

Home and Community-Based Services for Florida's Seniors: Administration on Aging — Structure, Roles, and Programs¹

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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.

The Administration on Aging

The AoA was established in 1965 under Title II of the OAA. Functioning under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the AoA serves as the primary federal agency responsible for coordinating programs and services for older Americans, with the exception of community service employment-related services provided under Title V (Colello & Napili, 2024). The AoA is led by the assistant secretary for aging, a presidential appointee confirmed by the Senate, who is supported by a deputy assistant secretary. Together, they oversee the agency's advocacy efforts and service delivery systems aimed at promoting the well-being of older individuals

and their caregivers. The AoA is a core organizational unit of the Administration for Community Living (ACL), which exists to better integrate services for older adults, people with disabilities, and their families. The AoA works through regional offices, state units, local agencies, and grantees to ensure that services align with the goals of the OAA and other relevant legislation (AoA, 2018).

State and Local Implementation

Under Title II of the OAA, a national framework was established for delivering aging services through a multi-tiered system that is headed by the AoA (Colello & Napili, 2024):

- **State Units on Aging (SUAs)** are designated as the primary state agencies tasked with developing statewide aging policy, planning services, and overseeing OAA-funded programs.
- **AAAs** operate at the local level within specific planning and service areas. These agencies either deliver services directly or contract with local providers to create coordinated systems offering social, nutrition, and long-term care support.
- **Tribal organizations** receive grants from the assistant secretary, allowing them to provide culturally appropriate social and nutrition services for Native American older adults.

Both SUAs and AAAs must create strategic plans outlining goals and assurances that guide how services are delivered and improved over time (Colello & Napili, 2024).

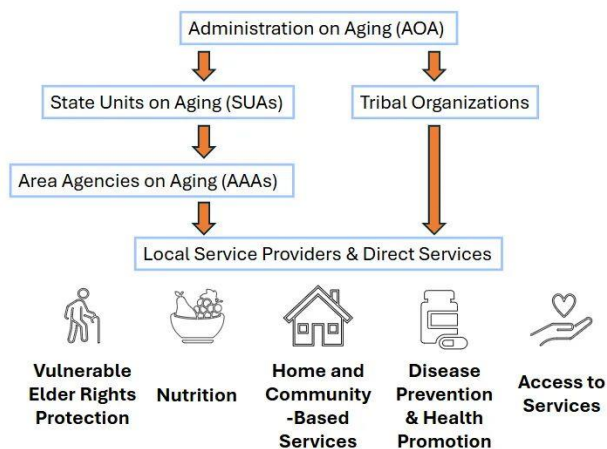


Figure 1. Organizational levels of the National Aging Network of the United States.

Credit: Muthusami Kumaran, Katie Diamond, and Rachel Gatto.

AoA Offices

The AoA has five offices that oversee SUAs and AAAs in implementing various types of programs for the elderly. The offices are discussed below.

Office of Supportive and Caregiver Services

This office collaborates with the National Aging Network to strengthen home and community-based services, senior centers, caregiver support, and information assistance. It provides technical guidance on implementing formula and grant-funded programs as well as transportation and housing programs, and advancing dementia care policies and programs (AoA, 2018).

Office of Nutrition and Health Promotion Programs

Tasked with promoting wellness and preventing chronic disease among older adults, this office oversees initiatives such as home-delivered and congregate meals, fall prevention, and oral and behavioral health programs. It supports sustainability through grant management and the use of business acumen strategies by partners in the Aging Network (AoA, 2018).

Office of Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs

This office ensures the effective implementation of state-level ombudsman programs, which advocate for the rights and welfare of residents in long-term care settings. It also works to shape federal policies that guard the health and safety of these individuals (AoA, 2018).

Office of Elder Justice

Focusing on abuse prevention and intervention, this office oversees programs funded under both the OAA and the Elder Justice Act. Its scope includes adult protective services, legal advocacy, and economic security initiatives for vulnerable older adults and adults with disabilities to prevent abuse and exploitation (AoA, 2018).

Office for American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian Programs

This office supports tribal organizations in delivering essential services to Indigenous older adults. Programs include caregiver support, nutrition assistance, and community-based supportive services tailored to the needs of American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian communities (AoA, 2018).



Figure 2. A younger adult reassuring an older adult.

Credit: © Pixel-Shot/Adobe Stock.

A key resource supported by the Administration on Aging is the Eldercare Locator, a free public service that helps connect older adults, caregivers, and families to reliable information and local aging-related resources. Users can access the service online to browse a searchable database of community programs, fact sheets, and outreach tools tailored to their needs and location.

In addition to the online portal, trained information specialists are available to assist users through phone, online chat, or email. The Eldercare Locator operates Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern Time, and can be reached at 1-800-677-1116 (ACL, 2018).

To learn more or explore services directly, visit the [Eldercare Locator website](#).

Conclusion

The complex organizational structure of the U.S. National Aging Network, headed by the Administration on Aging, is established to ensure that the needs of the nation's senior citizens are thoroughly addressed. By directing support for elder justice, Native American communities, nutrition, long-term care, and assistance to caregivers, each of the offices in the AoA leads a different aspect of comprehensive elder programs. State units, area agencies, and tribal organizations tailor these broad programs to suit the needs of their communities. Contact the Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116 for more information about your local programs.

References

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¹ This document is FCS3476, a publication of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date August 2026. Visit the Ask IFAS website at <https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication. © 2026 UF/IFAS. This publication is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

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