options, including therapeutic meals, culturally appropriate meals, and trainings for Meals on Wheels kitchens.
- The Vermont Arts Council supported **Creative Aging training** and targeted grant funding to organizations for creative aging programs and projects.
- Vermont has been rated **#2** in formal volunteering rates for 2023 – AmeriCorps programs, senior centers and many community organizations rely on hundreds of older volunteers donating thousands of hours-of-service.

## What are key gaps and opportunities to move forward?

Gaps	Opportunities
<p><b>Social Isolation &amp; Assessment</b></p> <p>Vermont experiences a 9% rate of frequent isolation among seniors, with 13% reporting no available support network. Primary care settings lack systematic screening, leaving many at-risk seniors unidentified.</p>	<p>Primary care practices could integrate screening for isolation during Medicare Annual Wellness Visits. Vermont could establish a coordinated referral network between healthcare providers and the state's 140+ senior centers.</p>
<p><b>Culturally Inclusive Programming</b></p> <p>Focus groups documented high rates of isolation among New American and LGBTQ+ seniors. Despite 8% of seniors being from historically marginalized communities, most senior centers lack culturally-specific programming or language access services.</p>	<p>Vermont could expand successful models like Winooski's cultural meals program to additional high-need communities. Leveraging the Vermont Arts Council's Creative Aging network, the state could fund new culturally-specific programs.</p>



## Spotlight on Bridging Generations: How Age Strong VT Promotes Meaningful Connections Across Ages

The future of aging well in Vermont isn't about creating separate spaces and services for older adults - it's about weaving connections between generations into the fabric of community life. Age Strong VT is helping partners across the state recognize and strengthen these natural connections while fostering innovative new approaches.



### Innovative Shared Spaces

In Central Vermont, Generations Vermont is designing a groundbreaking community space that combines an Adult Day Center with a childcare center. This model creates daily opportunities for meaningful engagement that benefits both young children and older adults.

### Higher Education Bridges

The University of Vermont's Center on Aging is transforming how higher education engages with older adults through their Grand Friends Program, which pairs students with older volunteers. UVM students regularly visit senior living communities for arts activities, contributing to a broader movement toward age-friendly universities.

### Reimagining Community Centers

The Thompson Senior Center exemplifies how community spaces are evolving, with their monthly Community Connections program bringing together local leaders, organizations, and older adults. These centers have become hubs of intergenerational activity, with volunteers of all ages contributing thousands of service hours annually.

### Building Lasting Connections

Through Age Strong VT, these initiatives form part of a larger strategy where every generation contributes to and benefits from strong community connections, strengthening everything from workforce development to social support in Vermont's communities.

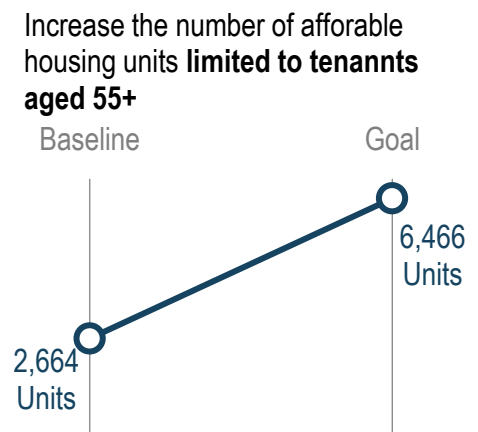
# Infrastructure for the Future

Affordable housing and accessible transportation and community design are the building blocks of a vibrant, age-friendly state. These components encourage people to grow up and raise their families in Vermont and for new residents to move to the state and stay.

## What do we want to achieve?

### Housing

1. Increase the number of new units of high-quality affordable housing that enable residents to age well in community.
2. Increase age-specific housing available for older Vermonters.
3. Increase the number of older Vermonters who can age in place.



### Transportation

1. Focus future transit service on Designated Growth Zones.
2. Expand the Older Vermonters and Persons with a Disability (O&D) transit program.
3. Increase access to walkable, bikeable and transit friendly communities.

### Community Design

1. Increase the availability of accessible, inclusive public spaces (indoor and outdoor) in towns by encouraging Smart Growth and infill development.

## What progress did we make to achieve these goals?



Multi-Sector Planning



## Housing

- UVM Center on Aging is piloting [Learning Enhancement in Aging Program \(LEAP\)](#) with the goal of improving the health and social care workforce, enabling more adults to successfully age in place.
- The UVM Center on Aging gave a research award to a project that will assess the validity of in-home instruments designed to measure mobility, activities of daily living, and speech production in aging rural Vermonters with and without mild cognitive impairment.
- Burlington adopted [new zoning regulations](#) called, [Neighborhood Code](#), which will promote greater housing supply and homeownership opportunities, and housing typologies and choices throughout the city.
- Agency of Commerce and Community Development launched '[Homes For All Toolkit](#)' and training for small-scale home builders, investors and community leaders.

## Transportation

- The Vermont Association of Adult Day Services is collaborating with officials at the Vermont Agency of Transportation, public transportation providers, and the Vermont Alzheimer's Association to better understand challenges to [expanding access to public transportation](#) to increase attendance at Adult Day programs.

## Community Design

- VDH works with state partners and municipalities to encourage and support downtown, mixed use development through our Healthy Community Design work.
- VDH, DAIL and partners are working on [building dementia friendly communities](#) with a lot of progress made in Middlebury, Vermont this past year.



## Systems and Policies

### Housing

- Through Act 186 of 2022, DAIL launched three pilot grants to develop housing options for aging [Vermonters with Developmental Disabilities](#).
- Act 113 of 2024 included nearly \$44.7 million to prevent nursing home closures, launch a specialized care facility, retain staff, and improve infrastructure at skilled nursing facilities.

- The Department of Housing and Community Development released **Municipal Planning Grants** to help cities, towns and villages adapt to change and prepare for the future with a new focus on projects that support aging well and connect to Age Strong VT goals.

### Transportation

- Agency of Transportation (VTrans) was awarded nearly \$6 million to develop micro transit options, introduce eSprinter Vehicles, and create new State Design Standards.
- Local Health Chronic Disease Designees are collaborating with VTrans to support public transportation options in their regions.
- Current legislative studies are examining **guidelines for car share programs** and **evaluating town-level transportation** contributions for potential statewide models.
- In 2024 Act 165 and Act 148 were passed to improve the quality and accessibility of transportation while addressing environmental impact.

### Community Design

- In 2024 Act 181 (H.687) was passed, changing zoning laws and **incentivizing accessibility improvements**.
- VDH has updated the Local Health Chronic Disease Designee work plan to include supporting initiatives like complete streets and other active transport options.



## Direct Programs and Services

### Housing

- **HomeShareVT** is expanding to more areas of the state with financial support from Act 114, providing more older Vermonters with options to age in place and more younger Vermonters with affordable housing.

### Transportation

- Many senior centers provide transportation through local transit partnerships while some centers offer their own direct door-to-door service.

- VTrans is funding pilot projects through **Mobility and Transportation Innovations (MTI) Grants** to connect food sources and people via stops at food shelves, and food at transit stops.

### Community Design

- **The Walk to Shop initiative** is offering trolleys for people to use to carry food on sidewalks and on busses.
- AARP Vermont provides two funding resources available to communities to enhance public spaces, expand mobility and transportation options, and build community resilience through (1) **Winter Placemaking Grants**; and (2) **Community Challenge Grant Program**. Both grant opportunities are focused on investing in building momentum to improve the livability of VT communities.

## What are key gaps and opportunities to move forward?

Gaps	Opportunities
<p><b>Housing Access &amp; Affordability</b></p> <p>While 93% of older Vermonters want to age in their own home, 52% report their homes need repairs to do so safely. The state's current supply of 2,734 age-restricted affordable housing units falls short of demand, with development limited by a 30% cap on annual tax credit housing for 55+.</p>	<p>Recent funding allocations of \$30 million for housing development and \$9.9 million for nursing home stabilization create opportunities to expand housing options. Successful home modification programs could be scaled up to help more Vermonters age in place. Municipalities need more funding options to be available to them to bond for infrastructure improvements and upgrades to support the development of more housing.</p>
<p><b>Transportation Access</b></p> <p>Focus groups reveal that limited transportation creates significant barriers to healthcare access and social engagement, particularly in rural areas. The current Older Vermonters and Persons with Disability Transportation Program's 112,000 annual trips leaves many regions underserved.</p>	<p>New Carbon Reduction Transportation funding (\$3 million) could expand micro-transit services in high-need areas. The planned 2025 VTrans scheduling software upgrade offers potential for improved service coordination and accessibility.</p>

## Spotlight on Housing: Creating Homes for Life in Vermont

The vision for housing in an age-friendly Vermont isn't just about building more units – it's about creating homes where Vermonters can thrive throughout their lives. Age Strong VT is helping partners across the state reimagine housing solutions that combine affordability, accessibility, and community connection.

### Integrated Health and Housing

A powerful example of this new approach is emerging through SASH (Support and Services at Home), which has embedded mental health clinicians in eight housing communities across three counties. This innovative model recognizes that housing isn't just about physical shelter – it's about creating environments where older adults can maintain their health and independence. The program's success has created momentum to expand to twelve more locations in 2025.

### Creative Housing Solutions

HomeShare Vermont demonstrates how creative solutions can address multiple needs at once. By matching older homeowners with people seeking affordable housing, the program helps seniors generate income and maintain social connections while aging in their own homes. The model has proved so successful that it's expanding to new service areas.

### Building Momentum for Change

Through Age Strong VT, these separate housing initiatives are now recognized as part of a larger strategy to create communities where Vermonters can age in place successfully. While challenges remain – 52% of older adults report their homes need repairs to support aging in place – new funding and collaborations are creating momentum for change. Recent allocations of \$30 million for mixed-income housing development are helping Vermont build communities that truly work for all ages.

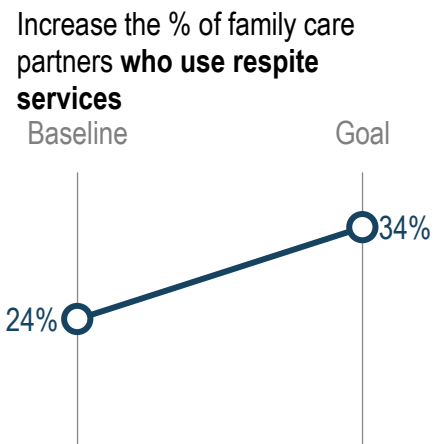


# Valuing Family Care Partners

Family care partners are fundamental to supporting the health and well-being of Vermonters across the lifespan. To address the needs of family care partners requires systemic change and strong collaboration among the state, providers, and the community of Vermont for success.

## What do we want to achieve?

1. Reduce the need for family/friends to provide full-time care/assistance to a friend/family member.
2. Increase family care partner knowledge and use of respite options and support groups.
3. Increase family care partner knowledge of self-care, medical benefits, long-term care and estate planning resources.
4. Reduce negative financial impacts on family care partners.



## What progress did we make to achieve these goals?



### Awareness and Education

- In 2024, Vermont made permanent COVID-era policies to **pay parents/caregivers as care providers** in Developmental Disability Services.
- UVM Dementia Family Caregiver Center and AAA offer opportunities to share information on support groups for care partners.



### Systems and Policies

- The DAIL State Unit on Aging is working with AAAs to use [TCARE](#), an evidence-based tool designed to identify caregiver stress and burden.
- The Older Americans Act and state-funded **dementia respite grants** provide increased family care partner knowledge of and participation in respite option.



## Direct Programs and Services

- The Alzheimer’s association offers **8 in-person caregiver support groups** including groups for adult children and those for spouses/partners. They continued to advocate for more state resources for respite given growing need in communities.
- All AAAs and many senior centers offer programs and services for caregivers, such as **Memory Cafes** and **Powerful Tools for Caregivers**.
- The Thompson Center hosts monthly caregiver support groups with meals, coordinates vetted services and volunteer assistance through Aging at Home, and provides Long-Term Care insurance policy guidance.
- Age Well has built a **Volunteer Respite Squad**, including a growing number of volunteers specially trained to offer in-home respite for people with dementia.
- The new **UVM Dementia Family Caregiver Center** provides a pathway to resources for families caring for those with Alzheimer’s disease and dementia.

## What are key gaps and opportunities to move forward?

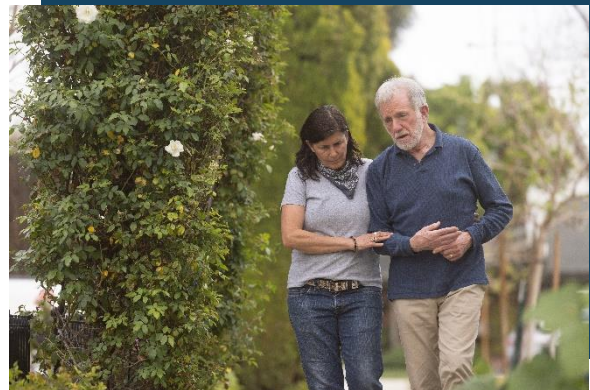
Gaps	Opportunities
<p><b>Support Services &amp; Resources</b></p> <p>Focus groups reveal family caregivers experience significant isolation, depression, and financial strain. Only 46% of care partners know about available respite services, and just 24% utilize them. Survey data shows 34% of Vermonters anticipate providing future unpaid care.</p>	<p>The state's adoption of TCARE as a caregiver assessment tool provides a foundation for more systematic support. Recent policy changes making COVID-era allowances permanent for paying family caregivers as personal care providers opens new avenues for financial support.</p>
<p><b>Education &amp; Respite Care for All Vermonters</b></p> <p>Focus group participants report difficulty navigating support systems and experiencing financial losses due to caregiving, with 32% reporting negative financial impacts. Language barriers particularly affect New American caregivers accessing services and understanding healthcare options.</p>	<p>Building on existing AAA caregiver support programs and UVM's Dementia Family Caregiver Center infrastructure could expand reach and effectiveness. Development of standardized, culturally appropriate training materials in multiple languages could improve access for underserved communities.</p>

# The Fight for Justice

Older Vermonters have the right to make decisions about their own lives and to be free of abuse, neglect or exploitation. It is essential that we bring together providers, agencies, advocates, and departments across all sectors of elder justice and beyond to elevate the safety of older adults.

## What do we want to achieve?

1. Increase the adoption and use of recommended policies and interventions to support adults who may be self-neglecting.
2. Increase the transparency and usability of long-term care facility data.
3. Increase coordination of elder justice services and supports.



## What progress did we make to achieve these goals?



### Systems and Policies

- In the 2023 legislative session, DAIL successfully implemented a new **Adult Protective Service (APS)** statute (Act 81 of 2023) that brought Vermont closer to full compliance with the new federal rules.
- In 2024, DAIL's APS team worked to raise awareness among organizations and communities about the rules and processes stemming from the new statute with a continued focus on reporting.
- DAIL is proposing some final updates to the Vermont statute that will bring the **negligence language** into full federal compliance along with some changes to operational timeframes and information sharing practices.



## Awareness and Education

- Vermont Department of Financial Regulation partnered with the partnerships involved with Financial Abuse Specialist Team (FAST), the Attorney General's office, Homeland Security, banks, 211 and more to provide **outreach and education to consumers**, especially older Vermonters, on frauds and scams.



## Direct Programs and Services

- DAIL launched an Ombud's pilot for **Brain Injury and Developmental Services** programs in Lamoille County, Washington County, and Franklin and Grand Isle Counties. The purpose of the Ombuds is to provide Vermonters with an independent advocate to help address concerns and solve problems.

## What are key gaps and opportunities to move forward?

Gaps	Opportunities
<p><b>Prevention &amp; Protection Services</b></p> <p>The National Center on Elder Abuse reports at least 1 in 10 older adults experience some form of abuse. Survey data shows only 47% of older Vermonters are aware of adult protective services, highlighting a critical knowledge gap.</p>	<p>Vermont's new Adult Protective Services statute brings the state closer to federal compliance and creates a framework for improved services.</p>
<p><b>Service Coordination &amp; Access</b></p> <p>Long-term care facility data remains difficult to access and analyze, limiting transparency and informed decision-making for families. Cultural barriers and stigma particularly affect marginalized communities' access to protective services.</p>	<p>The recent launch of the nursing facility bed board system provides a foundation for improved data transparency. The development of an Elder Justice Coalition could strengthen coordination between law enforcement, healthcare providers, and social services to better protect vulnerable adults.</p>



# Strengthening Systems of Support

Per Act 156 of 2020, older Vermonters should be able to benefit from an age-friendly system of services, supports, and protections. To do this Vermont will need to strive to create an accessible easy to use system of care for all Vermonters.

## What do we want to achieve?

1. Adopt age-friendly best practices at VT211 and AAA Helpline call centers.
2. Increase access to information about age-friendly resources and supports.
3. Increase access to a coordinated system of age-friendly services, supports and protections
4. Increase the availability of safe emergency housing for older Vermonters.



## What progress did we make to achieve these goals?



### Multi-Sector Planning

- DAIL is in conversations with the VT Network about how to ensure current domestic violence emergency housing can accommodate older Vermonters.
- DAIL and the Department for Children and Families are working to track and support older Vermonters who are in the [General Assistance Emergency Housing Program](#).
- The [results of an assessment](#) of information, referral and assistance systems, including 211, the Area Agencies on Aging Helpline and VT Helplink, are being used across departments to support continuous improvement efforts for high quality customer service.



## Awareness and Education

- The **Aging Resource Guide** developed by COVE is helping connect more people with services.
- DAIL will launch a **direct care workforce marketing and recruitment campaign** in 2025 to address workforce shortages across home and community-based services.



## Systems and Policies

- The Skilled Nursing Facility, **BedBoard**, launched in 2024 to assist hospital discharge planners and case managers with finding nursing home placements for patients.
- **The Choices for Care program** through DAIL is expanding the provider network to include non-medical home care agencies.
- Act 113 of 2024 increased Medicaid reimbursement rates by 3% for all Medicaid funded Home and Community Based Services.



## Direct Programs and Services

- **Mission Care** opened in Bennington in September 2024 to support those who have not been able to be admitted to other nursing homes. 13 people, who were stuck in a hospital or other setting, were admitted as of December 2024.
- Two medical respite pilot programs, one at Northwestern Medical Center (NMC) and one at Lamoille Community House, launched **and provide short-term housing and recovery care** to post-acute patients, many of whom are older.

## What are key gaps and opportunities to move forward?

Gaps	Opportunities
<p><b>Information Access &amp; Navigation</b></p> <p>Survey data reveals alarming gaps in both awareness and availability of services for older Vermonters. Only 55% know about senior help lines, 53% about legal assistance, and 47% about protective services. This knowledge gap is particularly concerning given that 64% of Vermonters report the state lacks adequate resources to address the needs of its growing older population, with only 11% believing current resources are sufficient.</p>	<p>The recent Information/Referral/Assessment (I/R/A) review provides recommendations for improving call center practices. AAAs are already engaged in implementation of these recommendations across agencies. Development of the Aging Resource Guide offers a foundation for enhanced information sharing and accessibility.</p>
<p><b>Service Coordination &amp; Emergency Support</b></p> <p>Hospital discharge planning for long-term care remains challenging, with limited emergency housing options for older adults in crisis. The lack of coordination between different service providers creates barriers to accessing comprehensive support. Senior centers, which serve as crucial community hubs providing meals, activities, and social connection to over 11,500 older Vermonters annually, remain chronically underfunded, limiting their ability to meet growing community needs.</p>	<p>Pilots like Northwestern Medical Center's medical respite program demonstrate potential solutions for short-term emergency housing needs. DAIL's initiative to expand the provider network for Choices for Care could increase access to home-based services.</p>

# Looking Forward

In its first year, Age Strong VT established the infrastructure needed to create lasting change. High-level commitment from state leadership, including regular engagement with the Governor's Office, legislators, and Agency Secretaries, demonstrates growing recognition that Vermont's changing demographics require coordinated action. The initiative secured evaluation and communications funding, created a full-time project manager position, and successfully integrated aging priorities into existing state programs and services.

## A Model for Collective Impact

The progress achieved this year shows how partners across sectors can work together effectively to support aging Vermonters. Through a proposed three-tiered structure – including a Steering Committee for strategic direction, Strategic Groups to drive specific initiatives, and broad Network Support to build advocacy – Age Strong VT is positioned to expand its impact. This coordinated approach aligns with key state priorities like healthcare transformation, workforce development, and housing accessibility.



## The Path Ahead

Vermont stands ready to accelerate its progress toward becoming an age-friendly state. The infrastructure and partnerships built this year provide a strong foundation for implementing immediate, actionable programs that will benefit Vermonters across their lifespan. With sustained commitment and investment, we can create communities where all Vermonters thrive as we age.

## Learn More

To get involved with Age Strong VT or learn more about our work, visit [Age Strong VT](#) online or contact us at [agestrongvt@vermont.gov](mailto:agestrongvt@vermont.gov).

# Appendix A. Tracking our Progress Through Data

*This Goal Tracker was created by the Vermont Department of Health in October 2024 and is also available on the Age Strong VT website.*

## Age Strong Vermont Objectives for 2024 – 2034

	Baseline	Goal by 2034
<b>Increase the % of adults 60 years and older who...</b>		
✧ Rate their health as good or better <sup>1</sup>	81%	84%
✧ Have hypertension and worked with a medical professional to create a plan to lower or control their blood pressure <sup>1</sup>	58%	64%
✧ Engage in physical activity in their leisure time <sup>1</sup>	73%	78%
✧ Participate in the workforce <sup>1,a</sup>	34%	37%
✧ Feel satisfied or very satisfied with their life <sup>1</sup>	95%	97%
✧ Rate their community as very safe to walk in <sup>2</sup>	91%	94%
✧ Have knowledge about services available for older adults including...		
-the senior phone help line <sup>3</sup>	55%	65%
-legal assistance or legal aid <sup>3</sup>	53%	63%
-adult protective services <sup>3</sup>	47%	57%
✧ Are self-neglect clients that received at least one intervention <sup>4</sup>	57%	67%
<b>Increase the number of...</b>		
✧ Older adults who engage with a Vermont senior center <sup>5</sup>	11,572	12,730
✧ Educational institutions with the 'age-friendly university' models <sup>6</sup>	1	3
✧ Affordable housing units limited to tenants aged 55+ <sup>7</sup>	2,734	6,484
✧ Annual trips carried for the Older Vermonters and Persons with a Disability (O&D) Transportation Program <sup>8</sup>	112,000	124,000
<b>Increase the % of family care partners who...</b>		
✧ Know about family caregiver support groups and how to access them <sup>3</sup>	41%	51%
✧ Know about available respite services and how to access them <sup>3</sup>	46%	56%
✧ Use respite services <sup>3</sup>	24%	34%

	Baseline	Goal by 2034
<b>Decrease the % of adults 60 years and older who...</b>		
✧ Did not have enough food to get through the past month <sup>1</sup>	6%	4%
✧ Live at 250% or lower of the Federal Poverty Level <sup>1</sup>	34%	31%
✧ Always or usually feel socially isolated <sup>1</sup>	6%	4%
<b>Decrease the rate of...</b>		
✧ Fall-related deaths per 100,000 Vermonters <sup>9</sup>	28	25
✧ Older adult suicides per 100,000 Vermonters <sup>9</sup>	20	17
<b>Decrease the % of family care partners who...</b>		
✧ Experience negative financial impacts due to their caregiving <sup>3</sup>	32%	22%
✧ Provide 40 hours or more of unpaid care in an average week <sup>1</sup>	19%	15%

**By 2034, create...**

- ✧ A public website that displays data from the Long-Term Facility Survey And Certification
- ✧ An age-friendly support guide for employees at VT211 and AAA helpline call centers
- ✧ A publicly available decision tree for any reported abuse and neglect events in long-term care services
- ✧ A well-informed majority of family care partners who are knowledgeable about services and resources related to self-care, medical benefits, long term care and estate planning, and medical conditions of their care recipients.

**Data sources used for Age Strong Vermont objectives**

1. [Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#) (BRFSS), 2022
  - a. Participate in the workforce includes people actively looking for work
2. [Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#) (BRFSS), 2019
3. Needs Assessment for the State Plan on Aging, 2020
4. Area Agencies on Aging Grant Reporting, SFY2023
5. Vermont Senior Center and Meal Site Annual Survey, 2023
6. [Age-Friendly University Global Network](#), 2023
7. [Vermont Directory of Affordable Rental Housing](#), 2023
8. [Public Transit Route Performance Report](#), SFY23