Advocacy for Older Adults at a State Unit on Aging

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Advocacy for Older Adults at a State Unit on Aging
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Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability (TCAD)

In comparison to national averages, Tennessee’s older adult population consistently ranks poorly on measures of overall health, including number of chronic conditions (37th), physical inactivity (49th), and number of reported falls (39th). [1,2,3]

To address the impact of falls on older Tennesseans, TCAD received a 3-year Administration for Community Living (ACL) grant in 2018 to implement an evidence-based falls prevention program, Stay Active & Independent for Life (SAIL), throughout all regions of the state.

Identified needs related to SAIL include:
- Administrative activities supporting grant management
- Recruitment and training of qualified instructors
- Organization and analysis of participant data
- Efforts to promote program sustainability, as ACL program funding ends in June 2021
- Supporting implementation of other TCAD initiatives, including a COVID-19 vaccination campaign for older adults

Project Goals
- To support TCAD’s efforts to promote quality-of-life among the state’s older adults
- To contribute to implementation and management of TCAD’s ACL-funded falls prevention program, SAIL
- To develop scholarly skills related to the grant process
- To develop a deeper understanding about state-administered, community-level interventions for the older adult population

Outcomes
- In collaboration with agency staff, completion of a 2021 ACL grant proposal for funds to sustain statewide falls prevention programs
- Enhanced understanding about the grant process through various activities and contact with agency staff, NCOA, & ACL project managers
- Engagement in day-to-day grant management activities, including data management and reporting
- Participation in SAIL leader training; acquired SAIL certification
- Collaboration with SAIL Master Trainers on creation of training video
- Organization and analysis of SAIL participant Fitness Check data
- Presentation of data analysis to SAIL leaders and Master Trainers: describing effectiveness of programming in TN and demonstrating how data collection supports program sustainability
- Research & identification of 500+ new organizations to recruit from for SAIL program participation
- Creation of resources to support current and future efforts to recruit qualified candidates as SAIL instructors
- Volunteer participation in TCAD programming, including a telephone reassurance program for older adults experiencing social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Assistance with COVID-19 vaccination campaign for older adults, including creation of resources, data processing, and volunteer training
- Enhanced understanding about the aging network and how population-based health initiatives are funded and implemented at the state and local level

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References available upon request.