



La Crosse County 2025-2027 Aging Plan

DRAFT

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Executive Summary

The Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of La Crosse County, fully integrated with the aging unit, is committed to addressing the evolving needs of older adults and their caregivers through its aging plan for 2025-2027. Guided by extensive community engagement—via surveys and listening sessions—the ADRC/aging unit has prioritized the most pressing issues identified by older adults and their caregivers. These include the need for accessible, affordable healthcare, improved transportation options, flexible caregiver support, and expanded opportunities for social engagement. These concerns are not only immediate but will continue to grow as the older adult population in La Crosse County is projected to increase 11 percent by 2040.

Older adults expressed an urgent need for better transportation options to maintain access to healthcare and social services, especially in rural areas where services are more limited. Caregivers voiced the necessity of more flexible, tailored support, including one-on-one counseling, respite care, and resources for managing conditions like early-onset dementia. Many caregivers reported feeling under-supported and sought clearer guidance on available ADRC services. Additionally, older adults highlighted a desire for more technology education, fall prevention programs, and diverse physical activities to maintain independence and quality of life. The feedback overwhelmingly emphasized the importance of aging in place, which requires stronger support systems to help older adults remain in their homes and communities.

In response, the ADRC/aging unit has developed targeted goals to address these expressed needs. These include improving the transportation system through partnerships, expanding dementia-friendly practices at all congregate dining sites, and reviving the Strong Seniors fitness program to promote physical and social well-being. Moreover, the ADRC/aging unit aims to enhance peer caregiver support networks to provide more comprehensive help to those caring for loved ones with various conditions.

Despite challenges such as funding limitations, workforce shortages, and disparities in urban and rural service access, the ADRC/aging unit remains committed to fostering partnerships and advocating for policies that expand resources for the aging population. The needs expressed by older adults and their caregivers serve as the foundation for the ADRC's/aging unit's approach, ensuring that programs and services are responsive, equitable, and impactful. Through this aging plan, the ADRC/aging unit will continue to evolve its services, thus its mission and vision of empowering older adults and caregivers to live with dignity, independence, and inclusion in the La Crosse County community.

Context

According to the U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2018-2022 Estimates, two percent of Wisconsin's older adult population, 60 years of age and older, reside in La Crosse County. Twenty-three (23) percent of La Crosse County's total population is 60 years of age and older, reflecting a six percent growth among this population since the U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2015-19 Five-year Estimates.

Among those 65 years of age and older residing in La Crosse County (U.S. Census):

- Majority (97%) are white/Caucasian, not Hispanic.
- Slightly more than half (55%) identify as female.
- Slightly less than one-third (31%) have a disability.
- About half (53%) are married with spouse present.
- Nearly one-third (30%) live alone.
- Less than one-fourth (15%) are employed.
- Less than 10 percent (8%) are living in poverty.

Geographically, La Crosse County, the most populous county on Wisconsin's western border, is made up of 18 subdivisions consisting of cities, towns, and villages over a total of 480 square miles. Half of these subdivisions are considered urban as defined by the U.S. Census, the other half, rural. The majority (73%) of individuals 60 years and older live within urban areas; however, more than half (63%) live outside the City of La Crosse. The top five most populous areas where older adults reside include:

- City of La Crosse (37% of La Crosse County's 60 and older population)
- City of Onalaska (23% of La Crosse County's 60 and older population)
- Village of Holmen (8% of La Crosse County's 60 and older population)
- Town of Shelby (6% of La Crosse County's 60 and older population)
- Town of Campbell (5% of La Crosse County's 60 and older population)

It is important to note, between 2025 and 2040, La Crosse County's population of individuals 60 and older is projected to grow by 11 percent, ultimately becoming about one-fourth (28%) of La Crosse County's total population. Moreover, it is projected that there will be a total of 35,430 La Crosse County residents 60 years of age and older in 2030; 37,200 in 2040 (5% growth). These population changes will bring about unique challenges, as well as opportunities, which reinforces the importance of planning.

As La Crosse County's population ages, the current and future needs of older adults and their caregivers are becoming more complex and diverse. The ADRC of La Crosse County/aging unit is at the forefront of addressing these needs, focusing on enhancing the quality of life for older adults while navigating challenges and opportunities presented.

Currently, there is a significant need for access to essential services like healthcare, transportation, and social engagement. As individuals age, maintaining independence becomes increasingly important, and the ADRC/aging unit plays a crucial role in providing the resources that enable older adults to live independently for as long as possible. Home and community-based services, such as in-home care and meal delivery, are essential for supporting aging in place, a preference shared by many older adults. Additionally, ensuring access to healthcare through transportation assistance and telehealth options is vital for managing chronic conditions and promoting overall health.

Looking to the future, these needs will continue to grow as the older adult population expands. The demand for affordable and accessible housing will become more pronounced, requiring a concerted effort to develop housing options that allow older adults

to live comfortably and safely within their communities. The integration of technology into caregiving, healthcare, and social services will also become increasingly important. Ensuring that older adults have the skills and support to use technology effectively will be key to reducing isolation, improving access to services, and enhancing overall well-being.

However, the ADRC/aging unit faces several critical issues and challenges in meeting these needs. Funding limitations are a significant concern, as the demand for services outpaces available resources. Without sufficient funding, it will be challenging to maintain the current level of services, let alone expand them to meet future needs. Workforce shortages also present a challenge, with difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified staff in caregiving and healthcare roles potentially impacting the quality of services.

Disparities in access to services between urban and rural areas add another layer of complexity. Ensuring that all older adults, regardless of location, have equitable access to the services they need is essential for promoting health equity and improving outcomes. The increasing complexity of health needs as the population ages requires more specialized and coordinated care, necessitating close collaboration between the ADRC/aging unit, healthcare providers, and community organizations.

Despite these challenges, there are numerous opportunities for the ADRC/aging unit to enhance its services and impact. Strengthening partnerships with local organizations, healthcare providers, and volunteers can improve service delivery and expand the ADRC's reach. Developing innovative programs that leverage technology, such as online caregiver support groups, can address emerging needs and provide more flexible solutions for older adults and their caregivers. Engaging the community in advocacy and volunteerism is another key opportunity. By raising awareness of the needs and contributions of older adults, the ADRC/aging unit can foster a more supportive and inclusive community environment. Additionally, policy advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels can lead to systemic changes that benefit the older adult population, such as increased funding for aging services and support for aging in place initiatives.

In conclusion, while the current and future needs of older adults and caregivers present significant challenges, they also offer the ADRC/aging unit the opportunity to innovate and lead in creating a supportive environment for aging. By focusing on collaboration, community engagement, and proactive planning, the ADRC of La Crosse County can continue to enhance the quality of life for older adults in La Crosse County, ensuring that they are valued, supported, and able to live with dignity and independence.

The Aging Network

The Aging Network is a network of and for older adults, comprised of local public and private service providers who work to empower and enable older adults as well as ensure existing service systems are responsive and accessible. The ADRC of La Crosse County, as part of the Aging Network, is a Section of the La Crosse County Human Services Department that consists of three integrated units: 1) ADRC, 2) Aging, and 3) Adult Protective Services (APS). Services provided by the ADRC include

information and assistance, options counseling, elder and disability benefit counseling, access to long-term care programs/services, services to people with dementia, transition services for youth, caregiver counseling and support, health promotion and early intervention programs/services, nutrition services and transportation.

To support its efforts, the ADRC of La Crosse County actively seeks and works to maintain a variety of collaborative partnerships. Examples of these collaborative partnerships, contributing to the Aging Network, include but not limited to volunteers, actively providing their time and talent to programs such as the La Crosse County Senior Nutrition Program; local municipalities, particularly Parks and Recreation Departments; senior/community centers; local universities and colleges; other County Sections and Departments such as Economic Support and Veterans Services; a variety of service providers, businesses and professional organizations; faith-based community; and local coalitions/taskforces such as the La Crosse County Falls Prevention Coalition, Caregiver Coalition, and Dementia Friendly Coalition. Partner interaction varies from working on projects or community initiatives; developing, promoting and/or facilitating programming; and/or sharing information and making referrals as appropriate.

Older adults, and their support networks, are also a critical part of the Aging Network. In addition to the ADRC Advisory Committee and Nutrition Advisory Council, which membership consists of all older adults, the ADRC of La Crosse County actively seeks input of older adults. Input is welcome anytime. A cornerstone of the Older American Act is that older adults have full participation in the planning and operation of community-based services. Opportunities will continue to be available to be part of planning.

Development of the Aging Plan

This section of the plan provides evidence of a commitment by the ADRC of La Crosse County/aging unit to engage with the public in the development of the aging plan.

Community Engagement

The ADRC of La Crosse County/aging unit offered a variety of community engagement opportunities between March and May 2024. A 12-question survey was administered and distributed via mail and electronically, which generated a total of 1,125 responses, and several listening sessions were held at various locations in the County, attended by a total of 96 individuals. Additional information regarding each of these methods, including partners and outreach done to solicit responses, can be found in the Appendices. A *Community Engagement Report* was completed for each community engagement method.

Through the community engagement process, the following issues, challenges, and opportunities were identified as most critical to older adults and their caregivers:

- *Healthcare:* Accessible, quality, and affordable healthcare is top priority.
- *Transportation:* Improved and more affordable transportation options are essential, with concerns about parking issues at current and temporary locations.

- *Caregiver Support:* There is a significant need for flexible programs tailored to caregivers, including 1:1 guidance and professional counseling. Misconceptions about ADRC services and lack of support for early onset dementia caregivers were noted.
- *Fall Prevention and Brain Health:* Fall prevention and brain health, including dementia support, are critical concerns requiring targeted programs and resources.
- *Technology and Education:* Educational programs to improve technology use among older adults are needed, along with stronger community presence and support.
- *Exercise and Activities:* More accessible and varied exercise programs and older adult-focused activities are desired to maintain physical health and well-being.
- *Financial Planning and Respite:* Caregivers need more information on financial planning and varied respite options, including full days or overnight stays.
- *Community Services:* A desire for a senior nutrition site on the north side of La Crosse County and broader dietary accommodations was expressed, along with interest in healthier eating habits and a more inclusive site with flexible hours.
- *Communication and Outreach:* Improved dissemination of transportation information, more activities for those over 60, and better community through community centers and local libraries are needed.

Engaging community members in the aging plan development process played a crucial role in shaping our approach and priorities. The feedback and insights gathered through surveys and listening sessions revealed key areas of concern and opportunities for improvement. This input guided the development of targeted initiatives aimed at addressing pressing needs and enhancing services for older adults and caregivers in La Crosse County. By incorporating community perspectives, we have ensured that our plan is responsive to the actual needs of our population, fostering a more inclusive and effective strategy for supporting their well-being. The *Goals and Strategies* section details the specific goals developed from this engagement, outlining our commitment to addressing these identified priorities and making meaningful improvements in our community.

Partners and Resources

Input collected from the community engagement process was presented to the ADRC of La Crosse County Advisory Committee (in-person) and Health & Human Services Board (via written report) in June 2024, with a focus on key trends and priorities. Relevant input was also shared with various community partners when it was beneficial to goal development (e.g., La Crosse Area Planning Committee regarding the OAA Title III-B Supportive Services goal). It is important to recognize that the ADRC/aging unit cannot address all issues independently, and some challenges fall outside its direct scope. Therefore, active collaboration, coordination, and resource sharing with partners are essential to effectively meet the needs of our community.

In general, as noted in the *Context* section, the ADRC of La Crosse County/aging unit actively seeks and maintains a wide range of collaborative partnerships to support its efforts. These partnerships, which contribute to the Aging Network, include volunteers who provide time and talent to programs like the La Crosse County Senior Nutrition Program, local municipalities (particularly Parks and Recreation Departments), senior

and community centers, local universities and colleges, and other County Sections and Departments such as Economic Support and Veterans Services. Additionally, a variety of service providers, businesses, professional organizations, the faith-based community, and local coalitions/task forces (e.g., La Crosse County Falls Prevention Coalition, Caregiver Coalition, Dementia Friendly Coalition) play vital roles. Partner interaction involves collaborating on projects or community initiatives, developing, and promoting programs, facilitating activities, and sharing information or making referrals as needed. These community partners will continue to be important stakeholders, requiring ongoing interaction and coordination throughout the three-year aging plan.

Public Hearings

[To be completed after public hearings are held.]

Goals and Strategies

This section of the aging plan describes the goals, strategies, and tools to document efforts and accomplishments for the plan period of 2025-2027. At least one goal is required to address an emerging need, a quality issue, or a gap in the services system for each of the Older Americans Act (OAA) Title III program areas: III-B Supportive Services, III-C1 and/or III-C2 Nutrition Program, III-D Evidence-Based Health Promotion, and III-E Caregiver Support. In addition, there are three aging network values: person centeredness, equity, and advocacy. At least one goal is required to address each of these, either as a stand-alone goal or within one of the OAA Title III program areas mentioned above. The next few pages consist of goal writing templates.

Goal Writing Template 1

<p>Older Americans Act Program Area:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Title III-B Supportive Services</p>
<p>Aging Network Value:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Person centeredness</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Equity</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advocacy</p>
<p>Goal Statement:</p> <p>To initiate system change to improve transportation for older adults in La Crosse County. Given the current complexities and limited accessibility of the transportation system, the ADRC of La Crosse County aims to collaborate with community partners. Together, we will enhance the availability of transportation options and increase awareness of the critical need for reliable, affordable services. This initiative seeks to alleviate strain on the ADRC's current capacity, ensuring sustainable support for vulnerable populations across the county.</p>
<p>Strategies:</p> <p>To achieve the goal, the ADRC of La Crosse County, at minimum, will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess and collect data: Identify current transportation services, gaps, and areas for improvement. Collect data on the specific transportation needs of older adults.• Establish partnerships: Form a transportation taskforce with representatives from key stakeholders to guide the initiative and ensure diverse perspectives across system.• Pilot innovative solutions: Brainstorm new transportation options, tailored to the needs of older adults, to enhance service delivery throughout La Crosse County.• Increase awareness and advocacy: Launch a public awareness campaign to highlight the importance of specialized transportation and the needs of older adults. Advocate for policy changes at the local and state levels to support sustainable funding.

- Train and build capacity: Provide training for transportation providers on serving older adults, emphasizing sensitivity and accessibility. Build capacity of ADRC and partner organizations to manage and coordinate expanded transportation services effectively.
- Monitor and evaluate: Implement monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress and impact of initiative. Use feedback from riders and other stakeholders to continuously improve and refine transportation services throughout the county.

Tools to Document Efforts and Accomplishments:

- To document **how much** has been done, the ADRC of La Crosse County will conduct an initial assessment of current transportation services, collect baseline data on usage, accessibility, and user satisfaction. We will track key performance indicators, including the number of new transportation options introduced and partnerships established. Detailed logs of all activities, such as community meetings, training sessions, and pilot programs, will be maintained. A centralized database will record all relevant data, ensuring comprehensive and organized documentation of our efforts.
- To document **how well** it has been done, the ADRC of La Crosse County will implement regular feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and focus groups, for both users and transportation providers. Observational assessments and peer reviews will be utilized to gauge the effectiveness and efficiency of these services.
- To assess whether anyone is **better off**, the ADRC of La Crosse County will distribute surveys to measure changes in user satisfaction, accessibility, and overall wellbeing. We will conduct follow-up interviews and focus groups with older adults to gather qualitative insights into their experiences. By comparing this data over time, we can determine the impact of our transportation initiatives and identify any positive changes in the lives of those who use/need transportation services.

Goal Writing Template 2

<p>Older Americans Act Program Area:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Title III-C1 and/or III-C2 Nutrition Program</p>
<p>Aging Network Value:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Person centeredness</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Equity</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy</p>
<p>Goal Statement:</p> <p>To ensure that all congregate dining sites within the La Crosse County Nutrition Program are dementia-friendly by December 31, 2027. This transition aims to create inclusive, supportive, and safe environments for individuals living with dementia and their caregivers. By implementing comprehensive training for staff and volunteers, enhancing site accessibility, and incorporating dementia-friendly practices, we strive to promote dignity, independence, and quality of life for all participants. Our commitment includes ongoing evaluation and collaboration with community partners to sustain these efforts and adapt to emerging needs.</p>
<p>Strategies:</p> <p>To achieve the goal, the ADRC of La Crosse County, at minimum, will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Train staff and volunteers: Partner with ADRC dementia care specialists to provide training on dementia awareness, communication techniques, and behavior management. Implement best practices for creating a supportive dining environment.• Enhance physical environment: Evaluate existing dining sites for dementia-friendly features and areas for improvement. Complete site modifications and/or safety enhancements, including adjustment and/or development of policies and practices.• Adapt programming: Develop dementia-friendly menus and incorporate flexibility in meal options, as appropriate. Introduce activities/opportunities tailored to individuals with dementia and/or establish volunteer buddy system to assist during mealtimes.

- Monitor and evaluate: Regularly review and assess the effectiveness of dementia-friendly initiatives and monitor participant satisfaction and engagement levels.

Tools to Document Efforts and Accomplishments:

- To document **how much** has been done, the ADRC of La Crosse County will maintain a detailed project timeline and milestone tracker. This document will list each milestone, such as staff/volunteer training sessions and implementation of physical modifications. For each milestone, the date of completion, the number of participants involved, and specific actions taken will be recorded. Additionally, we will keep comprehensive logs for each training session, including attendance, topics covered, and any follow-up actions required. Site modification checklists will detail the specific changes made at each location, ensuring a clear and organized record of all program enhancements.
- To document **how well** it has been done, the ADRC of La Crosse County will use a combination of quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods. Pre- and post-training assessments will be administered to all staff and volunteers to measure the improvement in their knowledge and skills regarding dementia care. Environmental audits will be performed at each site to verify that the modifications meet dementia-friendly standards. Participant and caregiver feedback will be collected through surveys and structured interviews to gauge satisfaction and identify areas for improvement.
- To assess whether anyone is **better off**, the ADRC of La Crosse County will collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data. Surveys with participants and caregivers will be conducted to gather feedback on their experiences and the perceived benefits of the dementia-friendly environments. Case studies and testimonials will be documented to highlight significant individual improvements to illustrate the overall impact on participants and their caregivers.

Goal Writing Template 3

<p>Older Americans Act Program Area:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Title III-D Evidence-Based Health Promotion</p>
<p>Aging Network Value:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Person centeredness</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Equity</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy</p>
<p>Goal Statement:</p> <p>To reinstate a program like Strong Seniors, which was widely attended by older adults in La Crosse County prior to the pandemic, and actively facilitate the StrongBodies program across La Crosse County, empowering older adults to engage in physical activities, build strength, and foster social connections. By collaborating with community partners and/or volunteers, organizing accessible sessions, and promoting inclusivity, we aim to enhance the overall well-being of older adults. Through this initiative, we aspire to create a supportive environment where participants can thrive physically, mentally, and socially.</p>
<p>Strategies:</p> <p>To achieve the goal, the ADRC of La Crosse County, at minimum, will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify and secure facilitators: Recruit qualified individuals with interest in facilitating the StrongBodies program and assist with completing facilitator training, if needed.• Identify and secure locations: Partner with community centers, senior centers, schools, churches, and other accessible venues across La Crosse County to host program activities. Ensure locations are accessible via public transportation.• Market and outreach: Implement a comprehensive marketing and outreach strategy to raise awareness about the program and encourage participation from a diverse group of older adults. Highlight the availability of multiple locations.

- Monitor and evaluation: Establish metrics for success and regularly evaluate to ensure it meets the needs of participants and adapts to any changes in demand or feedback. Adjust the number and locations of program sites based on attendance.

Tools to Document Efforts and Accomplishments:

- To document **how much** has been done, the ADRC of La Crosse County will collect/track baseline data, documenting the number of initial participants in the StrongBodies program and gathering demographic information such as age, gender, location, and health status. The ADRC of La Crosse County will also actively record enrollment numbers, the total number of classes and sessions held, and maintain attendance records for each session at all locations. Additionally, the number and types of locations utilized will be monitored to ensure accessibility, in addition to the frequency of classes offered each year, as well as the total hours of programming provided each week.
- To document **how well** it has been done, the ADRC of La Crosse County will collect and analyze participant feedback through regular surveys and questionnaires on satisfaction. Instructor performance will also be assessed through participant feedback to ensure high standards of delivery. The *StrongBodies Participant End of Session Survey* will be used to capture additional thoughts on the participant experience with the program, the instructor, and what impact the program had on their health and well-being.
- To assess whether anyone is **better off**, the ADRC of La Crosse County will use the strategies referenced above to actively evaluate the program's impact on health and wellness, including social engagement via participant reports of an enhanced sense of community and social connectedness. Success stories and testimonials from participants will also be collected to provide qualitative evidence of the program's benefits, in addition to community feedback from local partners and stakeholders to obtain additional insights into the program's broader impact on the older adult community.

Goal Writing Template 4

<p>Older Americans Act Program Area:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Title III-E Caregiver Supports</p>
<p>Aging Network Value:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Person centeredness</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Equity</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy</p>
<p>Goal Statement:</p> <p>To enhance and expand the peer caregiver support program to include caregivers of all conditions, increase volunteer participation, and boost visibility and usage. Broadening the scope ensures wider support and inclusivity. Enhancing volunteer recruitment and training will improve the quality and effectiveness of peer support, aiding the efforts of the ADRC of La Crosse County’s Caregiver Support Specialist (CSS). These improvements will provide comprehensive support, alleviate stress, and enhance the wellbeing of caregivers and care recipients. An expanded peer support network allows the CCS to extend reach and impact, ensuring more caregivers receive needed help despite the limits of a single FTE position.</p>
<p>Strategies:</p> <p>To achieve the goal, the ADRC of La Crosse County, at minimum, will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Align with Causeway Caregivers: Coordinate with Causeway Caregivers to ensure a unified approach to program expansion and volunteer recruitment. Conduct regular meetings and planning sessions to maintain consistency and foster strong partnership.• Expand scope: Update program guidelines to include all types of caregivers. Develop and deliver comprehensive training for volunteers to handle diverse scenarios.• Increase volunteers: Partner with the La Crosse County Caregiver Coalition, healthcare providers, community organizations, and the faith community to recruit volunteers. Highlight impact and value of volunteering through success stories and testimonials.

- **Boost visibility:** Launch a promotional campaign using digital marketing, community events, and partnerships with local media. Distribute materials and host informational sessions at healthcare facilities, community centers, and other local organizations.
- **Augment ADRC role:** Leverage the enhanced peer support network to provide supplemental assistance to caregivers, allowing the Caregiver Support Specialist to manage more cases effectively and focus on those requiring more intensive support.

Tools to Document Efforts and Accomplishments:

- To document **how much** has been done, the ADRC of La Crosse County will collect initial data on program usage, volunteer participation, and caregiver satisfaction. Key performance indicators, such as the number of active volunteers, caregivers served, and support session frequency, will measure our efforts. We will log all activities, including training sessions, support meetings, and promotional events. A centralized database, such as Excel, will be used to record volunteer hours, caregiver interactions, and resources provided, ensuring all data is organized and easily accessible.
- To document **how well** it has been done, the ADRC of La Crosse County will use regular feedback surveys for caregivers and volunteers. Periodic evaluations of volunteer training will ensure they meet diverse needs. Observational assessments and peer reviews will monitor support session effectiveness, providing insights into how well the program is performing and identify areas for improvement.
- To assess whether anyone is **better off**, the ADRC of La Crosse County will develop and distribute pre- and post-participation surveys to measure changes in stress levels, satisfaction, and perceived support. Follow-up interviews or focus groups with caregivers will gather qualitative data on their experiences. Additionally, monitoring health indicators like mental and physical health status, and quality of life, will provide insights into the program's impact on caregivers' overall wellbeing.

Program Advancement

Community Engagement and Public Input

The ADRC of La Crosse County/aging unit enhanced the amount and quality of community engagement and public input into the aging plan by conducting a comprehensive survey and holding listening sessions. These efforts gathered direct feedback from older adults, caregivers, and community stakeholders, ensuring that a wide range of voices were heard. The survey provided valuable quantitative data, while the listening sessions offered more in-depth, qualitative discussions, enabling a thorough understanding of the community's needs and priorities.

To support these efforts, reminders about the engagement opportunities were shared in the *La Crosse Senior Life* newspaper and promoted through a local news channel. Community partners were also encouraged to spread the word, broadening outreach, and ensuring that diverse individuals had the chance to participate. This combination of strategies ensured that public input was gathered effectively and incorporated meaningfully into the development of responsive programs and services.

Moving forward, the ADRC/aging unit will build on these efforts by increasing ongoing interaction with community members through a variety of strategies. Regularly scheduled community meetings could provide more frequent and accessible opportunities for engagement. Expanding the use of newsletters, social media, and partnerships with local organizations would ensure timely communication and increase visibility of aging programs and services. Additionally, establishing feedback loops and continuing to offer educational workshops would further strengthen connections, allowing the ADRC/aging unit to continuously adapt and improve its services based on community input.

Title III and Title VI Coordination

The ADRC/aging unit has made efforts to engage and create partnerships with Older American Act Title VI to increase opportunities for tribal nation members to utilize services. While there has been no formal engagement, the ADRC/aging unit remains committed to building meaningful relationships and understanding the unique needs of the tribal community. The ADRC/aging unit recognizes that this is an ongoing process and are open to exploring new ways to connect and collaborate, ensuring that tribal national members have full access to the services and resources they need.

Aging Unit Integration and Collaboration

In La Crosse County, the aging unit is fully integrated with the ADRC, allowing for seamless coordination to meet the needs of older adults and their caregivers. This integration ensures that services are streamlined, reducing duplication of efforts, and improving access to information, support, and resources. By working as one unit, the ADRC/aging unit can provide comprehensive assistance that addresses a broad spectrum of needs, from nutrition programs and caregiving support to health promotion and long-term care options. This collaborative approach enables the ADRC/aging unit to respond effectively and efficiently to the needs of older adults and their caregivers.

Emergency Preparedness

While the ADRC/aging unit does not have a formalized emergency preparedness plan, the importance of ensuring continuity of aging program operations and essential services during crisis situations is recognized. The COVID-19 public health emergency highlighted the critical need for adaptability and coordination. During that time, the ADRC/aging unit quickly implemented safety measures, transitioned to virtual service delivery, and worked closely with local partners (e.g., municipalities, libraries, transportation providers, news/radio, etc.) and public health agency to maintain services such as meal delivery, information and assistance, and caregiver support.

These experiences have provided valuable lessons on how to effectively respond to emergencies, and the ADRC/aging unit will work toward developing a comprehensive emergency preparedness plan. Moving forward, the ADRC/aging unit will build on the partnerships formed and the strategies that proved successful during the pandemic, ensuring that older adults and caregivers continue to receive uninterrupted services in future crises.

Organizational Structure and Leadership of the Aging Unit

This section of the aging plan describes the organizational structure and leadership of the aging unit, integrated with the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC).

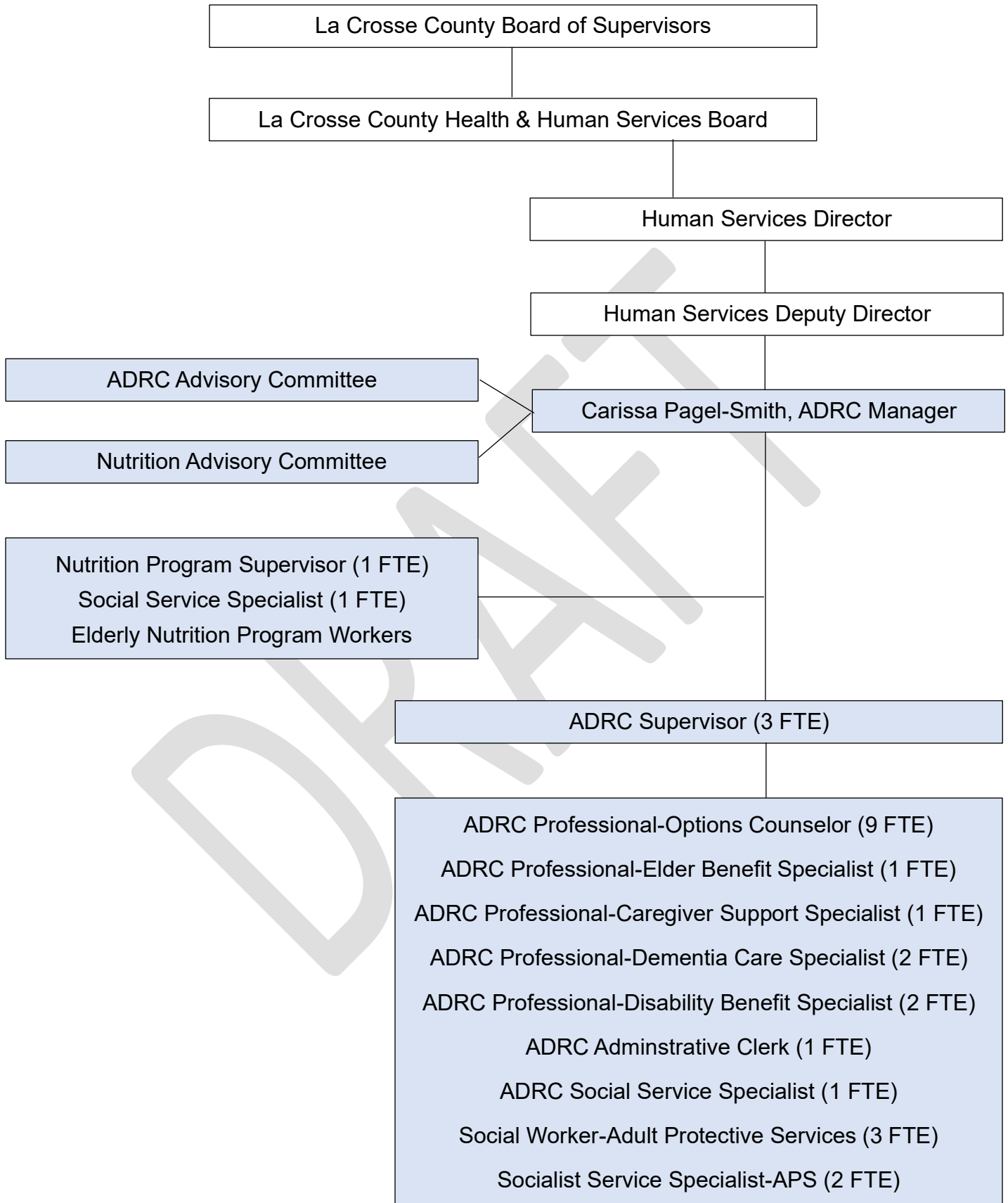
Primary Contact

Questions or comments related to the 2025-2027 Aging Plan may be directed to:

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Organizational Chart of the Aging Unit

The next page provides an organizational chart that depicts the place of the aging unit, policy-making body, and advisory committee, in relation to the county government.



Aging Unit Coordination with the Aging and Disability Resource Center

Effective January 1, 2016, the La Crosse County Aging Unit integrated with the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of La Crosse County. The ADRC of La Crosse County (single county) is a Section of La Crosse County Human Services that consists of three units: 1) ADRC, 2) aging services, 3) Adult Protective Services (APS).

Statutory Requirements for the Structure of the Aging Unit

Chapter 46.82 of the Wisconsin Statutes sets certain legal requirements for aging units.

Organizational structure: Choose the option that represents the organizational structure of the aging unit.	Check one
(1) An agency of county/tribal government with the primary purpose of administering programs for older individuals of the county/tribe.	<input type="checkbox"/>
(2) A unit, within a county/tribal department with the primary purpose of administering programs for older individuals of the county/tribe.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(3) A private, nonprofit corporation, as defined in s. 181.0103 (17).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Composition of the policy-making body: Choose the option that represents the composition of the policy-making body.	Check one
For an aging unit that is described in (1) or (2) above, organized as a committee of the county board of supervisors/tribal council, composed of supervisors and, advised by an advisory committee, appointed by the county board/tribal council. Older individuals shall constitute at least 50% of the membership of the advisory committee and individuals who are elected to any office may not constitute 50% or more of the membership of the advisory committee.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
For an aging unit that is described in (1) or (2) above, composed of individuals of recognized ability and demonstrated interest in services for older individuals. Older individuals shall constitute at least 50% of the membership of this commission and individuals who are elected to any office may not constitute 50% or more of the membership of this commission.	<input type="checkbox"/>
For an aging unit that is described in (3) above, the board of directors of the private, nonprofit corporation. Older individuals shall constitute at least 50% of the membership of this commission and individuals who are elected to any office may not constitute 50% or more of the membership of this commission.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Full-time aging director: The law requires that the aging unit have a full-time aging director.	Check one
The aging unit has a full-time aging director as required by law.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The aging unit does not have a full-time aging director as required by law.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Policy-Making Body

The policy-making body, also called the commission on aging, must approve the aging plan. In La Crosse County, the Health and Human Services Board serves as the policy-making body and its current chairperson is Dillon Mader. A summary of community engagement feedback, along with a draft of the aging plan goals, was presented to the

Health and Human Services Board on August 6, 2024. The final plan was presented on October 8, 2024. See Appendices for the agendas and minutes from these meetings.

Advisory Committee

An advisory committee is required if the policy-making body does not follow the Wisconsin Elders Act requirements for elected officials, older adults, and terms, or if the policy-making body is a committee of the county board (46.82 (4) (b) (1)). When an aging unit has both an advisory committee and a policy-making body, as we do in La Crosse County, a key role of the advisory committee is to advise the policy-making body in the development of the aging plan and to advocate for older adults.

In La Crosse County, the official name of our advisory committee is the ADRC of La Crosse County Advisory Committee and there is no identified chairperson. In lieu of a chairperson, the ADRC Manager, Carissa Pagel-Smith, serves as a primary contact.

The 2025-2027 Aging Plan was first discussed with the ADRC of La Crosse County Advisory Committee on February 5, 2024. A summary of community engagement feedback was presented to the Committee on June 3, 2024, and a draft of the aging plan goals was presented on August 5, 2024. The final plan was presented to the Committee on October 7, 2024. See Appendices for the agendas and minutes from these meetings.

Budget Summary

The aging unit is required to submit an annual budget to GWAAR (Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources) using a budget worksheet approved by the Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources (BADR). Below is the budget summary for CY 2025.

[insert budget summary]

Verification of Intent

The purpose of the verification of intent is to show that county government has approved the plan. It further signifies the commitment of county government to carry out the plan.

We verify that all information contained in this plan is correct.

Signature and Title of the Chairperson of the Commission on Aging Date

Signature and Title of the Authorized County Board Representative Date

Appendices

The following pages contain items included in the appendices, providing additional details and supporting documents for the 2025-2027 La Crosse County Aging Plan.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT #1

Your County or Tribe: La Crosse	Date/s of Event or Effort: March-May 2024
Target audience(s): Subscribers of <i>La Crosse Senior Life</i> monthly publication, general public including other older adults and caregivers, and various community partners	Number of Participants/ Respondents: 1,125
<p>Describe the method used including partners and outreach done to solicit responses: Introduced the 2025-2027 Aging Plan, and provided an announcement of the upcoming survey, in the March 2024 edition of the <i>La Crosse Senior Life</i> monthly publication. A hard copy of the survey, along with a prepaid, self-addressed return envelope, was mailed to each subscriber of the <i>La Crosse Senior Life</i> in March 2024. A total of 5,118 surveys were mailed; 300 were returned as undeliverable. An electronic version of the survey was also made available (link was provided in <i>La Crosse Senior Life</i> and on home page of the ADRC of La Crosse County website) and social media graphics/content was created and posted while the survey was open. To solicit additional responses, outreach was conducted with various community partners, including but not limited to B.L.A.C.K., Causeway Caregivers, Cia Siab Inc, City of La Crosse Housing Authority, Coulee Region RSVP, Harry J Olson Senior Center, Hmoob Cultural & Community Agency, Ho-Chunk Nation, Holmen Area Community Center, Hope Restores, La Crosse County Library, La Crosse County Falls Prevention Coalition, La Crosse County Health Department, La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium, La Crosse Parks & Recreation, La Crosse Public Library, Onalaska Parks & Recreation, Town of Campbell, Town of Holland, Town of Shelby, Vang Council of La Crosse, Village of Bangor, and Village of West Salem. A reminder was provided in the April 2024 edition of the <i>La Crosse Senior Life</i>.</p>	
<p>Describe how the information collected was used to develop the plan: Raw data was individually reviewed and categorized to establish trends. Results were shared with the ADRC Advisory Committee in June 2024 with emphasis on top trending data for each survey question. Committee members discussed potential goals related to each program area. A summary of the results was also published in the July 2024 edition of the <i>La Crosse Senior Life</i>. Results were top of mind, and referenced often, during goal development. Results were also referenced, and will continue to be referenced, when presenting a draft of the goals to the ADRC Advisory Committee and Health & Human Services Board in August 2024.</p>	
<p>What were the key takeaways/findings from the outreach? The survey results highlighted several key areas of concern and priority for older adults in La Crosse County. Accessible healthcare emerged as a top priority, with respondents emphasizing the need for quality and affordable healthcare services. Transportation was identified as a major issue, with many expressing concerns about limited and costly transportation options, pointing to the necessity for improved and more affordable solutions. The need for enhanced support systems for caregivers was also significant, underscoring the importance of providing adequate resources and assistance to those caring for older adults. Preventing falls was identified as a critical health concern, indicating the need for programs and resources focused on safety and injury prevention. Concerns about brain health and dementia were prevalent, highlighting the necessity for specialized programs and support services to address cognitive health issues. Additionally, many respondents faced challenges with understanding and using technology, demonstrating a clear need for educational programs to improve technological proficiency among older adults. There was also a strong desire for more accessible and varied exercise programs tailored to the needs of older adults, which would help in maintaining physical health and overall well-being. Lastly, there was a strong preference for services to be offered at community and neighborhood centers, urban accessible locations, and senior centers, ensuring that these services are accessible and promote community engagement.</p>	

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT #2

Your County or Tribe: La Crosse	Date/s of Event or Effort: March 5, 8, 14, 20
Target audience(s): Older adults, including current La Crosse County congregate dining participants	Number of Participants/ Respondents: 81
Describe the method used including partners and outreach done to solicit responses: Introduced the 2025-2027 Aging Plan, and provided an announcement of the listening sessions, in the March 2024 edition of the <i>La Crosse Senior Life</i> . A flyer advertising the four different listening sessions was created and posted at La Crosse County Senior Nutrition sites, local libraries, and ADRC of La Crosse County website.	
Describe how the information collected was used to develop the plan: Results were shared with the ADRC Advisory Committee in June 2024 and committee members discussed potential goals. The information gathered will not only help to develop the plan and related nutrition service goal, but shape future programming. For example, increasing frequency of salads and continuing to improve recipes.	
What were the key takeaways/findings from the outreach? The La Crosse County Senior Nutrition Program has identified several key areas for improvement and expansion based on community feedback. Residents have expressed a strong desire for a Senior Nutrition Site on the north side of La Crosse County, with suggestions such as the Black River Beach Neighborhood Center as a potential location. Parking issues at the current site are a concern, in addition to parking concerns at a temporary location at the Omni Center. There is curiosity about the construction of a new community center in Onalaska. Attendees also expressed interest in healthier eating habits through organizations like Wise Traditions and requested more salads year-round and a new chili recipe. There is a call to revive the Smart Seniors programming and expand services to rural areas like West Salem, Bangor, and Rockland. The community desires a dining center open to everyone with flexible hours and more senior-focused activities and programming. Some individuals, due to restrictive diets, feel unable to participate in the current program and suggest broader dietary accommodations. There is a need for a stronger community presence, such as scheduled times at local libraries to reduce the necessity of driving to La Crosse. More activities for those over 60 and better transportation information dissemination are also requested. Positive feedback includes appreciation for recent menu changes, the idea of having "movie" events at sites, and acknowledgment of increased awareness of issues like Alzheimer's. Overall, these insights highlight the necessity for more inclusive, accessible, and varied services to meet the diverse needs of the La Crosse County senior community.	

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT #3

Your County or Tribe: La Crosse	Date/s of Event or Effort: March 11, 19, 25
Target audience(s): Family Caregivers	Number of Participants/ Respondents: 15
<p>Describe the method used including partners and outreach done to solicit responses: Introduced the 2025-2027 Aging Plan, and provided an announcement of the listening sessions, in the March 2024 edition of the <i>La Crosse Senior Life</i> monthly publication. A flyer advertising the three different listening sessions was created and mailed to 134 family caregivers and shared with the La Crosse County Caregiver Coalition, a network of 30 individuals representing individual family caregivers and various organizations in the community. Additionally, a media alert notifying news outlets of the listening sessions was issued, information was posted twice on La Crosse County Facebook page and Instagram, and information was included in the March 6, 2024, issue of <i>County Connection</i> newsletter which is made available to all County employees and the public (shared via Facebook and sent electronically via email distribution list).</p>	
<p>Describe how the information collected was used to develop the plan: Results were shared with the ADRC Advisory Committee in June 2024 and committee members discussed potential goals. The information gathered will not only help to develop the plan and related caregiving support goal, but shape future programming. For example, introduce technology trainings and financial planning programs that will bridge the knowledge gaps identified by caregivers. The scheduling and delivery of these programs will be adjusted to offer flexibility, accommodating those who cannot commit to a regular schedule.</p>	
<p>What were the key takeaways/findings from the outreach? The listening sessions highlighted several key areas of concern and priority for caregivers in La Crosse County. Caregivers require significant flexibility in their weekly activities due to frequently changing schedules, making it challenging to consistently attend programs or classes. They need curated resources tailored to their specific needs, often benefiting from one-on-one guidance to navigate the available options. Some caregivers and community members mistakenly believe that ADRC services are income-based, deterring them from seeking assistance and leaving them unaware of the diverse resources available. Additionally, caregivers of individuals with early onset dementia are particularly disconnected, with little information available about their numbers or support mechanisms. Professional counseling from individuals who understand their experiences is crucial for caregivers, as is more technological support, including lessons on using cell phones, streaming services, and home safety devices. This support can lead to cost savings, respite opportunities, improved social connections, and enhanced safety. Moreover, caregivers need more opportunities to connect with peers through support groups, phone calls, and Facebook groups, where they can share challenges, brainstorm solutions, and identify resources together. The <i>La Crosse Senior Life</i> newsletter, despite being a valuable resource, is often overwhelming due to its extensive content and layout. Caregivers also need more information on future financial planning, covering topics such as retirement, home buying and selling, life estates, nursing home liabilities, Medicaid spousal impoverishment rules, and preparing for moves to assisted living. Lastly, caregivers are not receiving enough respite, with needs varying widely—some desire full days away, including overnight stays, while others prefer more consistent or spontaneous breaks.</p>	

[Place holder for Public Hearing Reports, Health & Human Services Board meeting agendas and minutes, ADRC Advisory Committee meeting agendas and minutes, Assurance of Compliance]

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