

Home and Community-Based Services for Florida's Seniors: Florida Department of Elder Affairs — The Mandate and Services¹

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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 the Florida Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA), this publication offers an overview of the agency's structure, mission, and key programs. This publication is intended for Florida's older adults, their families, and caregivers seeking information about state-level services that promote independence, health, and dignity in aging. Readers will also find guidance on ways to access local resources and connect with service providers through the Elder Helpline and related tools.

What Is the DOEA?

The DOEA was established in accordance with Section 430.03 of the Florida Statutes, designating it as the primary state agency responsible for delivering services and programs to Florida's elderly population. Created in response to the state's growing senior demographic, the DOEA plays a critical role in coordinating a wide network of aging-related initiatives. Its foundation reflects Florida's constitutional commitment to honoring and supporting older adults across the state.

Mission Statement: To promote the well-being, safety, and independence of Florida's seniors, their families, and caregivers.

Vision: For all Floridians to live well and age well.

Elder Helpline: 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337)

This article provides information and resources regarding the programs offered by the DOEA. It can be used to identify and seek out services that may be helpful to older adults and their caregivers.

Role of the DOEA

Florida is home to one of the largest elderly populations in the United States. As of 2024, approximately 28% of the state's residents are aged 60 and older (DOEA, 2024b). This trend of increase is expected to continue, reinforcing the importance of agencies such as the DOEA in shaping elder care policy and community-based solutions. Rather than institutionalizing care through long-term facilities, the DOEA strives to create supportive environments that allow seniors to remain independent, engaged, and healthy in their own homes and communities. The DOEA offers a multitude of programs and services, aiming to equip aging adults and their caregivers with the resources and tools to promote living and aging well.

To accomplish this, the DOEA administers funding to 11 AAAs across Florida (DOEA, 2024a). These regional entities, in turn, support 47 lead agencies, ensuring that services are tailored to meet the specific needs of seniors in local communities. Through this multi-layered structure, the department reaches thousands of Floridians each year with essential services ranging from meal programs and home care to health education and caregiver support.



Figure 1. A caregiver at a care home gives an older adult a birthday cake.
Credit: Nanoxyde via Wikimedia Commons
(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nurse_in_geriatry.jpg).

DOEA Main Activities and Services

The Comprehensive Assessment and Review for Long-Term Care Services (CARES) Program

CARES is a federally mandated program that assesses/reviews individuals who request Medicaid reimbursement for home and community-based services or nursing facility placement. These assessments are completed at no cost, with the goal of recommending the least restrictive but most appropriate placements that meet an individual's long-term needs. If an individual is determined to be able to remain in the community, the assessment may recommend or facilitate alternative placements (OPPAGA, n.d.).

Community and Support Services

The DOEA also provides non-Medicaid related programs with the goal of helping elders to avoid institutional care. Funded through the Older Americans Act, various programs including home-delivered meals, medical transportation, shopping assistance, adult daycare, caregiving training and support, elder abuse prevention, and information assistance are offered (OPPAGA, n.d.).

The DOEA offers various specific programs to Florida residents. The Respite for Elders Living in Everyday Families program is one such program, providing typical family units with the tools to properly care for their aging loved one. Additionally, the DOEA offers the Adult Care Food Program, which administers meals to elders. The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program aims to improve the nutritional health of low-income seniors. The department provides many other support services, including the Home Care for the Elderly (HCE) program and the Community Care for the Elderly (CCE) program. Both HCE and CCE provide resources to ensure older adults have an environment suitable to their needs (OPPAGA, n.d.).



Figure 2. Older adults playing a card game.
Credit: © Drazen/Adobe Stock.

Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Programs

Supporting individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers is a key priority of the DOEA. Through the Alzheimer's Disease Initiative, the DOEA delivers essential support services and coordinates research aimed at improving diagnosis, care, and understanding of the disease. Support services include caregiver training, counseling, respite care, and access to necessary medical supplies. On the research side, the initiative collaborates with memory disorder clinics that conduct diagnostic evaluations to identify probable Alzheimer's disease or related dementias, and with the Florida Brain Bank, which advances research and provides education on these conditions (OPPAGA, n.d.).

Conclusion

From caregiver support to insurance counseling and nutritional assistance, the DOEA programs make aging a

more independent, purposeful, and dignified experience for thousands of Floridians every year.

If you are a Florida resident, exploring the resources provided by the Department of Elder Affairs can be a valuable step for yourself, a friend, or a loved one. For more information regarding the services near you, contact the Elder Helpline at 1-800-963-5337.

Other Helpful Resources

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

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

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

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

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

References

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

Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA). (2024b). *Live well and age well: 2024 department overview*.

Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA). (n.d.). Department of Elder Affairs. <https://oppaga.fl.gov/ProgramSummary/ProgramDetail?programNumber=5054>

¹ This document is FCS3486, 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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