

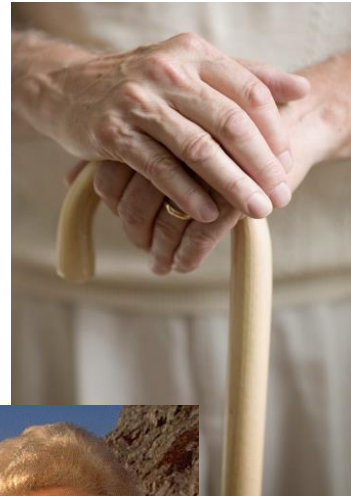
# **Herkimer County Office for the Aging**

109 Mary Street, Herkimer, NY 13350-2924

www.herkimercounty.org



## *The Many Faces of Aging*



*Four-Year Plan: April 2024-March 2028*

## **Introduction**

Older adults are a vital part of our community; they are our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents, part of our individual and community family. The older adult population is diverse, ranging from age 60 years to over 100 years, spanning at least 2 generations. Some older adults suffer from serious health issues that restrict their ability to perform activities of daily living such as driving, housekeeping, and even their own personal care. Many of them live alone due to the death of their spouse; this usually results in a loss of income, sometimes a very dramatic income loss that can result in a myriad of aftereffects. Although there are programs available to assist older adults, a number of factors can limit their ability to access these services. Sometimes the services that are available are not adequate to meet their needs.

The mission of the Office for the Aging (OFA) is to provide a range of supportive services to the Herkimer County senior citizen population and their families. The goal is to assist older adults to remain in their homes independently, for as long as possible. Those with the greatest economic and or social needs are given priority.

The philosophy of the OFA includes a strength based approach. This approach focuses on the positive and encourages independence rather than dependence. The focus is on the positive, what an individual can successfully perform, rather than focusing on what the individual can no longer perform successfully. A focus on assets rather than deficits helps keep an individual from developing a negative perspective of themselves and their situation that can lead to depression and further dependence. Older adults are encouraged to maintain as much independence as possible, performing as many tasks as is reasonable and realistic.

This 4-year plan provides an overview of the 60 and older population of Herkimer County, their strengths, the issues they face, and the services available to address those needs. Also included are the activities that the Office for the Aging has developed and will be implementing over the next 4 years.

*NOTE: This Plan is based on a compilation of data and needs assessment work from a variety of sources including the US Census, Community Wide Needs Assessment, client satisfaction surveys, OFA service data, and various internet web sites.*

## **Plan Approach**

Inherent in our mission and overall goal is a focus on basic needs. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was used as guidance for the development of this Plan. Basically, Maslow's theory states that humans have several levels of need, and that basic needs must be met before they can move up to the next higher level of need.

According to Maslow, there are 5 levels of need:

1. *Biological needs* – the need for physical comfort and survival.
2. *Safety* – the need for a stable, structured and predictable environment.
3. *Belongingness & love* – the point which turns the individuals' attention away from the maintenance and protection of him/her towards the pleasure of affectionate interaction with friends and family.
4. *Esteem needs* – needs which impel the individual to seek the approval and respect of others and eventually to create his/her own internal fund of self-esteem.
5. *Self-actualization* – “the ongoing actualization of potentials, capacities, and talents, as fulfillment of mission, as a fuller knowledge of, and acceptance of, the person's intrinsic nature, as an increasing trend toward unity, integration or synergy with the person”. This level is never achieved but rather is a continual growth process.

The Office for the Aging focuses the majority of its energy and resources on Category 1 and 2 levels of need – biological & safety needs but understand that providing support with Category 3, 4 & 5 are essential to providing a holistic approach to aging. Therefore, the more basic needs of food, shelter, personal safety, and health related concerns are the priority and primary focus. There will be crossover among different levels as it will be nearly impossible, and hardly desirable, to separate the levels through the service delivery process. Furthermore, services to family members, friends, and concerned others are included in order to support the older adult in need.

For the purposes of this Plan, Maslow's Hierarchy of Need is broken down into three categories. These three categories are:

### **Category 1: Biological and Safety Needs.**

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Economic Security        | Food                                     |
| Housing                  | Personal Care & Safety (Fall Prevention) |
| Transportation           | Medical/Health Related                   |
| Information & Assistance | Legal Services                           |

**Category 2: Belonging and Love**

Recreation

**Category 3: Esteem and Self-Actualization**

Volunteerism

Before examining these three categories of “Biological & Safety”, “Belonging & Love”, and “Esteem & Self-actualization” we will examine the senior population from a demographic perspective.

## **Herkimer County Senior Citizens**

### **Demographics**

“How old would you be if you didn't know how old you were?”

— Satchel Paige

*Often, all older people are considered as one homogenous group—the elderly. At other times, for simplicity and convenience, they are categorized into three groups, by age—the young-old, the old-old, and the oldest-old. Such approaches do not realistically reflect what researchers observe about older people: they are the most diverse of all age groups—a multi-generational group ranging in age from 55 to over 100, with extremely varied traits, characteristics, preferences, and needs. Thus, it is hard to define, describe—put a label on—New York's older adults.*

According to the 2020 Decennial Census estimates, there were 18,915 residents aged 60 and over in Herkimer County; this is 31% of the total population of Herkimer County. Our percentage of older adults was higher than the New York State average of 25%.

From a historical perspective, the senior population in Herkimer County has increased from 20% to 31% since 1980, while the US senior population went from 16% to 17.3%.

**Herkimer County Senior Citizen Population**

| <b>Herkimer County</b>                            | <b>1980</b> | <b>1990</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2010</b> | <b>2013</b> | <b>2018</b> | <b>2021</b> |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total Population                                  | 66,714      | 65,797      | 64,427      | 64,519      | 64,442      | 62,505      | 60,139      |
| Total Senior Population (aged 60 & over)          | 13,164      | 14,243      | 13,781      | 15,022      | 15,948      | 16,761      | 18,915      |
| Percentage of total population (rounded)          | 20%         | 22%         | 21%         | 23%         | 25%         | 26%         | 31%         |
|   |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Total Aged 85 & over                              | 910         | 1,157       | 1,443       | 1,737       | 1,809       | 1,642       | 1,670       |
| Percentage of <b>SENIOR</b> population            | 6.9%        | 8.1%        | 10.5%       | 11.6%       | 11.3%       | 10.5%       | 8.9%        |
|   |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| <b>Seniors (60+) as a percentage of TOTAL Pop</b> | <b>1980</b> | <b>1990</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2010</b> | <b>2013</b> | <b>2018</b> | <b>2021</b> |
| United States                                     | 16%         | 17%         | 15%         | 18%         | 19%         | 22%         | 17.3%       |
| New York State                                    | 17%         | 18%         | 17%         | 19%         | 21%         | 22%         | 25%         |
| Herkimer County                                   | 20%         | 22%         | 21%         | 23%         | 25%         | 26%         | 31%         |
|   |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| <b>Total Aged 85+ as percentage of TOTAL Pop</b>  |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| United States                                     | 1.00%       | 1.20%       | 1.50%       | 1.80%       | 1.90%       | 1.9%        | 2.5%        |
| New York State                                    | 1.10%       | 1.40%       | 1.60%       | 2.00%       | 2.10%       | 2.2%        | 2.4%        |
| Herkimer County                                   | 1.40%       | 1.80%       | 2.20%       | 2.70%       | 2.80%       | 2.80%       | 2.8%        |

Source: U.S. Decennial Census, Statistical File 1 1980-2020  
 U.S. Census, American Community Survey (ACS) 2017-2021 Five Year Estimates

It is readily apparent from the chart above that the population of Herkimer County is getting older. Herkimer County has a high percentage of senior citizens (age 60+). Since 1980, the percentage of seniors increased from 20% of the total County population to 31%. The population of seniors aged 85+ has more than doubled in the last 40 years.

Different areas within Herkimer County have different aging population densities. The Town of Ohio has the highest percentage of seniors over the age of 65 years (42%) and the Town of Norway has the lowest (13%) [Population density data is based on the 2020 ACS Five Year Estimate.]

The median age of Herkimer County residents has changed considerably over the last 50 years. The median age declined for a period of twenty years, from 1950 to 1970. During this period the median age dropped from 33.6 in 1950 to 31.1 in 1970. After 1970, the median age began to climb, rising to the (Census 2020) level of 44 years.

The aging of the baby boomer generation has led to a growing older population within Herkimer County. With the current median age at 44 years, the baby boom population has clearly made its transition from middle age to older adults. More than half (56%) of the county’s population is between the age of 19 and 64. In addition, almost one in six county residents (19%) is age 65 or older.

According to the 2021 Data from the Census, Herkimer County ranks #8 in the State of aged 85+ population with 2.8% of the total county population. Montgomery County ranks #1 with 3% and Putnam County ranks lowest with only 1%. The Herkimer County population aged 85 and older has more than doubled since 1980, from 910 in 1980 to 1,670 in 2021. The group is much more likely to need of services in order to keep them home and out of a nursing home. The chart on the right outlines the age breakdown of Meals on Wheels clients over time that illustrates this trend.

Care for the elderly very often falls to their adult children who may also have the responsibility for providing care for their own children and/or grandchildren. This phenomenon is often referred to as the “sandwich generation”. In the US 23% of individuals are caring for children and an older relative.

| Herkimer County Meals on Wheels Clients<br>by Percent of Total |           |           |           |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Age  | 2014-2015 | 2018-2019 | 2023-2024 |
| <60  | 0%        | 1%        | 1%        |
| 60-74  | 12%       | 15%       | 48%       |
| 75-84  | 21%       | 28%       | 31%       |
| 85+  | 51%       | 42%       | 20%       |
| Total  | 100%      | 100%      | 100%      |

**Living Arrangements:** According to the 2020 Census, 26% of households in all of Herkimer County have an individual over the age of 65 who lives alone. This figure has increased over the years, at 14% in 2018. Projections for the future show this number will continue to increase as the population ages with people are living longer.

| Herkimer County Living Arrangements |      |      |      |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|------|
| Year                                | 2013 | 2018 | 2021 |
| Living alone                        | 13%  | 14%  | 26%  |

In the table below “Population Served by OFA”, it displays that from our group of served clients from 2023-2024 43% of these individuals live alone.

**Population Served by OFA \***

04/01/2023-03/31/2024

|                  |  |              |     |
|------------------|--|--------------|-----|
| a. Total Served  |  | 2,984        |     |
|                  |  |              |     |
|                  |  | 150% Pov Lev |     |
| Low Income**     |  | 1,245        | 41% |
| Frail/Disabled** |  | 1,160        | 39% |
| Age 75- 84**     |  | 714          | 24% |
| Age 85+**        |  | 430          | 15% |
| Live Alone**     |  | 1,282        | 43% |

\* The Total Served number of 2,984 is understated as many seniors are provided with general information & assistance but we do not gather statistics on them.

\*\* Each of these numbers are also understated because of the reason above and because for many programs we may not gather the data.

## Category I: Biological & Safety Needs

### Economic Security

According to the 2021 ACS Survey-2017-2021, approximately 9.7% of senior citizens in our County live at or below the federal poverty level. This translates into a monthly income of <=\$1,255 for a household of one and <=\$1,882 for a household of two people in 2024.

#### Economic Security

Herkimer County Poverty Among Seniors Age 60 & over

|                           | Herkimer County |                   | NY State |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------|
|                           | Number          | % of pop aged 60+ |          |
| Total below poverty level | 2,960           | 15.6%             | 12%      |
|                           |                 |                   |          |

| POVERTY LEVELS                | Year 2018           |                      | Year 2024           |                      |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
|                               | Annual/<br>1 Person | Monthly/<br>1 Person | Annual/<br>1 Person | Monthly/<br>1 Person |
| <i>Provided for reference</i> |                     |                      |                     |                      |
| 100% of poverty               | \$12,140.00         | \$1,012.00           | \$15,060.00         | \$1,255.00           |
| 150% of poverty               | \$18,210.00         | \$1,518.00           | \$22,590.00         | \$1,882.50           |
| 200% of poverty               | \$24,280.00         | \$2,053.00           | \$30,120.00         | \$2,510.00           |

Source: 2018 and 2024 Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG) annual income- US Department of Health and Human Services

SNAP (Food Stamps) and HEAP are two programs where documentation of an applicant’s income is required. Because income documentation is required, the statistics for these two programs helps to more clearly paint a picture of the economics of the County population. The statistics below related to the senior population (age 60+) of Herkimer County.



**SNAP (Food Stamps)**

1,800 individuals age 60 and over are receiving SNAP in Herkimer County. This amounts to approximately **10% of the senior population**. The **Food Stamp monthly income eligibility levels are listed in the chart below.**

| SNAP Monthly Income Levels<br>(10/1/2022-9/30/2023) |             |
|---|-------------|
| HH Size   | for Seniors |
| 1   | \$2,430     |
| 2   | \$3,287     |

**HEAP 2023-2024 Season (OFA processed only; does not include SNAP participants)**

HEAP applications were processed 979; this is approximately **5.6% of the senior population** had monthly incomes of \$1,882 or less (<=150% of poverty.)

| HEAP Income Levels for<br>2023-2024 Season |         |             |
|--|---------|-------------|
|  | HH Size | Tier 2      |
|  | 1       | \$ 3,035.00 |
|  | 2       | \$ 3,970.00 |

Fourteen percent (14%) of applicants were aged 85 or older and, 55% live alone and 38% have incomes at or below 150% of poverty.

The SNAP & HEAP populations discussed above are separate populations. The individuals counted in SNAP are different people than those counted in HEAP. With about 10% of seniors on SNAP added to approximately 5% of seniors receiving HEAP there is a total about fifteen percent of the senior population with incomes at or below 150% of poverty.

It should be noted that people must apply for both of these programs. It is unknown how many people may be eligible but, for whatever reason, do not apply.

| <b>HEAP Applications Processed by OFA</b>  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| HEAP Program Years: 2015-2016 to 2023-2024 |                                  |
| HEAP Program Year                          | Number of Applications Processed |
| 2015-2016                                  | 1,011                            |
| 2016-2017                                  | 950                              |
| 2017-2018                                  | 955                              |
| 2018-2019                                  | 909                              |
| 2019-2020                                  | 948                              |
| 2020-2021                                  | 912                              |
| 2021-2022                                  | 1,048                            |
| 2022-2023                                  | 1,035                            |
| 2023-2024                                  | 979                              |

Please note that the HEAP applications processed by OFA do not include the age 60+ Food Stamp population. SNAP households receive HEAP automatically and do not need to complete an application. Because of this, the number of seniors receiving HEAP on the chart at the left is less than the *total* number of HEAP recipients aged 60 and older.

The drop in the number of HEAP applications processed by the OFA from a peak in 2021-2022.

SNAP cases have continued to increase over time. If individuals receive SNAP they automatically receive HEAP.

| <b>Total 2023-2024 HEAP Applications Processed By OFA Income levels</b>                       |      |
|---|------|
| <= 100%   | 10%  |
| 101-125%  | 13%  |
| 126-150%  | 19%  |
| 151-185%  | 24%  |
| >185%   | 34%  |
| unavailable (denied)  | 1%   |
|   | 100% |
| Herkimer County OFA applications only; does not include Food Stamp recipients receiving HEAP. |      |

The maximum HEAP *Tier 1* monthly income level is approximately 130% of the federal poverty level.

The maximum HEAP *Tier 2* monthly income level is approximately 60% of the NYS median income and 235% of the federal poverty level.

**OFA Plan Activities:**

- OFA will continue to consider low income seniors a high priority population for OFA services.
- Continue to process HEAP applications for the 60+ population.
- Continue to assist the NOEP (Nutrition Outreach & Education Program) of Catholic Charities of Herkimer County in distributing information to seniors regarding SNAP.
- A representative of the OFA will continue to serve on the Ecumenical Food & Shelter Committee.
- Continue to evaluate all HEAP applications for the Medicare Savings Program

## Housing

The median year of construction for year-round homes in Herkimer County is 1954 (2020 ACS 5 Year estimate-Census). Thirty-five percent (35%) of Herkimer County homes were built prior to 1970.

For, the median value of an owner-occupied home in Herkimer County was \$147,375 compared to \$370,000 for New York State. [<http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>]

Older housing stock and low income are commonly seen by OFA staff. Vital home repairs (such as roof leaks, etc.) are often neglected and the result is often severe. For example, the OFA receives many referrals from seniors who have leaky roofs and the senior cannot afford to repair or replace the roof. The OFA does not have places to refer them to for the assistance they need. Also seen are seniors who still own their own homes but whose income is so low that when something like a water heater needs to be replaced (\$500-\$850) they cannot afford to replace it.

**The Age Friendly Survey completed in 2019 45% of participants said that the cost of maintaining their homes is a major factor if they will remain in their homes as they age.**

OFA does refer seniors to other municipalities that may have CDBG funding which can be used for home repairs.

The OFA makes referrals to the designated weatherization agency (Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency for weatherization and, when it was available, the RESTORE Program.) Also, Herkimer County has continued to make referrals to EmPower NY and to USDA Rural Development for their grants & low interest loans.

Roof repairs are the one type of home repair that continues to be a glaring deficit for Herkimer County seniors. The high cost of roof reconstruction combined with limited funding leave roof repairs in a void. Some funding is available through USDA.

Another glaring deficit is assistance with health and safety issues such as grab rails, ramps, and repairs of steps/ handrails, and ramps. Referrals have been made to volunteer organizations but unfortunately these volunteer agencies are unable keep up with the demand.

Sometimes seniors leave their homes and move into apartments. Apartment living relieves them of housing repairs and maintenance issues such as mowing & snow removal. The OFA maintains a senior housing brochure of local rental units. There are numerous housing facilities for senior &/or disabled populations located throughout Herkimer County. There are waiting lists for some senior housing. Most senior housing facilities currently have waiting lists due to the high demand for senior housing in the area. Some facilities offer efficiency apartments and one-bedroom apartments and the wait list is sometimes comprised of people waiting for a one-bedroom apartment while efficiency apartments are available.

**OFA Plan Activities:**

- Continue to provide information and referrals to senior households for weatherization services.
- Continue to be a secondary certifier for DSS processing HEAP applications to senior households.
- Continue to refer to CDBG programs in Herkimer County.
- Continue to maintain Senior Housing brochure both in print & on web site.
- Continue to make referrals to other programs as appropriate such as EmPower, NYSERDA, Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency, HomeOwnership Center, etc.

## **Transportation**

***“I don't know what I would do if we didn't have this ride to get to where we have to go”***  
(From OFA Transportation Client Satisfaction Survey, 2023.)

Many seniors have to give up driving due to vision problems, physical limitations, or the expense of fuel, insurance & repairs. The need for transportation services for seniors is well understood. Transportation has been identified as a need in many local studies and was included as a need in the Risk Assessment Profile. Transportation was also identified as a priority in the Human Service Transportation Coordinated Plan developed by the Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Study in 2020. The options available to seniors include depending on their family & friends, public transportation including taxi service, or publicly supported services such as OFA, RSVP, or the Community Transportation Service in the Town of Webb.

There is limited public transportation available in Herkimer County which makes getting places much more difficult, especially for seniors. Commuter bus service is provided at many stops between Little Falls and Utica (Oneida County), along the Routes 5 and 5S valley corridor but it requires the physical capability of walking to a bus stop, which is not always an option for seniors. Commercial taxi services are very limited in Herkimer County and can be expensive, especially for someone with a low income.

Several communities and agencies have created small, localized services to help meet the transportation needs of senior citizens. These organizations include the Herkimer County Office for the Aging, the RSVP Program (Retired Senior Volunteer Program), and the Town of Webb Community Transportation Service, a volunteer transportation program. These services are limited and do not meet all the needs of the senior population. The OFA receives many requests for rides that they cannot provide because the demand is so high. RSVP lost many volunteer drivers during COVID. All three organizations face formidable funding challenges.

Transportation for medical appointments outside Herkimer County is often raised as an issue. RSVP specializes in meeting this need for the residents in the Southern part of the County. Community Transportation Service provides both local and out-of-county transportation for the Town of Webb. The OFA does not transport outside of the County due to the high demand for rides in the County.

There is a shortage of RSVP volunteers providing transportation, especially with the increased gasoline prices. Many RSVP volunteers will not transport in the winter due to bad weather. Another related transportation issue is the insurance risk and potential legal ramifications involved with an RSVP volunteer providing transportation to someone. There is concern of getting sued and the possibility of financial problems if someone gets hurt while you are transporting them. Although RSVP provides insurance, the volunteers own car insurance is primary.

Wheelchair-accessible transportation is a special need that is currently provided by the OFA and Community Transportation Service.

As a new program offering, Herkimer County Office for the Aging began providing transportation for Poland, Ohio, Newport, and Middleville residents two times per month for shopping and errands which began in 2017.

| <b>OFA Transportation Program<br/>2024 Client Demographics</b> |     |     |  |
|--|-----|-----|--|
| <b>N=264</b>   |     |     |  |
| <b>Age</b>   |     |     |  |
| age unknown  | 3   | 1%  |  |
| 60+  | 130 | 49% |  |
| 75+  | 92  | 35% |  |
| 85+  | 39  | 15% |  |
| <b>Gender</b>  |     |     |  |
| Male   | 87  | 33% |  |
| Female   | 177 | 67% |  |
| Frail/Disabled   | 102 | 39% |  |
| Live Alone   | 160 | 61% |  |
| <b>Total rides = 6,237</b>                                     |     |     |  |

The possibility of expanding public transportation has been explored, but the system would be prohibitively expensive and so has not been pursued. Birnie Bus service began a bus run to the outlying Dolgeville area, but has gotten few riders due to the limited service hours. Another issue with establishing a public transportation system is that people tend to want a service when they want it; they do not want to wait for a pick-up, and they do not want to pay for the actual cost of the services. When people have been independent and have been able to get in their own car and take care of what they need to do, it is a very difficult adjustment to lose that independence. When you no longer drive, it is difficult to have to make arrangements with someone and then wait until they are available.

**OFA Plan Activities:**

- Transportation services remain a priority service for the OFA, including wheelchair transportation.
- Continue to provide funding for the Town of Webb Community Transportation Service.
- Continue to participate in local and regional transportation study efforts such as Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Study efforts and advocate for services for the elderly.
- Continue to work with the Mobility Manager from The Parkway Center to address the transportation barriers in Herkimer County.
- Continue to work with funders to assist with additional rural funding needs.

## Information & Assistance

*The average American is bombarded with 3,000 – 6,000 messages a day.*

*— Caroline Roan, U.S. Department of Labor*

Many individuals do not know what services are available to them. The same applies to their adult children and others who care about the individual. A lack of awareness of what services are available has been well documented both locally and nationally. Locally it was noted in the County’s Risk Assessment Profile, the 2023 OFA Senior Survey, and the 2023 HIICAP Client Satisfaction Survey.

Public education about the availability of services is difficult to achieve because we are all so bombarded with information on a daily basis. Until we need a particular piece of information, i.e. Long Term Services and Supports, it does not register.

The OFA and the Department of Social Services (DSS) are partners in a NY Connects project (pronounced New York Connects). NY Connects offers links to Long Term Services and Supports in Herkimer County which offers information and assistance to individuals of any age. NY Connects does not offer any services other than information and assistance. During the period of April 1, 2023 through March 31, 2024, 1,953 people were served through NY Connects and 75% of these people requested information about home based services. (Home based services include companionship, home delivered meals, home health care, personal care such as bathing, personal emergency response systems, private duty nursing and telephone reassurance.)

### Information & Assistance

During the period of 4/1/2023-03/31/2024, the Office for the Aging provided over 13,336 units of information & assistance to over 1,953 individuals.

Our web site received 6,521 hits.

The OFA/NY Connects uses several methods to educate the public about services available including press releases and paid ads in local newspapers, Facebook, the OFA website, Blooming Health, a quarterly newsletter, distribution of information directly to clients, the public library system, urgent care & the local emergency room, public speaking, mailings to senior clubs, and distribution of brochures. Word of mouth is probably the most effective tool for public education. We utilize our Advisory Council as public educators and reinforce to Council members that their job as a member is primarily 2-fold: to know enough about the OFA so they can refer people to the OFA/NY Connects when someone needs assistance and to keep the OFA/NY Connects informed of aging concerns as they hear them. Each of these public education tools helps to reach people so that they know to contact us when they have concerns.

All educational publications produced by the OFA/NY Connects such as our brochures and newsletter use a font size of 14 and other techniques to make them more easily readable.

A limitation to providing public education that has become increasingly evident to the OFA/NY Connects is that more & more individuals are telling us that they no longer get the newspaper because they cannot afford it. Although press releases in newspapers are an inexpensive way to communicate with the public, the OFA has no control as to whether the release gets published or when. And, with more individuals not subscribing and not having access to home delivery of free papers, the ability to cost-effectively reach the public is becoming increasingly challenging.

The internet is a very cost-effective way to reach the public. The OFA/NY Connects has been committed to making the most of this medium and so provides a very large amount of info on the web site. We see our web site as an effective way to reach the adult children of the seniors more so than the seniors themselves. As the years go on and more Baby Boomers age, we would expect that the internet will be used by more seniors themselves. In 2024 OFA/NY Connects partnered with T-Mobile to provide tech classes to help older adults learn to utilize technology. The OFA/NY Connects has over 1,000 followers on Facebook. In 2024 the OFA implementing Blooming Health to increase our outreach in the community. This communication platform allows individuals in the community to sign up to receive communications from the OFA via voice message on a landline phone, text message or e-mail.

**OFA/NY Connects Plan Activities:**

- Continue public education efforts via newspapers, web site, and distribution of brochures & flyers.
- Continue In person community outreach
- Continue with NY Connects.
- Continue to make the community aware of NY Connects
- Continue to work with Community Partners to spread the word about the services the Office for the Aging/NY Connects provides
- Continue to educate current and new Advisory Council members about the importance of their role as educators within the community
- Continue to work with local legislators and other government officials to educate them on the programs offered at the Office for the Aging New York Connects
- Continue to utilize or website, Facebook & Blooming Health to educate the community about our services.
- Continue to provide T-Mobile Technology classes for older adults.



## Food

*“My driver is wonderful and look forward to their visit. I eat much more nutritious food due to variety of foods menu items I would normally never eat are delicious!*

*- 2023 Nutrition Program Client Satisfaction Survey Respondent*

Assistance with food is probably the most basic of all services. The need for food assistance can be due to being physically unable to safely prepare meals (permanently or temporarily) or it can be due to a lack of financial resources. Some of the assistance available to seniors includes Meals-on-Wheels; congregate meals, Food Stamps, Farmer Market Coupons, food pantries and programs such as Food Sense.

The provision of food through Meals-on-Wheels is related to non-financial need. To receive home delivered meals clients must meet eligibility criteria that do not include income. The regulations that govern both the Meals-on-Wheels and our congregate meals programs come from the federal Older Americans Act. Meals that are home delivered must be based on need – basically the inability to safely prepare meals. In fact, for home delivered and congregate meals, no questions are asked about finances unless it is to determine eligibility for some other program. Congregate meals are open to any senior wishing to participate. Congregate meals may be provided to disabled residents under the age of 60 who live in the building where congregate meals are served. This is a local decision and we have historically done so.

The OFA provides Meals-on-Wheels to most areas in the County. Due to several logistical limitations, there are geographical pockets where we are unable to provide daily service. Congregate meals are provided in 5 locations in the county, all in senior housing units located in Dolgeville, Little Falls, Herkimer, Ilion, and West Winfield. In 2020 we began providing drop ship meals for those who we cannot reach by an in person delivery. Weekly calls are made to these individuals to check on their status. Approximately 97,293 meals were provided to 74 home delivered and congregate meal clients during 2023-2024.

**Meals on Wheels:** Meals-on-Wheels are offered through the Herkimer County Office for the Aging. The meals are delivered to seniors who are unable to safely prepare meals due to a chronic condition or a temporary condition caused by an accident or post-hospitalization recovery. One hot noon-time meal is delivered to clients 5 days a week. Each meal contains one-third of the RDI (recommended daily intake of nutrients.) A small donation of \$3.00 per meal is suggested. The average per meal donation received last year was \$.41.

During the period of 2023-24, 614 seniors received home delivered meals. Sixty-two (60%) of those seniors lived alone, 58% were women and 30% were aged 85 or older.

Since there are no income eligibility criteria associated with Meals on Wheels, income data is not available.

| Herkimer County Meals on Wheels Clients<br>by Percent of Total |           |           |           |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Age  | 2014-2015 | 2018-2019 | 2023-2024 |
| <60  | 0%        | 1%        | 1%        |
| 60-74  | 32%       | 30%       | 48%       |
| 77-84  | 19%       | 28%       | 31%       |
| 85+  | 51%       | 42%       | 20%       |
| Total  | 100%      | 100%      | 100%      |

| Meals on Wheels Clients<br>2023-2024 by Gender |             |
|--|-------------|
| Gender   | Percent     |
| Female   | 58%         |
| Male   | 42%         |
| Total  | <b>100%</b> |

**Farmers Market Coupons** is a USDA Program that offers coupons to be used to purchase fresh fruits & vegetables at participating Farmers Markets. Each set of coupons is worth \$25.00. Farmer Market Coupons are distributed to 2 populations, low income senior citizens and WIC recipients. The OFA distributes the Coupons to the 60 and over population. We distributed 890 coupon sets in 2023.

Part of our Nutrition Program includes the provision of **nutrition education** in order to encourage healthy eating & good nutrition. The OFA distributes a monthly newsletter called “Nutrition News.” A printed copy of the newsletter is distributed to all nutrition program participants and the newsletter is also posted to the OFA web site so it is available to all seniors and their caregivers.

The OFA contracted Registered Dietitian also provides **nutrition counseling** to seniors and their caregivers. This service is often most needed after a senior develops a health problem that demands a dietary change, for example, the onset of diabetes or kidney disease, etc.

**Food pantries** are a source of emergency food for people of all ages, including senior citizens. There are 9 food pantries in Herkimer County. These pantries generally offer clients once-a-month usage. Households are given enough food for three meals a day for five days for each member of their household. In 2021, 2,900 meals were provided to individuals 60 years and older.

**The Food Sense Program** Food Sense is a food co-op program offering quality food at a reasonable price, with an estimated savings of up to \$15 a unit over retail. There are no age, income, or geographic requirements for the community Food Sense Program. All are welcome to participate. You may order as many units of food as you wish for \$20.50 a unit. Bonus items are also available for

purchase. SNAP is welcomed.

(per <https://ccherkimercounty.org/food-sense-program/> accessed 7/31/2024)

**Food Stamps**, now called Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), is a federal program offering assistance with food related purchases for low-income households.

The number of Non-Public Assistance Food Stamp cases has risen dramatically from 2001. These cases shown in the neighboring chart are for non-Public Assistance cases and include people of all ages, including seniors.

| Average # Non-PA Food Stamp Cases Years 2002-2021 Herkimer County (All Ages) |       |
|--|-------|
| 2021   | 7,620 |
| 2020   | 7,414 |
| 2019   | 7,368 |
| 2018   | 7,841 |
| 2017   | 8,222 |
| 2016   | 8,381 |
| 2015   | 5,194 |
| 2014   | 5,353 |
| 2013   | 5,145 |
| 2011   | 4,616 |
| 2010   | 4,256 |
| 2009   | 3,742 |
| 2008   | 3,146 |
| 2007   | 2,736 |
| 2006   | 2,682 |
| 2005   | 2,577 |
| 2004   | 2,373 |
| 2003   | 2,093 |
| 2002   | 1,842 |

The local Nutrition Outreach & Education Program (NOEP) at Catholic Charities has worked with many individuals to encourage them to apply for Food Stamps.

| Food Stamp Pre-screens by the NOEP (Nutrition Outreach & Education Program)   |
|---|
| <b>July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023</b>   |
| 95 seniors aged 60 and older were pre-screened for Food Stamps. This was 55% of the total pre-screens (174). Of the 95 seniors: |
| 48% (45) were age 60-69   |
| 29% (28) were age 70-79   |
| 23% (22) were age 80-89   |

| <b>Food Stamp Income Guidelines for Households with an Elderly or Disabled Member</b>  |                              |                             |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Family Size</b>   | <b>Monthly Gross Income*</b> | <b>Annual Gross Income*</b> |
| 1  | \$2,430                      | \$29,160                    |
| 2  | \$3,287                      | \$32,444                    |
| 3  | \$4,143                      | \$49,716                    |
| 4  | \$5,000                      | \$60,000                    |
| * These figures based upon November 2024 Federal Poverty Levels  |                              |                             |
| Note: There is no resource test for households with elderly/disabled members whose income falls at or below the amount listed above, unless a member of the household has been sanctioned or disqualified from participation in the Food Stamp Program. Households with elderly/disabled members whose gross income exceeds these amounts may still be eligible for food stamps, if their countable resources do not exceed \$3,000. |                              |                             |
| <a href="https://www.ny.gov/services/apply-snap">https://www.ny.gov/services/apply-snap</a>  |                              |                             |

In a Senior Survey conducted by the OFA in the October of 2023, the question was asked about what services are important, of the respondents, 50% identified financial assistance including Food Stamps, HEAP, and the STAR program.

**OFA Plan Activities:**

- Continue to provide home delivered and congregate meals.
- Continue to offer nutrition education and nutrition counseling.
- Continue to distribute Farmer Market Coupons.
- Continue to represent the senior population on the Ecumenical Food & Shelter Council.
- Continue to assist NOEP with the distribution of information about food assistance programs.

## **Personal Care & Safety**

Many senior citizens have difficulty performing housekeeping and personal care tasks due to chronic diseases or due to a temporary injury or acute health episode. The provision of aide services to assist with housekeeping, errands, and personal care is vital to keeping seniors at home for a longer time and preventing, or at least postponing, nursing home placement.

Safety equipment such as PERS (personal emergency response systems), grab rails, raised toilets, smoke alarms, extra-loud doorbells & phone ringers, wheelchair ramps and other such adaptive equipment are very helpful in keeping seniors safe at home.

Caregivers often provide a large amount of care to their spouse or other family member in order to help them remain at home. These caregivers deserve special attention as they can become overloaded. In the words of one caregiver after her spouse was placed in a nursing home, "I did not realize how much I was doing for him. As I look back on it all, I just did one more thing, and one more thing, until I was doing almost everything for him." Information, assistance, training and respite are often needed by the caregiver. It is not uncommon for the caregiving spouse to die before the care receiving spouse due to the stress of caregiving. In 2024, a free Web-Based Support Platform for all Family Caregivers in NYS. This platform has educational videos on caregiving and virtual support groups.

The Office for the Aging provides specialized assistance to caregivers including information & assistance, training, respite, and public education. A free caregiver newsletter is distributed monthly to interested caregivers; this newsletter is also posted to our web site. Respite services include in-home respite, day care in the Town of Webb, and institutional respite.

The Office for the Aging works closely with the Adult Protective Unit of the Herkimer County Department of Social Services. The OFA makes referrals to Adult Protective occasionally and works cooperatively with Adult Protective to provide appropriate services to Adult Protective clients. The OFA assists APS by publishing a public education article in the OFA/RSVP joint newsletter and also by distributing public education material to OFA clients. In 2024 the OFA began an outreach campaign to educate the community, banks & Law Enforcement about Elder Abuse, Financial Exploitation, & Scams. These presentations are provided to increase the awareness and reduce the likelihood of older adults falling victim to these issues. The OFA participates in the Elder Abuse Multi-Disciplinary Team to assist older adults who have been victimized.

The OFA for the Aging collaborates with the Army National Guard to provide Citizen's Preparedness Training. These training are provided to increase the number of individuals that are prepared for disasters. Disasters are becoming more common and being prepared for these events increases the likelihood that individuals are prepared if a disaster does occur.

**OFA Plan Activities:**

- Continue the provision of shopping, housekeeping, and personal care services.
- Continue caregiver services.
- Continue to work closely with the Adult Protective Unit, DSS.
- Continue Education campaign for Elder Abuse, Financial Exploitation, & Scams
- Continue to participate in the Elder Abuse Multi-Disciplinary Team
- Continue to provide information for older adults to reduce falls and provide Tai Chi Classes
- Continue to promote the NYS caregiver portal.

## Medical and Health Related

**Health Insurance:** Having health insurance is vital. Without adequate insurance, the financial burden can bankrupt someone. Health insurance claims and issues can be overwhelming unless a senior has an adult child or someone to assist them. This relates not only to medical insurance claims, but to decisions related to Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage and other insurance policy decisions. The OFA provides funding for a HIICAP (health insurance information, counseling, and assistance program) that assists seniors with the highly complex and confusing world of health insurance. The OFA subcontracts this program to Catholic Charities. During 4/1/2022-3/31/2023, HIICAP had 2,818 client contacts.

**Medications:** Many seniors take numerous prescription and non-prescription (over the counter) drugs. These medications have many side effects and can cause difficulties. The OFA will educate older adults on medication safety & make referrals for Medication reconciliations.

**Discharge Planning** is an important tool, especially for senior citizens and their caregivers. The NY Connects project is assisting seniors and their caregivers by providing valuable information related to hospital discharge planning. These materials are now available on our NY Connects web site and printed materials are being distributed to both OFA and Alternatives Unit clients who we know are hospitalized. This approach broadcasts the information to the general public as well as providing it directly to clients/caregivers who the OFA knows have been hospitalized. A Discharge Planning Symposium was held in March of 2024 to educate both caseworkers, discharge planning staff, and not-for-profits. The symposium’s objective was to improve communication among agencies and improve the discharge planning process for older adults & their families.

Herkimer County HealthNet provides Diabetes Prevention & Chronic Disease Self-Management classes. The OFA has assisted HealthNet outreach/advertise the availability of these classes by distributing flyers to OFA clients. Catholic Charities of Herkimer County provides the WISE program for older adults. Herkimer County OFA/NY Connects helps to promote and advertise these classes.

**Health Promotion (Falls Prevention):** The Herkimer County Office for the Aging works to reduce falls among older people living in the community. Two specific courses were added to assist with keeping individuals living in their own as independently as possible while reducing the risk of falling. Tai chi classes and a Matter of Balance are evidence-based courses held by the OFA from 2023-24. See data below for these programs.

| <b>HIICAP Contacts 4/1/2022-3/31/2023</b>  |       |      |
|--|-------|------|
| Contacts in which the total time spent with or on behalf of the client was                                   |       |      |
| 1-9 minutes  | 20    | 1%   |
| 10-29 minutes  | 835   | 52%  |
| 30-59 minutes  | 374   | 23%  |
| 60 or more minutes   | 382   | 24%  |
| Total  | 1,680 | 100% |
| It is readily apparent from the length of time involved with client contacts that the issues are not simple. |       |      |

|   |
|---|
| <b>Tai Chi (4/1/23-3/31/24)</b>                         |
| Total Units: <b>467</b>                                 |
| Reported balance improvement:<br><b>95% of students</b> |

**OFA Plan Activities:**

- Continue to provide health insurance information and assistance services.
- Continue to provide medication management education.
- Continue discharge planning efforts to assist older adults and their caregivers.
- A representative of the OFA will continue to serve on the Herkimer County Public Health Services Advisory Board.
- Continue to work to educate the community about falls prevention.
- A representative of the OFA will continue to serve on the board of Herkimer County HealthNet. The Mission of the Herkimer County HealthNet is to improve the health and well-being of individuals who live, work, play, and learn in Herkimer County.
- Continue to distribute the Container Vegetable gardens.



## **Category 2: Belonging and Love**

### **Recreation**

Noun. Recreation - An activity that diverts or amuses or stimulates.

Recreation - activity that refreshes and recreates; activity that renews your health and spirits by enjoyment and relaxation

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/recreation>

Herkimer County has sponsored an annual Senior Citizen Picnic for over 20 years and it has always been a popular event. It is estimated that over 600 seniors attended the picnic last year. Many Herkimer County employees, including OFA employees, help make the day a success.

Herkimer County began providing animatronic pets for individuals who were socially isolated. These pets are researched based and there is evidence that they improve feeling of social isolation. In 2024 several sets of board games were received. Herkimer County OFA will be planning to hold intergenerational game nights.

In 2024 Herkimer County began to offer Get Set Up. This website offers older adults the opportunity to take classes on a variety of topics. These classes are interactive. Older Adults can also be paid to provide a class on Get Set Up.

#### **OFA Plan Activities:**

- Continue to participate in the Herkimer County Senior Picnic
- Continue to provide to Senior Clubs and other organizations to assist in the provision of recreational opportunities to seniors.
- Continue providing animatronic pets and board games for older adults.
- Continue to promote the Get Set Up platform.

## **Category 3: Esteem & Self-Actualization**

### **Volunteerism**

Giving to others through the vehicle of volunteering provides people (of all ages) with many rewards. The OFA offers volunteer opportunities at each of their congregate meal sites and without their assistance, fewer meals would be able to be served. The OFA also offers volunteer opportunities through membership on the OFA Advisory Council and our meals programs.

The OFA recognizes outstanding volunteers in the community through annual awards. Annually, nominations from the public are reviewed and two awards are presented: Office for the Aging Person of the Year & Outstanding Contribution.

The Office for the Aging continues to refer individuals to the Retired Senior Volunteer program provided by Catholic Charities.

#### OFA Plan Activities:

- Continue to foster volunteers for congregate meal sites and the Advisory Council.
- Continue to recognize community volunteers through presentation of annual awards.

## **Appendix A: Services Offered by the Office for the Aging**

The mission of the Office for the Aging (OFA) is to provide a range of supportive services to the Herkimer County senior citizen population and their families. The goal is to assist senior citizens to remain in their homes independently for as long as possible. Those with the greatest economic and or social needs are given priority. In order to assist these seniors, the following services are offered:

### **Resource Inventory:**

#### **Office for the Aging**

- *Meals on Wheels*
- *congregate meals*
- *nutrition counseling*
- *In-home aide services for housekeeping & personal care*
- *Caregiver Services, including info, assistance, training, & respite*
- *Transportation; wheelchair accessible vehicle available*
- *Information & assistance & referral*
- *Legal services*
- *HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program)*
- *HIIICAP (Health Insurance Information, Counseling & Assistance Program) subcontracted to Catholic Charities.*
- *Participation in the Herkimer County Senior Picnic and assist with other Senior Recreation*
- *Opportunities for volunteerism & employment*
- *Falls Prevention*
- *Outreach*
- *Elder Abuse-Financial Exploitation-Scams Prevention*
- *Digital Literacy*
- *Online Caregiver Portal*
- *Online Learning Platform*

## **Appendix B: Disaster Assistance**

The Office for the Aging will continue to be a member of the Herkimer County Emergency Planning Committee (CEPC) and Herkimer-Oneida Organizations Active in Disaster.

Herkimer County Office for the Aging will continue to work with Herkimer County Emergency Manager to continue to identify individuals who are vulnerable who may need assistance during a disaster.

HCOFA will offer disaster preparedness classes to help older adults prepare for disasters.

## **Appendix C: Resource Inventory**

Under our NY Connects project, an on-line directory of long term care services will be required as part of the State-wide NY Connects. You can find this directory at <https://www.nyconnects.ny.gov/>

## **Appendix D: Targeting**

Inherent in the federal Older Americans Act is recognition of the need to target the limited resources available and to serve those with greatest economic or social need. The targeted groups are: low-income, frail, vulnerable, and minority elderly; these populations are to be served at least equal to their relative proportion of the population.

Targeting activities of the OFA include:

- Making public our mandated responsibility of targeting. We meet this through including the targeting statement of 'giving priority to those with the greatest economic and social needs' on our OFA brochure, and our web site.
- The OFA practices equal opportunity employment practices. We include EOE statements on job announcements and in our subcontracts.
- Ensure that targeted populations are represented on our Advisory Council.
- Continue to participate in training opportunities as they become available.

As the chart below illustrates, we meet our targeting goals.

| Targeting Objectives               |                               |                  |               |                       |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
|                                    | ACS 2017-2021 -year Estimates | Percent of total | Served by OFA | Percent Served by OFA |
| Total # aged 60+                   | 18,915                        | 31.5%            | 693           | 3.6%                  |
| Low income                         | 2,960                         | 16%              | 384           | 13%                   |
| Low income minority                | 175                           | 0.9%             | 16            | 9%                    |
| Frail/disabled                     | 4,595                         | 24%              | 611           | 13%                   |
| Aged 85+                           | 1,660                         | 2.7%             | 210           | 13%                   |
| Live Alone                         | 4,880                         | 8.8%             | 429           | 8.8%                  |
| Rural                              | 9,602                         | 26%              | 157           | 1.6%                  |
| Limited English Proficiency *      | 65                            | 0.3%             | 0             | 0.0%                  |
| Hispanic *                         | 84                            | 0.4%             | 4             | 4.7%                  |
| Native American/Alaskan Native *   | 84                            | 0.4%             | 3             | 0.0%                  |
| Asian *                            | 64                            | 0.3%             | 1             | 1.6%                  |
| Black *                            | 240                           | 1.2%             | 10            | 4.1%                  |
| Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander * | 0                             | 0.0%             | 0             | 0.0%                  |

\* numbers for these categories are estimates provided by the NYS OFA

Targeting goals have been met as the OFA provides service to targeted populations at least equal to their relative proportion in the population.

**Data limitations:**

*The actual number of clients served is actually higher than is noted above. This is because many people who call us are only seeking general information and because of the limited contact we have with them, we do not collect info regarding their names, ages, or other data listed.*

*Also, for many clients we serve, not all of the characteristics listed in the chart above are gathered. For example, on a HEAP application there is no question asking ethnicity or race, so for the nearly 1,100 clients we process HEAP applications for, unless we gathered that info from providing them with some other service, we do not know their race/ethnicity. Another example is home delivered meal clients; because income is not an eligibility criteria for meals, unless we gathered income info from providing them with some other service, we do not know that info.*

## NYSOFA Goals:

Goal# 1 Further the vision of the Older Americans Act to cultivate innovative approaches reflective of local needs and preferences.

Goal#2 Enable older New Yorkers to remain in their own homes with high quality of life for as long as possible through the provision of home and community-based services, including supports for the family

Goal#3- Create an Age Friendly New York where home and community-based services are available and accessible to those who most need them, when they are in need of them.

Goal#4 Ensure the rights of older New Yorkers and prevent their abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Goal #5 Empower older New Yorkers to stay active and healthy through Older Americans Act services and those funded under Medicare.

Goal # 6 Integrate COVID-19 lessons and adaptations into standard practice while preparing the aging network, and those served by the network, to successfully respond and adapt to future emergencies and disasters.

Goal #7 Promote equitable access to older adults in greatest social and economic need throughout all the program and services administered.

Goal# 8 Support continuation of growth of state and local policy programs, and investments that compliment and expand upon Older Americans Act programs.

Goal#9 Family caregivers will be recognized, assisted, included, supported, and engaged through a variety of programs so that they can care for their care receiver at home as long as possible.

Goal #10

HCOFA will increase transportation options for older adults who reside in rural locations.

Goal #11 HCOFA will work to provide additional preventive and educational services to assist older adults to be prepared for aging.



## **Appendix E: Herkimer County Office for the Aging Needs Assessment**

### **Summary of Efforts:**

The OFA collaborated with other Herkimer County agencies on a “**Risk Assessment Profile**” (RAP) during 2022. The Risk Assessment Profile included the collection and analysis of data (including census data). The Risk Assessment Profile included data regarding the entire County population, children, youth, families, and senior citizens. The entire report is available on the Herkimer County web site. Data most pertinent to the OFA needs assessment are included in this Plan.

See: <http://www.herkimercounty.org>

A **needs assessment survey** was sent out to approximately 400 individuals in November 2023 which included current clients of the Office for the Aging, Senior clubs, Advisory Council members, Public Hearing participants, over sixty human service providers in the area, and individuals who reside in senior housing in Herkimer County. An internet based survey tool was used to distribute the survey to human service providers and other organizations that would be vital to providing input on what services are needed. Two focus groups were held one with The Resource Center for Independent Living Advisory Board and one included the Mohawk Valley Community Action Advisory Board. During the Office for the Aging Public Hearing individuals completed surveys and were asked what services were most important to keep individuals independent in their communities. Herkimer County Office for the Aging worked in collaboration with the Community Foundation of the Mohawk Valley and held three focus groups to answer the question, “What is the specific thing would allow an older adult to live independently in their community.”

Data from OFA clients was also gathered through responses to our **client satisfaction surveys**. The responses typically illustrate the positive outcome involved with the provision of services offered.

The data collected showed that basic services such as in-home services, Social Adult Day Services, Care giver Services, Home Delivered and Congregate Meals, transportation, HIICAP, financial assistance such as HEAP, home repairs and inability to pay property taxes appeared to be the most pressing issues. 74% of those who filled out the survey were females. Of the caregivers who filled out the surveys 32% responded that they were stressed or overwhelmed.

### **To see the complete results of the Survey SEE APPENDIX G**

As part of the Needs Assessment process we examined the current waiting lists for the programs that HCOFA offers. The respite program currently has 36 individuals waiting for services. The EISEP program currently has a waiting list of 15 individuals and the Companion Homemaker program currently has 29 individuals on the waiting lists.

The OFA staff is involved with many community agencies and boards in order to gather information regarding local services, senior issues, and to provide advocacy on the part of individuals who may need assistance with Long Term Services and Supports. A list of affiliations includes:

- Herkimer County HealthNet (Executive Committee, full board, and Long Term Care Committee);
- Herkimer- Oneida Organizations Active in Disaster
- Herkimer County Emergency Planning Council
- Interagency County Planning (ICP) Human Resource Planning Team
- Alternatives to Incarceration Advisory Board
- Ecumenical Food & Shelter Council
- Herkimer County Public Health Services Advisory Board
- Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency Advisory Board
- Park Way Center Advisory Committee
- Resource Center for Independent Living Advisory Board
- Herkimer County Department of Social Services- Human Development Committee
- Herkimer County Mental Hygiene Board
- Herkimer-Oneida Transportation Coordination Committee

The OFA Advisory Council provided input into this Plan through participation in Advisory Council meetings and through the public hearing process associated with this project.

The OFA participated in the DSS Adult Protective Planning process for the DSS Plan and the associated public hearing.

## Appendix F: Web Hits of OFA & NY Connects Over Time

Unless the number of hits &/or data downloaded reaches a certain threshold, info regarding the # of hits is not available. Actual hits for POE/ NY Connects is actually higher than the Sum listed above as some months do not get enough hits for the info to be available, but there were probably still some hits.

| Month/Year | OFA |
|------------|-----|
| Jan-23     | 856 |
| Feb-23     | 958 |
| March-23   | 739 |
| April-23   | 690 |
| May-23     | 677 |
| June-23    | 662 |
| Jul-23     | 778 |
| Aug-23     | 872 |
| Sept-23    | 653 |
| Oct-23     | 748 |
| Nov-23     | 583 |
| Dec-23     | 498 |

## **Herkimer County Office for the Aging Needs Assessment- 2023**

**INTRODUCTION:** The Herkimer County Office for the Aging/NY Connects completed a Needs Assessment in preparation for the Four Year Plan for 2024-2028.

**SURVEY:** The clients were asked to respond to a series of statements that would measure the level of needs in the community. The survey was sent to over 850 individuals in the community which included the Office for the Aging Advisory Board, Senior Clubs, and current clients of the Office for the Aging, Public Hearing participants, over fifty human services organizations in the area, and individuals who reside in senior housing in Herkimer County. An internet based survey tool was also used was used to distribute the tool to human service providers and other organizations that would be vital in providing input of the needs of our older population. 320 surveys were completed.

**Zipcode distribution of surveys taken-**

*Town of Webb-10% Poland/Newport/Cold Brook-11% LF/Jordanville/Fairfield-19% Frankfort/Utica-17% Herkimer-27% West Winfield-3% Mohawk-13%*

The participants were asked the following questions and the results are listed in the percentage of clients who answered that question out of the total responses. Important, is a concern, Important, but is NOT a concern, Not Important, Not Concern. The results are as follows:

**Housing**

Able to perform household chores (cleaning, etc)

**42%** Important, is a concern    **46%** Important, but is NOT a concern    **12%** Not Important, Not Concern

Finding reliable help to perform home maintenance / repairs

**51%** Important, is a concern    **36%** Important, but is NOT a concern    **13%** Not Important, Not Concern

Ability to pay rent or taxes

**40%** Important, is a concern    **43%** Important, but is NOT a concern    **16%** Not Important, Not Concern

Able to pay for home heating

**54%**Important, is a concern    **31%**Important, but is NOT a concern    **13%**Not Important, Not Concern

**Transportation**

To medical appointments

**40%**Important, is a concern    **46%**Important, but is NOT a concern    **13%**Not Important, Not Concern

To out of county medical appointments

**46%**Important, is a concern    **38%**Important, but is NOT a concern    **15%**Not Important, Not Concern

To the grocery store and other errands

**32%**Important, is a concern    **51%**Important, but is NOT a concern    **16%**Not Important, Not Concern

Driving my own car

**27%**Important, is a concern    **42%**Important, but is NOT a concern    **31%** Not Important, Not Concern

**Nutrition/Food**

Having enough money for nutritious food

**42%**Important, is a concern    **45%** Important, but is NOT a concern    **12%**Not Important, Not Concern

Being able to shop and cook for myself

**37%**Important, is a concern    **49%**Important, but is NOT a concern    **13%**Not Important, Not Concern

Able to follow a special diet recommended by my doctor

**28%**Important, is a concern    **44%**Important, but is NOT a concern    **28%**Not Important, Not Concern

Important and Satisfied, Important and NOT Satisfied, Not Important and Satisfied. The results are as follows:

**Services and Supports**

Respite services for caregivers, such as adult day programs, for people with dementia or other functional impairments

**14%**Important and Satisfied **27%**Important and NOT Satisfied **9%**Not Important and Satisfied **48%**N/A

Access to senior centers

**15%**Important and Satisfied **33%**Important and NOT Satisfied **17%**Not Important and Satisfied **34%**N/A

Transportation options for those unable to drive

**17%**Important and Satisfied **36%**Important and NOT Satisfied **10%**Not Important and Satisfied **35%**N/A

In-home personal care services

**34%**Important and Satisfied **18%**Important and NOT Satisfied **19%**Not Important and Satisfied **38%**N/A

Ability to participate in Congregate Meal Sites or receive Home Delivered Meals

**34%**Important and Satisfied **17%**Important and NOT Satisfied **9%**Not Important and Satisfied **38%**N/A

Ability to obtain help in applying for government programs

**31%**Important and Satisfied **36%**Important and NOT Satisfied **7%**Not Important and Satisfied **25%**N/A

**Elder Abuse-Scams- Financial Exploitation**

Are you or anyone that you know a victim of abuse?

**10%** Yes **90%**No

If yes, did you or the victim seek assistance?

**10%** Yes **90%** No

Are you or anyone that you know been a victim of a scam?

**26%**Yes **74%** No

Are you or anyone that you know had money taken without your/their permission?

**16%**Yes **84%**No

*Do you know where to get assistance if you or anyone that you know have been a victim of abuse, a scam, financial exploitation?*

**34%**Yes **66%**No

*If yes, where could you get assistance?*

|               |                             |                            |                 |             |
|---------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| <b>Police</b> | <b>Office for the Aging</b> | <b>Credit Card Company</b> | <b>Attorney</b> | <b>Bank</b> |
| <b>35%</b>    | <b>20%</b>                  | <b>6%</b>                  | <b>4%</b>       | <b>5%</b>   |

**If you are caring for another individual, please answer the following questions.**

For whom do you provide care?

44% Spouse   41% Parent   8% Adult Child (over 21)   7% Minor Aged Child (20 & younger)

**27% of the total respondents to the survey stated that they were a caregiver**

Does the individual for whom you care live in your home?

57% Yes   43% No

Does the individual have memory problems and/or dementia?

43% Yes   57% No

Do you feel overwhelmed and/or stressed in providing care?

52% Yes   48% No

**Where I turn for Help:**

If you, or someone you know, has been in the hospital in the past year, did you/they have the information and supports needed to return home?

43% Yes   21% No   24% Not applicable   12% Don't Know

Have you heard of "NY Connects", the local program that helps consumers with information, assistance and connections to needed long term services and supports?

31% Yes   63% No   6% Not applicable

**Health**

Are you or someone you are caring for managing any ongoing health condition?

**80% Yes**   **20% No**

Do you feel overwhelmed and/or stressed due to this condition?

**49% Yes**   **51% No**

Are you or someone you are living with have experienced?

Loss of a partner

**44% Yes                    56% No**

Loss of housing

**14% Yes                    86% No**

Difficulty managing everyday activities

**70% Yes                    30% No**

Have you felt sad in the last 6 months?

**58% Yes                    42% No**

If you answered yes, did you seek assistance?

**24% Yes                    76% No**

**Falls**

Do you have a fear of falling?

**56% Yes                    44% No**

Have you fallen in the last 6 months?

**32% Yes                    68% No**

**Legal Services**

Did you need Legal Assistance from an Attorney in the last 6 months?

**21% Yes                    79% No**

If yes what types of services did you need?

**80% Will/ Power of Attorney   19% Credit/financial issue   21% housing/real property  
14% medical bills                7% Family Court**

Where did you receive these services?

**16% Office for the Aging Legal Services   16% Legal Aid Society   68% Private Attorney**

**Demographics:**

Sex: **32% Male            67% Female**



Age: **3%** 55-59      **23%** 60-69      **39%** 70-79      **13%** 80-84      **22%** 85+

Persons living in your home, including yourself:

**46%** 1      **40%** 2      **9%** 3      **5%** 4+

Living Arrangements: **53%** Homeowner      **44%** Renter      **3%** Other

Income (per year):

1 person household: **20%** < \$11,491      **39%** \$11,491-\$22,980      **41%** > \$22,980  
 2 person household: **12%** < \$15,510      **27%** \$15,510-\$31,020      **61%** > \$31,020

**Is there anything else you'd like to tell the Office for Aging as they plan for future services in Herkimer County?**

|  |
|--|
| More Senior Housing<br>More Senior centers in Ilion<br>Activities for seniors  |
| I am currently driving my own car but am afraid to drive alone and if this car dies on me I have no \$ for another.  |
| Someone told me it would be a good idea if there would be a bus that also brings the seniors to Dr appointments even outside of Herkimer County.   |
| Mohawk 4 Silver Sneakers   |
| Post info online   |
| People like me need rides but there is nothing available. Only for poor people that have never worked or did anything they get it all. Catholic charities do help some.                                      |
| Thank you I will always help you as long as I got it   |
| Not really. But most of the time potatoes are half raw and garlic rolls. They put bread in paper by the time we get it it's dried up.  |
| Need to apply for HEAP and ADI's.  |
| Friend connections<br>Just people who want to visit  |
| Meals on wheels needs some way of exchange of info   |
| Yes the staff is doing a very good job the people are very nice. Thank you for delivering my meal.   |
| Need for transport such as out of county IE medical, VA visit, etc   |
| Help for getting new concrete ramps with railings, doing yard work, and shovel sidewalks in winter.<br>Someone to volunteer taking senior citizens in wheelchairs for walk around the block once in a while. |
| I like help with programs with phone scams, identity theft/ theft of services, and use of electronic devices (computers, phones, etc)  |
| I think letting elderly know charges for various services, like rides and some chores around the house. This would be very helpful.  |
| A senior citizen place to go like a community center where people can go to play cards or knit or sew. Or  |

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| have birthday parties or just visit.  |
| Please keep meals on wheels the food is very good. The staff is warm and friendly.  |
| More funding for bus trips for necessities and please.  |
| Make more transportation available we only have Thursday and Friday in Little Falls.  |
| Home cleaning help for those who don't meet criteria for home aide or long term care.   |
| There is a need for trained people to help folks stay in place. There is a need to be able to stay in their homes with minor assistance/ support. Wellness checks after hospital stays.   |
| Thank you for all you do, it's appreciated.   |
| I don't think you guys get paid enough for all that you do.   |
| I believe that the area lacks activities for seniors, support for seniors, and a variety of services for seniors. I do not have Medicaid and I am disappointed that I am unable to receive in-home care if needed. Those receiving Medicaid seem to have many more benefits. I believe that the area is lacking Services specifically for seniors. It would be wonderful to have a social center for seniors or special activities periodically that seniors would be able to attend. It would be a wonderful place to meet others. |
| If unable to drive, maybe a grocery store that delivers   |
| When my husband was alive, I needed help with caretaking services and I had a lot of difficulty obtaining assistance.   |
| Our governor is an embarrassment.   |
| We are currently active and reasonably healthy and doing fine. We do worry a little about the future if we should become unable to provide total care for ourselves as we live in a rural area with no services nearby. There are many others in our community who would benefit from additional help.  |
| I believe it is important to help people of all ages receive the best care they need in terms of meals, transportation, living arrangements, medical attention, and the ability to talk to someone about situations they are facing in their everyday lives.  |
| Heating and cooling assistant Programs, plowing of snow programs, cleaning services, laundry services, chair yoga, program for everyday help when caregiver can't be with you, landscaping services,  |
| Keep doing the good work that you do for the community each day.  |
| Suggest interconnected resources such as Arc, OPWDD, DSS when applying or inquiring for services for disabled siblings, etc   |
| It would be so great to have a senior center in Herkimer County. Older adults have such few options and such poor transportation in this county, it's really sad.   |
| Nobody there knows anything about the Medicaid office and nobody there knows anything about Medicare. no help whatsoever  |
| not at this time  |
| child care  |
| Transportation to appointments out of county would be very helpful because the majority of drs are in Oneida county(Utica area)   |
| One of most challenging aspects is convincing spouse I cannot manage myself, the car & house (bills, shopping, food prep, cleaning and yard) while also being nursemaid. Spouse cannot do most anything for self and insisting does not need in-home care yet will not discuss when/how to move from home to care facility. Could public service television could run informational series on recognizing signs of aging and types of help available?? Maybe if spouse came to own decision would be easier to address.             |
| Right now I'm doing my best to be independent. My future plans is NOT to move. BUT...looking ahead as I get older can be quite concerning. Be nice to have a "peace of mind" & "comfort" knowing I have County services to depend on. ESPECIALLY transportation to App'ts !   |

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| Our biggest concern is the lead service line to our house. Herkimer has become another Flint Michigan. All we get is letters. Soon we will need help buying and carrying in all the water we use.  |
| Health care and transportation with assistance is very poor in Herkimer county. Also, being able to afford medications, food and heat has gotten terrible in the past 3 years. We need to get rid of Democrats.  |
| There is NO transportation available unless you have Medicaid. i have enough income so do not have Medicaid... there are no transportation options for me!!  |
| Desperately need SNAP BENIFITS restored to previous levels of 291.00   |
| Now only getting 23.00 my rent has gone up 170.00.   |
| Meals on wheels should extend beyond Herkimer<br>Programs for window, insulation and siding to maintain home environment.<br>Tax services for >65  |
| No I think you really try to do the best you can.  |
| Your meals on wheels are a big help for me since losing my wife 4 1/2 years ago, I'm not a cook. I do think we need something similar to the old version of visiting nurses.   |
| I am a caregiver for my 84 yr old father who at this time is in rehab. I am having a hard time trying to get answers on how he is doing, if and when he will be able to go back to assisted living, etc. I get general answers when I am calling... am I not asking or forming the correct questions? I am at a loss.  |
| More senior housing options are needed. Not just low income, but median income as well. The ability to age in place doesn't have to be a person staying in their big home. Having nice apartment or townhome options would be great. It would also open up homes to young families.  |
| The office for the aging is the only agency that has the resources to assist the chronically ill and despite being below the age limit, I am often in need of the same exact services provided and cannot access them because of my age. At the same time I am referred to all of the resources tied to a office for the aging and need help gaining access because of my age and disability status. |
| Herkimer County needs affordable help in the home for caregivers. I'm told by the nursing home that there is a long waiting list in our county and I will probably not be able to receive help for my husband when he returns home.  |
| senior centers, have trips, companion service  |
| We need more access to services in northern Herkimer county.   |
| I prefer to remain in my home for as long as possible.   |
| It would be helpful to have a list of capable, honest, reasonable cost repairmen. It is hard to find someone and if they say they'll come, sometimes they do not show up.  |
| Assistance with home repairs is a big concern.   |
| There needs to be access to reliable transportation  |
| Why is it so hard for seniors that are just a few dollars over the limit to receive heap or food stamps when people on welfare get it all and never contribute a penny to society  |
| My daughter in Schuyler is a big help to me.   |
| I help care for my grandparents and they are not eligible for meals on wheels because they live just outside of town. They also qualify for a home healthcare aid but it has been hard to find good reliable people.   |
| It would be helpful to have transportation available to places outside of Herkimer County, such as to Bassett in Cooperstown.  |
| Thank you  |
| The meals from mom's meals are a help but there quality and selections leaves a lot to be desired. If they are shipped via UPS or Fed Ex they tend to come damaged. Meals on Wheels is a lot better. 5 meals a week  |

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| is unacceptable. In home nursing, P.T. and O.T. is a big need up north. Wheel chair transportation is another need.  |
| Would like someone with a sense of humor   |
| Seniors needs individuals who can help with home repairs, yard work and snow removal.  |
| How do I file for help due to Coronavirus shutdown, had to quit my job due to underlying health problems, been in self quarantine since 3/18/2020!!!   |
| Please find more in-home service providers for people with chronic health conditions.  |
| Need transportation services in Our county   |
| Need for places for older people to get out & socialize  |
| Low cost transportation to drs. appts. and for shopping are of particular interest.  |
| Need better psychiatric services and counseling for elder adults.  |
| Herkimer county has been of absolutely no assistance to my mother. She has dementia and I tried to get help. She was assessed a couple of times and I was told she was ok. Her diabetes was out of control. Blood sugar between 500 and 1000 and I was told she was fine by the case worker. The fact that she was having bowel movements all over the house. Not eating properly, unable to clean herself or the home was not enough to obtain help for her. Honestly it was a joke and a waste of time to even call and ask for help.  |
| I have ALS   |
| Technology is extremely challenging for us older folks! Self-registers at stores... Also, high cable bills when tv main entertainment... Another thing that's troubling: All this incoming mail that looks like it's from the govt about our Medicare, etc (small fine print says non-govt agency!!)   |
| Affordable Transportation is needed for elderly in rural areas.  |
| I very much appreciate the ride program  |
| Although I am able to take care of myself NOW, I do worry about the future because I'm single, no family and live alone. I don't trust hiring strangers to come in and help, just because there's no guarantee I wouldn't be taken advantage of. Recently hired a guy to clear some land, sent him a hefty deposit to rent the equipment, but he stalled for months, and rather than go after him for the deposit, I just wrote it off. Hate asking neighbors or friends for help. Not sure what the solution is, but I know I'm not the only senior who wants dependable, bonded help so we don't have to give up our independence. |
| NO   |
| Not eligible Medicaid services, only have Medicare. System not fair. I would have to sign over my house for services. The home I worked my whole life for.   |
| No   |
| There needs to be more handicap accessible housing that is not assisted living or a nursing home. My parents are able to live on their own, but there are no places with handicap accessible bathrooms and entrances. They are basically living in a tiny, expensive apartment without the basic comforts of coming in and out of the building themselves or looking out the window. We have a major lack of suitable senior housing in our area!  |
| Needs something in place for rural members of the county.  |
| No thanks  |
| You should mail information- list of services offered to Herk residents since they may not know who to call. My mother is elderly and lives alone. Sometime she does not know who to contact and trust to do home improvements etc. if she could get a list of phone numbers of reliable sources I'm sure she and other residents could use that information. Also there doesn't seem to be any activities she could take part in as a lifelong Herkimer resident it would be nice for her to mingle   |

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| More/better transportation needed for Seniors  |
| I live in the country and am doing OK at 64, but fear my future ability to keep up my property should I get any weaker.  |
| Was concerned about transportation and housing for the elderly in rural parts of Herkimer County.  |
| You're doing a great job! Now let's get the governor to increase aging program budgets.  |
| transportation is a huge need. Unable to get to medical appts due to wheelchair.   |
| Thank you for all you currently do.  |
| When my mother was alive she was ineligible for many programs because we live a mile and a half from the line  |
| Need providers for nursing care, pt, ot especially specializing in stroke patients   |
| Need opportunities to socialize and not be alone.  |
| Mohawk has no senior housing. Sometime in the future this must be addressed. We stay in our homes longer than we should. If there was a senior center for us we could free up homes for the young families |
| This survey is VERY poorly worded!!!   |
| How to get a ride to doctor appointments   |
| We need more services in the rural areas. Such as senior groups. Transportation and help with household. We need affordable housing.   |
| No thanks  |
| Old Forge and TOW needs home care, hospice and telemedicine.   |
| We need a physical place to gather for activities in our county and then we need transportation to get to it. So many of my friends are lonely and sad.  |
| Have Medicare pay for dental work.   |