

Home and Community-Based Services for Florida’s Seniors: Florida’s Aging Network — National to Local Level¹

Muthusami Kumaran, Katlyn Diamond, and Rachel Gatto²

Introduction

This publication is part of the Home and Community-Based Services for Florida’s Seniors series, a collection of educational resources designed to inform the public about home and community-based support services available to seniors in Florida.

The Older Americans Act of 1965 (OAA) provides a variety of home and community-based services for eligible older Americans (those aged 60 years or older, as defined by the OAA) that are channeled through the Administration on Aging (AoA) and state-level units on aging. In the state of Florida, these services are administered and implemented through Florida’s Aging Network, which comprises the Florida Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA) and a host of 58 nonprofit organizations.

As the older adult population of Florida continues to grow rapidly, it is increasingly important that the state’s seniors, their caregivers, other stakeholders, and the general public understand the home and community-based services and protections available through the 58 nonprofits — 11 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and 47 Community Care for the Elderly (CCE) lead agencies — that make up Florida’s Aging Network.

In Florida, approximately 6.3 million residents are aged 60 or older, accounting for about 28% of the state’s population (DOEA, 2024a; DOEA, 2024b). These individuals are all entitled to a variety of government-funded services under the Older Americans Act of 1965, but understanding the organization of the nation’s Aging Network can be complex due to the involvement of multiple agencies and programs at different levels. The purpose of this article is to clarify for older adults and their caregivers the hierarchy of these organizations that offer supportive services. If you are a Florida resident, understanding how these networks function can help you more easily locate and access vital services and resources through local, state, and federal programs.

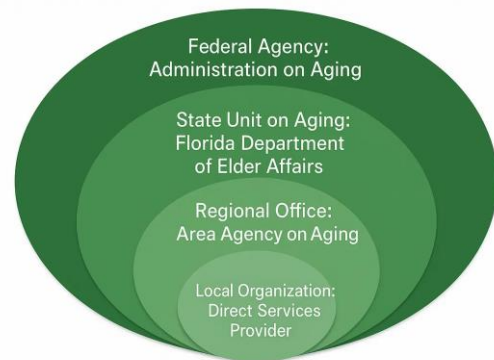


Diagram 1. Organizational Structure of Florida’s Aging Network

Figure 1. Hierarchy of the Florida Aging Services Network from the national to the county level. Credit: Muthusami Kumaran, Katlyn Diamond, and Rachel Gatto

The Administration on Aging

The AoA, under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and part of the Administration for Community Living (ACL), serves as the primary federal agency addressing the needs of older Americans and their caregivers. It provides funding and oversight for state and local entities to support home and community-based services (ACL, 2024). For more information on programs, see <https://acl.gov/programs>.

Florida Department of Elder Affairs

As Florida’s designated State Unit on Aging (SUA), the DOEA receives federal funds through the AoA and allocates them to the state’s 11 AAAs. It also manages several state-run programs, such as the Alzheimer’s Disease Initiative and Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders (SHINE) (DOEA, 2024b). For information on state-funded programs, see <https://elderaffairs.org/programs-services/>.

Area Agencies on Aging

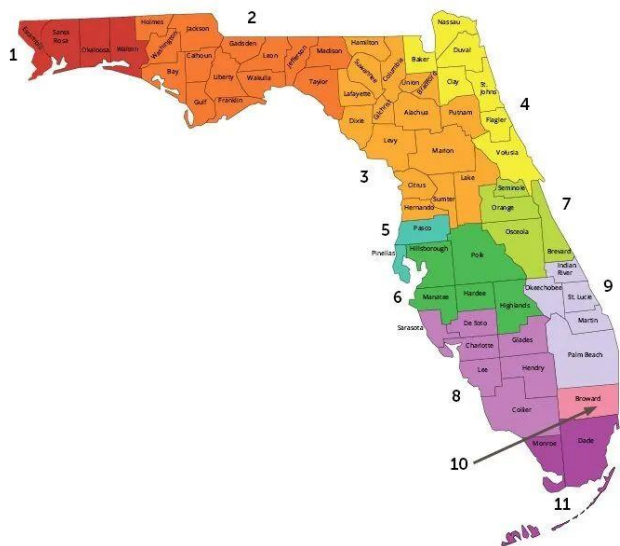


Figure 2. The 11 Area Agencies on Aging in Florida.
Credit: DOEA (2023)

There are 11 AAAs in Florida, each serving as a designated regional office responsible for planning, funding, organizing, and coordinating elder services within their respective Planning and Service Areas (PSAs). These agencies aim to support community-based care that promotes dignity, purpose, and independence for older adults. AAAs receive funding from the SUA, which is allocated under Titles III and VII of the Older Americans Act to develop coordinated service systems and advocate on behalf of seniors and caregivers (ACL, 2024). In addition to their core roles, each AAA functions as an Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), serving as a single point of access for information and assistance related to public and private long-term care options, Medicaid programs, and state- and federally-funded elder support services (DOEA, 2024b).

Community Care for the Elderly Lead Agencies

Florida has 47 CCE lead agencies that provide direct services within the PSAs. These agencies — either nonprofits or county government entities — deliver a wide array of care services, such as home health care, personal care, respite, transportation, and more. The DOEA contracts with AAAs, which subcontract with these lead agencies to ensure service delivery (DOEA, 2024b).

Local Service Providers

Local service providers — ranging from senior centers and assisted living facilities to faith-based organizations and

health clinics — serve as frontline contacts for elders and caregivers. These services can be public or private, and free or fee-based, and eligibility requirements may vary.

Conclusion

The U.S. Aging Network’s tiered structure helps maintain reliable funding and effective organization for community services such as Meals on Wheels and adult day care. The AoA directs funding for programs nationwide, the DOEA allocates that funding for state and local programs, and AAAs plan and coordinate these programs at a regional level in Florida. Finally, CCE lead agencies deliver these services and work directly with Florida’s older adults.

For more information about finding services near you, contact the Eldercare Locator, a free public service that helps connect older adults, caregivers, and families to reliable information and local aging-related resources. This helpline can be reached at 1-800-677-1116.

Other Helpful Resources

AARP: <https://www.aarp.org/>

Florida DOEA Resource Guide:
<https://elderaffairs.org/resources/>

Healthy Living: Reliable Websites:
<https://doi.org/10.32473/edis-fy102-2016>

Eldercare Locator: <https://eldercare.acl.gov/home>

Adult and Elder Care: <https://hr.emory.edu/eu/work-life/adult-and-elder-care/index.html>

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² Muthusami Kumaran, Ph.D., associate professor, nonprofit management and community organizations, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences; Katlyn Diamond, clinical director, Council on Aging of Martin County; Rachel Gatto, undergraduate research intern, UF College of Agricultural and Life Sciences; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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