

Home and Community-Based Services for Florida's Seniors: Available Services through the Florida Department of Elder Affairs ¹

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Introduction

This article 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.

Focusing on home and community-based programs, this article offers Florida's seniors and their caregivers a practical overview of the support available through the DOEA. Many of these programs are funded by the OAA, and aim to promote aging in place, enhance well-being, and meet the social, nutritional, and health-related needs of older adults. Readers will find guidance on key services and ways to seek out those that best meet their needs. Understanding what these services are and how to access them is essential for older adults and those who care for them.

The Structure and Purpose of the Older Americans Act



Figure 1. A health care professional talks with an older adult in a wheelchair.

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The OAA authorizes a wide array of programs designed to meet the social, nutritional, and caregiver support needs of individuals aged 60 and older. The law also established the AoA, which serves as the federal focal point for aging services and policy.

Since its initial passage, the OAA has been reauthorized multiple times to expand and modernize its services. The most recent reauthorizations in 2016 and 2020 strengthened protections for vulnerable elders, enhanced caregiver support programs, and increased flexibility for states in service delivery (ACL, 2025). These reforms allow programs to better respond to local needs and demographic trends.

Eligibility

Eligibility for services under the OAA generally includes adults aged 60 and older. While most programs do not impose financial means testing, priority is given to

individuals with the greatest social and economic need — particularly those who are low-income, live in rural areas, are members of minority groups, or have limited English proficiency (ACL, 2021). For certain services, such as in-home care or respite care, recipients must also meet a frailty threshold, typically defined as requiring substantial assistance with at least two activities of daily living or having cognitive impairments that necessitate supervision (ACL, 2021).

Florida's Services

Florida is home to more than 6.3 million adults aged 60 and older, making it one of the largest aging populations in the United States (DOEA, 2024). To support the health, independence, and dignity of its aging residents, the state has developed an extensive network of services and support through Florida's Aging Network.



Figure 2. A caregiver helps an older adult at home.
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Services available to eligible seniors in Florida include the following.

- **Congregate and home-delivered meals:** This service promotes healthy diets for older adults by providing them with meals. These can be provided in the form of “congregate meals,” which are served at local community centers or churches to promote socialization, as well as meals provided via pick-up, carry-out, drive-through, or even home delivery for eligible individuals (ACL, 2021).
- **Homemaker services:** Homemaker services are provided for older adults who live in their own homes but have trouble with one or more activities of daily living, such as shopping, light housekeeping, and preparing meals. Most individuals who receive these services have medical conditions, with more than 90%

of them reporting having three or more in 2018 (ACL, 2021). The services of employed caregivers help these senior citizens to continue living in their own homes.

- **Transportation for medical appointments and errands:** This service also helps senior citizens to continue living in their homes by providing transportation for basic activities. Additionally, escorted transportation is offered and directed towards individuals with physical or cognitive difficulties using private or public transportation (ACL, 2021).
- **Case management:** This service supports older adults who require formal support or extensive care for low functioning capacities or other characteristics by assessing their needs, developing care plans, coordinating services among their providers, and performing other activities as needed (ACL, 2021).
- **Legal assistance:** The OAA guarantees senior citizens access to adequate legal protections, counseling, and representation by an attorney or a person acting under the supervision of an attorney (ACL, 2021).
- **Health promotion and disease prevention programs:** Florida's Aging Network offers a wide variety of health-related services to preserve the longevity and quality of life of older adults. These services include but are not limited to health screenings and assessments, medication management, organized physical fitness activities, and education and prevention programs to prevent chronic disease and other conditions (ACL, 2021).

Conclusion

Under the authorization of the OAA, the DOEA offers a comprehensive array of services for adults aged 60 and older. These services help seniors, particularly those with the greatest social, health, and economic needs, continue to live independently and remain healthy as they age.

If you think that you or a loved one might benefit from one of these services, contact the DOEA Elder Helpline at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337) for more information about the organizations and programs available near you.

Other Helpful Resources

Adult and Elder Care:

<http://worklife.emory.edu/dependentcare/eldercare/types.html>

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

Healthy Living: Reliable Websites:

<https://doi.org/10.32473/edis-fy102-2016>

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

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

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Florida Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA). (2024). About us. <https://elderaffairs.org/about-us/>

¹ This document is FCS3485, a publication of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date September 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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