

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The white paper provides documentation as to what members of the American Association of Service Coordinators (AASC) currently do and proposes enhancements to Service Coordinator duties that will improve health and wellness among elder and disabled residents served, improve both the resident and property's experience, and reduce costs. Service Coordinators identify, locate, and assist the residents with acquiring the benefits and services necessary for them to age in place in their own community. They provide assistance and access to community-based supports, skills training, and resources for low-income elders and families to achieve self-sufficiency. Programs to enhance service coordination among AASC members that are discussed are health prevention services, transitional care services, falls prevention, medication self-management, weight loss, brain health, chronic disease self-management, and advance planning.

A convenience survey administered by the Center for Healthy Aging in June 2014 for this white paper was a sample size of 3% of the total Service Coordinator membership of 3,200. Per the results, approximately 8% of the average resident population were referred to programs for common health and wellness prevention issues such as: falls prevention, medication management, and chronic disease self management. Given that 42% of the 218,000+ resident population are at-risk and frail, the numbers of residents receiving these preventive services should increase. These survey responses are of particular interest in our efforts to propose enhancements to service coordination.

According to AASC, evidence supports what affordable housing practitioners have known for a long time; the provision of resident services through Service Coordinators result in dramatic benefits for both residents and properties. Elders experience better health outcomes and the ability to age in place as they become more functionally frail. Service Coordinators provide needs assessments, goal development, service planning, and follow up. One of the major goals is to increase safety as needs for assistance are more quickly recognized and addressed before they escalate to a crisis situation. Affordable housing properties that provide on-site service coordination see significantly lower operating costs through savings associated with lower vacancy rates. This paper addresses the enhancement of the Service Coordinator mission for the elder, the resident with disabilities, and the housing property management.

Many problems of elders and the disabled deal with chronic health conditions that if not attended to, will exacerbate into costly emergency or other medical services. Preventive services and education around brain health, medications, falls, nutrition, exercise, socialization, emergency advanced planning, chronic disease self-management, and transitional care after a hospitalization are critical to improving quality of life for the elders and disabled, as well as improving both the residents' and properties' experience for aging in place, and reducing costs.

The enhanced Service Coordinator role will assist residents with preventive health and wellness services and the linkages for transitional care programming. This white paper introduces the concept by presenting the following health prevention and wellness services: transitional care; falls prevention; medication self-management; weight loss – nutrition and exercise; brain health; chronic disease self-management; and advance planning. This enhancement will improve health and wellness among elder and residents with disabilities served, improve both the residents' and properties' experience, and reduce costs.