



Connecting You to Community Services

2014 Eldercare Locator Data Report

A Snapshot of Older Adult Issues & Needs in America



advocacy | action | answers on aging

Introduction

Launched in 1991, the Eldercare Locator is the only national information and referral resource to provide support to consumers seeking assistance across the spectrum of issues affecting older Americans. The Locator was established and is funded by the U.S. Administration on Aging, which is part of the Administration for Community Living, and is administered by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a). Through its National Call Center (800.677.1116), which operates five days a week from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET, and website (www.eldercare.gov), the Locator serves as a trusted gateway for older adults and caregivers searching for information and resources which can be crucial to their health, well-being and independence. Older adults and caregivers contact the Locator to find local resources involving a broad range of services. Transportation, home and community-based services, housing, and health insurance information are among the most requested services.

In 2014, the Eldercare Locator's call, online chat and email volume reached an all-time annual high of 271,234 requests for assistance; this is an average of over 22,000 inquiries a month or 1,000 a day. And in February 2015, the Locator responded to its three millionth call. The geographic reach of the Locator is extensive, with consumers making contact from all fifty states, the District of Columbia and most U.S. territories.

Given the national scope and increasing volume of the requests for assistance being made to the Eldercare Locator, the program is able to produce valuable consumer trends on aging. For this reason, the *2014 Eldercare Locator Data Report: A Snapshot of Older Adult Issues & Needs in America* was developed. It is hoped that this report will provide a wide range of stakeholders with useful information on issues affecting older adults and caregivers, as viewed from the perspective of the more than a quarter of a million people who contact the Locator seeking services and supports each year.

Report Methodology

The data in this report was aggregated based on information gathered from 271,234 contacts made to the Eldercare Locator via phone call, online chat and email during 2014. Individuals are never asked to provide identifying information and any identifying information that is received during the exchange is kept confidential.

This report should not be construed as a thorough assessment of the needs of older adults and caregivers nationwide, as only a fraction of all consumers contact the Eldercare Locator for help. Nor is this report necessarily representative of the type or volume of services ultimately provided in states and communities by Aging Network or other entities, which would require more exhaustive analysis.

How it Works

The Eldercare Locator has the capacity to provide information and resources on dozens of issues affecting older adults and caregivers. As such, it has become a go-to referral source for government agencies and nonprofits. Once a referral is made, the individual has the option of contacting the Locator via phone, the website or email.

Call Center

To ensure that the needs of those who contact the Eldercare Locator are carefully matched with the appropriate resources, information specialists are trained to listen closely to callers, identify relevant local, state and/or national resources and, when needed, provide a “warm transfer,” which involves staying on the line to facilitate the caller’s dialogue with a particular resource. About 14 percent of callers choose to receive a warm transfer.



For more complex caller situations, skilled eldercare counselors provide additional support on a host of issues, including transportation, long-term care decision-making, caregiver challenges and recognizing the signs of elder abuse; these are known as escalated calls.

All eligible information specialists have received Certified Information and Referral Specialist-Aging (CIRS-A) accreditation through Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, the member association for information and referral professionals that sets the standards for quality in the industry.

How Did They Hear About Us?

Major sources of referrals to the Eldercare Locator include:

55%	Federal, State or Local Government Referral
	36% Direct referral (Social Security, Medicare, FEMA, VA, HUD, State Medicaid Office, other governmental agency/program)
	19% Mailing that includes Locator contact information (Social Security)
11%	Found the Locator through an Internet Search
9%	Partner/Other Professional Organizations
7%	Insurance Provider
6%	Newspaper, Radio, TV, Social Media
5%	Telephone Directory/Phone Book
4%	Employer/Family/Friend
3%	Health Care Professional

How it Works

Escalated Calls

Seven percent of calls are escalated to senior staff for handling. These calls may involve complex situations of a serious nature, multiple issues or long-term care planning. Categories for these calls include:

- **37% Long-Term Services and Supports Information** involving education and guidance on services and facilities
- **29% Caregiver Services/Resources** such as compensation and financial assistance programs
- **27% Elder Abuse** such as identifying abuse, how to report it and steps for following up on reported abuse
- **6% Transportation Options** such as special needs or long-distance travel
- **1% Crisis** defined as an emergency situation such as no food, housing, disconnected utilities, etc., as well as suicide risk

Website

Today, nearly half a million people visit the Eldercare Locator website at www.eldercare.gov annually. Visitors can search for a wide range of services and supports in their own community, review tools and resources on an array of topics and engage in an online chat with an information specialist. Brochures on subjects of major interest to older adults and caregivers are also available at no cost. Over 32,000 brochures were distributed in 2014 on topics including falls prevention, financial exploitation and brain health.



Website: eldercare.gov

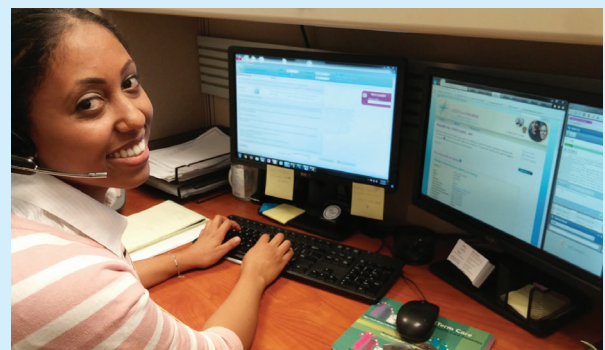
- 483,196 visitors in 2014
- 72.5% are new visitors
- *Find Help in Your Community* search feature is the most popular, followed by information/fact sheets about home health care, adult day services, in-home services and home modifications

The Human Factor

The heart and soul of the Eldercare Locator Call Center is its well-trained staff of approximately 20 people who view their work as more of a calling than a job. Not everyone is cut out to take up to 100 calls a day from people who may be frustrated and even frightened as they search for needed services and supports. Yet the staff treat every caller with compassion and professionalism and meet the highest quality assurance standards.

Top 5 Traits of Locator Staff:

- Great listener
- Empathetic but focused
- Effective problem solver
- Extremely knowledgeable
- Passionate about helping others



Bridge to the Aging Network

The Older Americans Act (OAA) was passed in 1965 with the goal of helping older adults live with dignity and independence in their homes and communities for as long as possible. To make this goal a reality, the federal, state and local infrastructure needed for organizing, planning and providing home and community-based services and supports—known as the Aging Network—was established. Consisting of 56 state and territorial units on aging, 618 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), 246 Title VI Native American aging programs and nearly 20,000 community service providers, the Aging Network was the first home and community-based services system established in the United States.

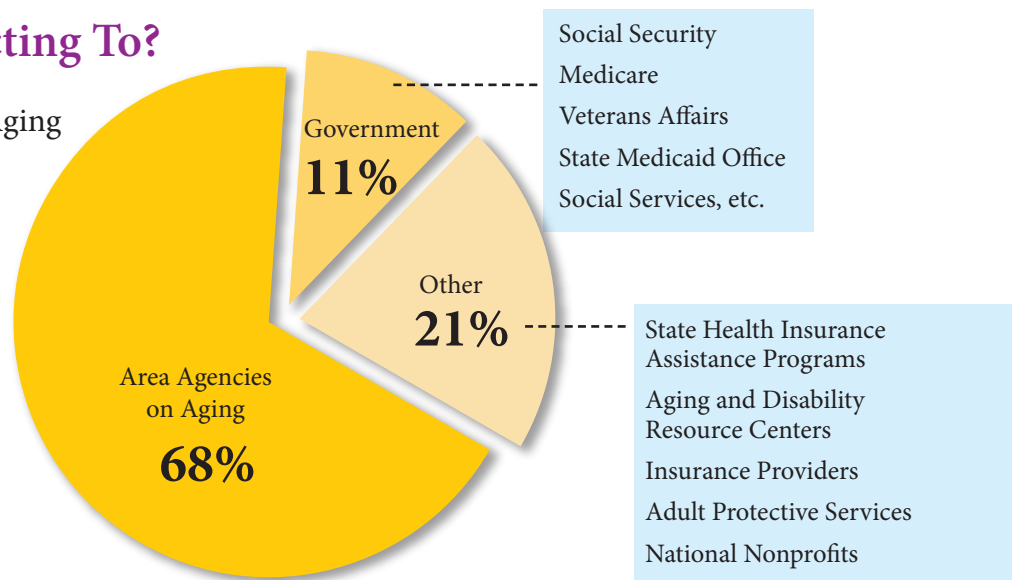


Located in virtually every community in America, AAAs plan, coordinate, develop and fund a wide array of home and community-based programs and services, including information and referral, congregate and home-delivered meals, health and wellness programs, in-home care, transportation, elder abuse prevention, caregiver support, adult day care and a host of other efforts to support older adults aging in place.

In recent years, AAAs have expanded their service portfolio to include integrated care, Medicaid managed care and care transitions, while also broadening the base of people they serve, with increasing numbers of AAAs providing support for people under age 60 with disabilities or chronic conditions, as well as caregivers and veterans of all ages.

Who Are We Connecting To?

- 68%** Local Area Agencies on Aging
- 11%** Government Agencies
- 21%** Other Resources



Who We Serve

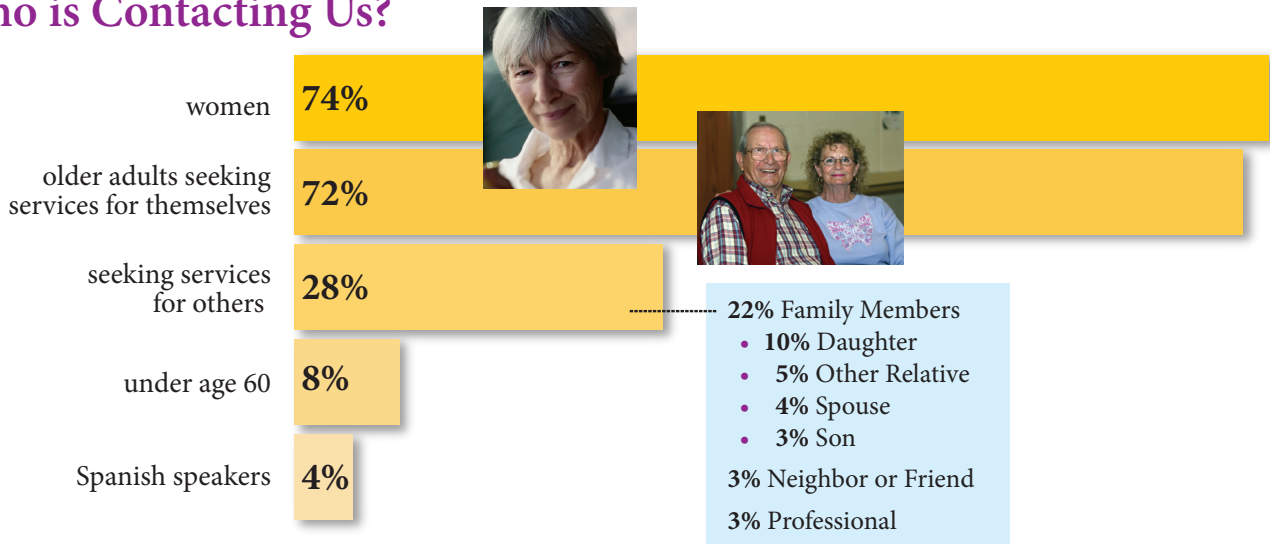
Although originally conceived as a service for caregivers, over 70 percent of people contacting the Eldercare Locator are older adults seeking information on services for themselves. The people who contact the Eldercare Locator are a microcosm of America's broad aging population, comprised of multiple generations of people with different life experiences and needs. Information specialists only ask those who contact them if they are age 60 or older, so it's impossible to say with certainty where a person falls on the aging spectrum.

Profile of the Average Caller:

- Age 60 or older
- First-time caller
- Female
- Calling about services for themselves



Who is Contacting Us?



Why Do Most Inquiries Come from Women?

The Locator not only serves as a conduit to local services and supports, it also holds up a mirror to those most in need. Research shows that older women, especially those who live alone and are black or Hispanic, are the most vulnerable:

- 45.4% of Hispanic women age 65 or older living alone, live in poverty
- 28.3% of black women age 65 or older living alone, live in poverty
- 15.5% of white women age 65 or older living alone, live in poverty

There is a sizable poverty gender gap:

- 11.6% poverty rate for older women overall
- 6.8% poverty rate for older men overall



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2014. Data obtained from "A Profile of Older Americans: 2014" developed by the Administration on Aging, Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (see http://www.aoa.acl.gov/Aging_Statistics/Profile/index.aspx).

Overview of Key Findings

The data in this report represents a snapshot—not the full picture—of the issues and needs of older adults in America because it is based on information gathered from a microcosm of that population—those who contacted the Eldercare Locator in 2014. But because the Locator is the only program of its kind providing support across the full spectrum of issues affecting older adults, it is an especially valuable source of data on the issues this population care about most.



In 2014, requests for assistance involved issues as diverse as nutrition, employment, medical supplies, senior centers and home improvement. However, clear categories of need also emerged, often confirming trends seen elsewhere in the Aging Network and beyond. The following is an overview of the categories that garnered the most requests for assistance and some context for the rankings.

Transportation: Challenges accessing transportation ranked as the number one reason people contacted the Locator in 2014, and for good reason. For older adults who can no longer drive and who live in suburban or rural communities without adequate public transit, a lack of transportation options can have a profound effect on overall quality of life. Many callers express frustration because they can't do simple things like visit the doctor, buy food or socialize with peers because the options for getting from Point A to Point B are limited.

Home and Community-Based Services: As people age, services that enable them to continue to live independently in their homes tend to be the first outside resources they seek out. Home-delivered meals, personal care, chore services and home maintenance are just a few of the services requested. Unfortunately, inadequate funding for these programs means that too many older adults will struggle to access the services and supports they need.

Housing: The third highest-ranked reason for contacting the Locator was difficulty finding affordable and accessible housing. A combination of factors—living on a fixed income and changing accessibility needs which may require modifying an existing home or finding a new one—present significant challenges for older adults. As the gap between demand for housing suitable for older adults and available supply widens, the number of inquiries on this topic is expected to grow.

Medical Services and Supplies: This category includes inquiries about such needs as prescription payment assistance, dental and vision services, hearing aids, and diabetic and incontinence supplies, some of which are not covered by health insurance. These gaps in coverage present a serious challenge for older adults because there are very limited resources to help them access these services and supplies through other means.

Health Insurance: As health care systems evolve and change, many older adults require individualized help navigating their insurance options, whether they involve Medicare, Medicaid or private insurance. In fact, the Locator experiences its highest annual call volume—30,000-40,000 calls per month—during the Medicare open enrollment period from November-January.

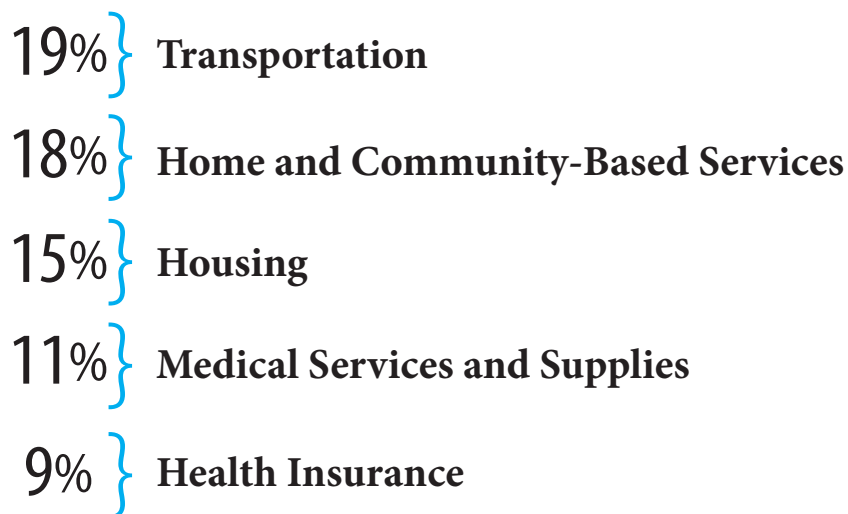


Responding to Consumer Needs with Information and Services

Top Reasons People Contact the Locator

When people contact the Locator, it is often for a specific reason—they need a ride, for example—but during the conversation with an information specialist, other needs become apparent. Someone may call looking for home-delivered meals, but after a few questions, it becomes clear that they lack access to transportation that would enable them to visit the grocery store. Another caller may be exploring housing options, but when questioned further, it is learned that they need to move because they can't afford the home modifications that would enable them to stay in their home. While this report segments the data by issue, it is important to note that needs, whether they be for transportation, housing or an array of home and community-based services, are often interconnected.

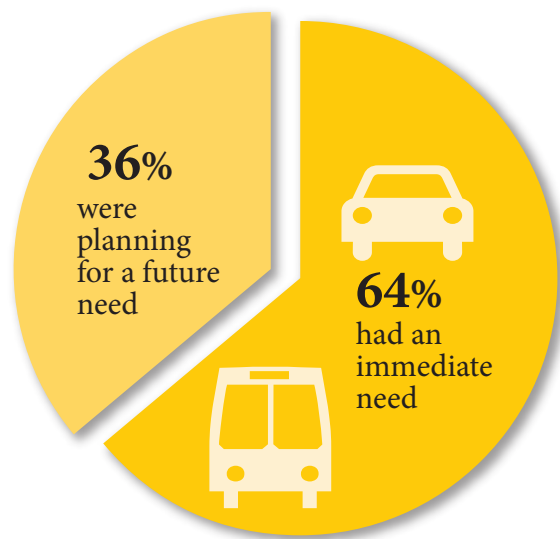
The following graphic depicts the categories of greatest interest for those who contact the Locator. Subsequent charts provide much greater specificity about the nature of the requests for assistance.



- Other Areas of Interest:**
- Legal and Tax Assistance
 - Elder Abuse
 - Long-Term Care
 - Caregiver Resources
 - Employment Services

Transportation

Immediate or Future Need?

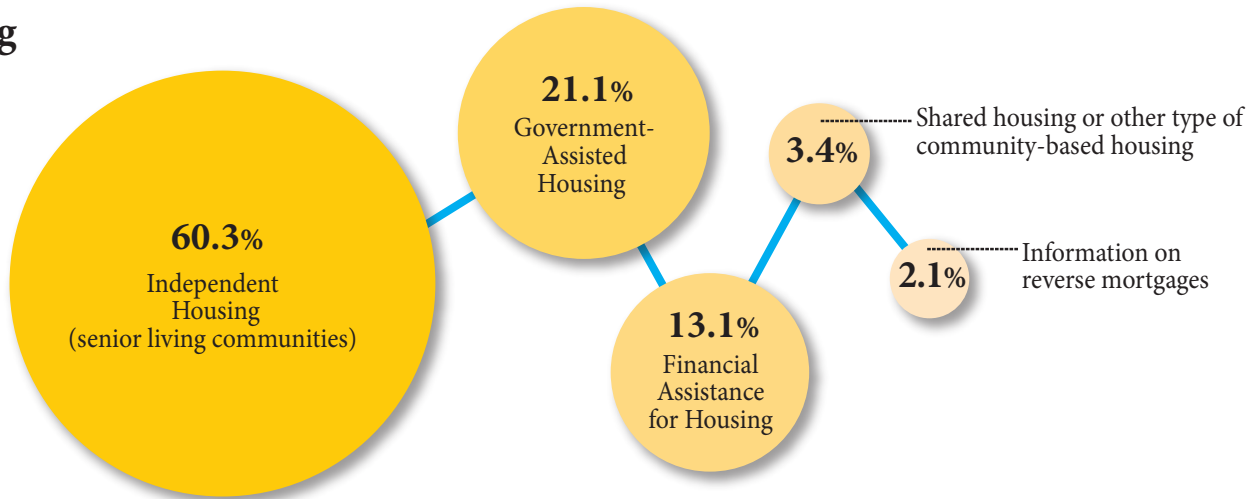


Type of Transportation Need

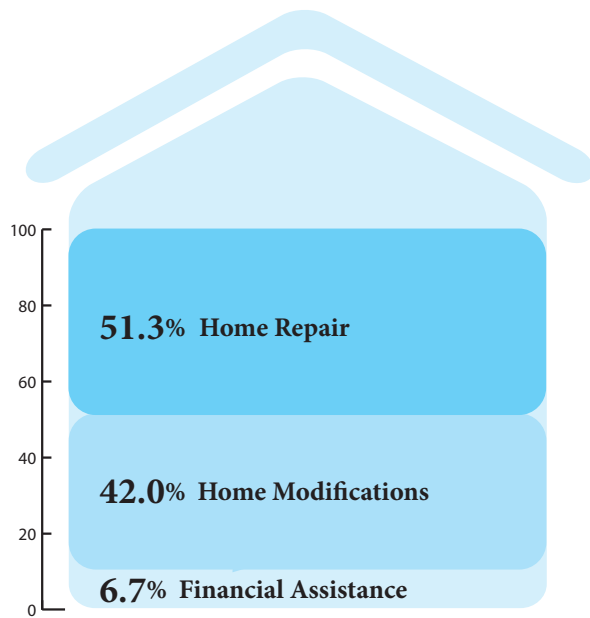
- 77.5% Medical appointments (non-urgent, routine, dialysis/chemotherapy/radiation, etc.)
- 8.7% Non-medical rides (grocery shopping, church, etc.)
- 5.5% Long-distance or county-to-county transport
- 3.4% Special needs (disability, unusual medical situations)
- 1.9% Financial assistance for transportation/travel
- 3.0% Electric wheelchair and scooter requests; stretcher/ambulance transport; older driver safety information; or vehicle modification (financial assistance and programs)

Information and Services Consumers are Seeking

Housing

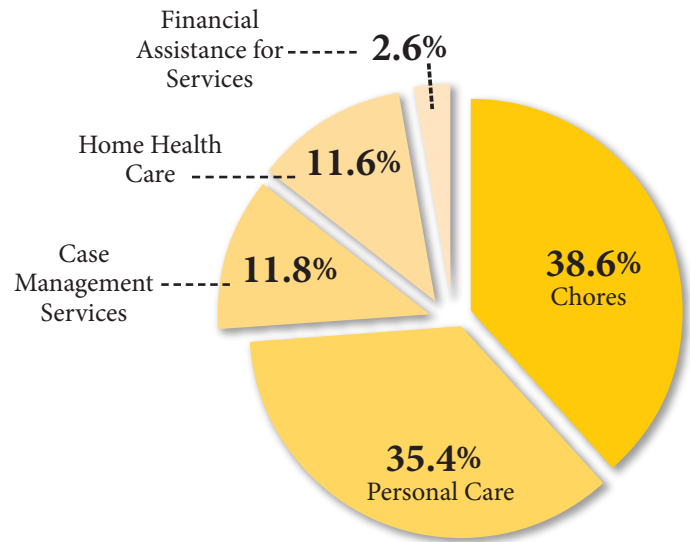


Home Improvements



- 51.3% Home repair services
- 42.0% Home modifications (grab bars, ramps, etc.)
- 6.7% Financial assistance for home improvements

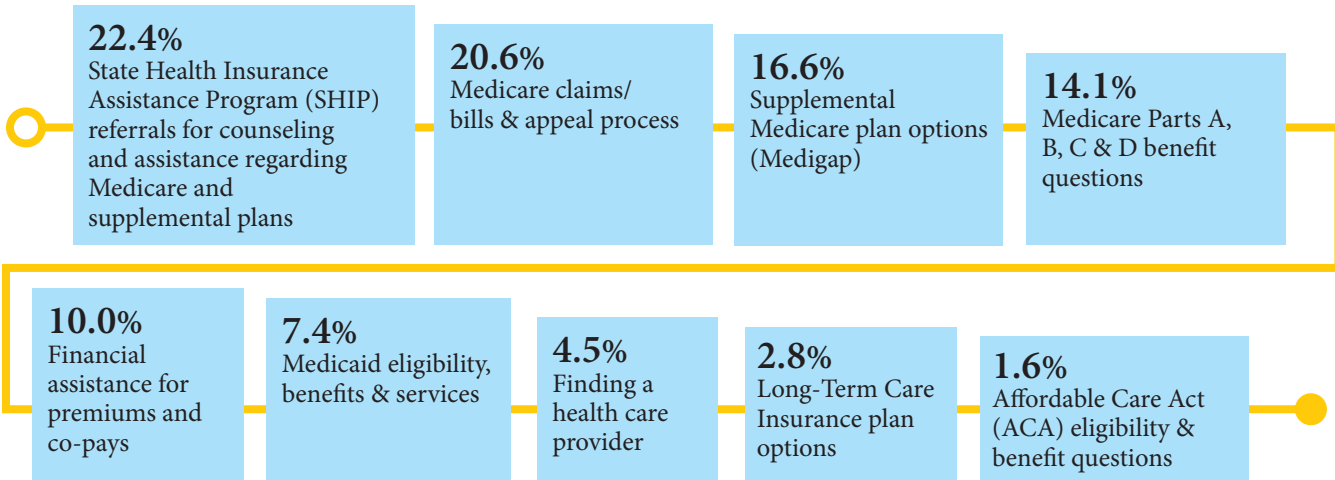
Home and Community-Based Services



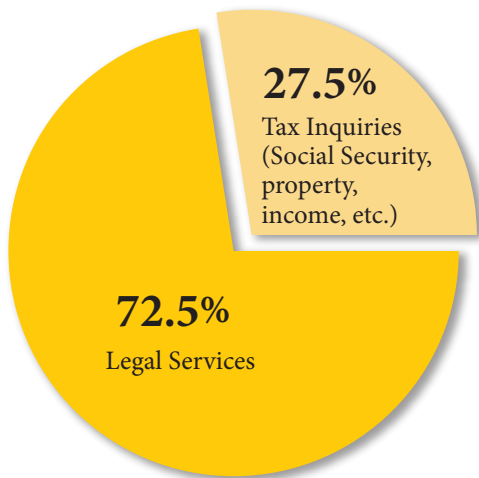
- 38.6% Chores (housecleaning, cooking, running errands, etc.)
- 35.4% Personal care (Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) like bathing, grooming and dressing)
- 11.8% Case management services (assistance for getting in-home and other services)
- 11.6% Home health care (medical service)
- 2.6% Financial assistance for services

Information and Services Consumers are Seeking

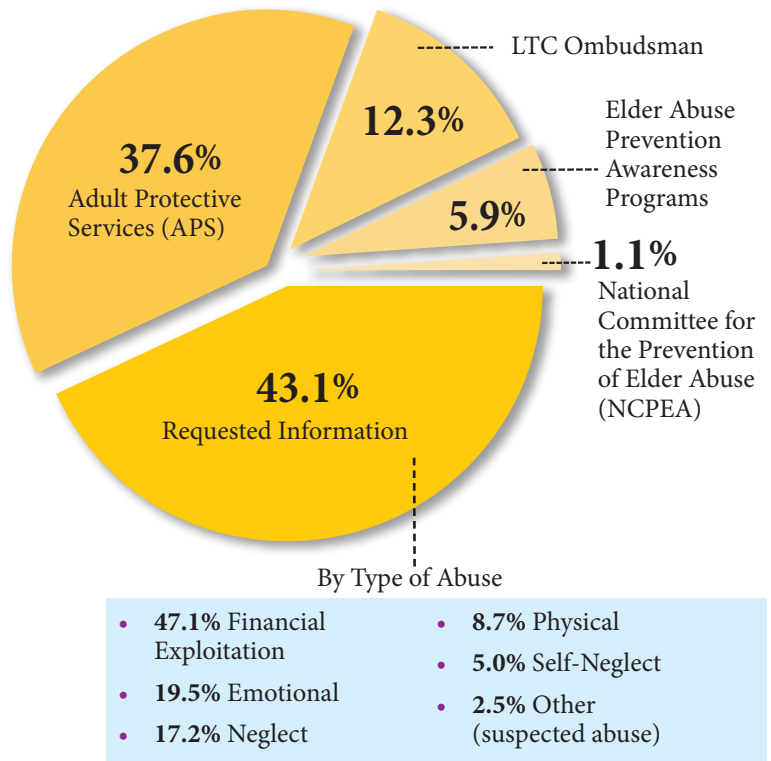
Health Insurance



Legal and Tax Assistance

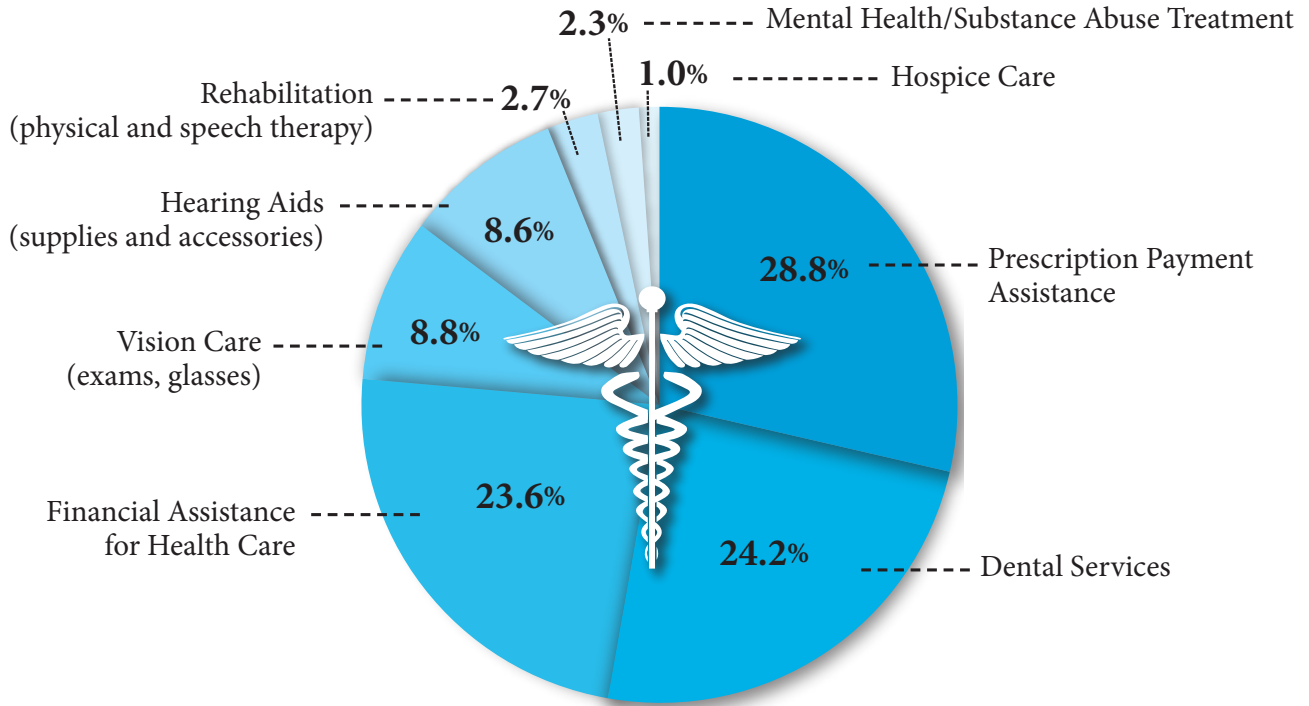


Elder Abuse

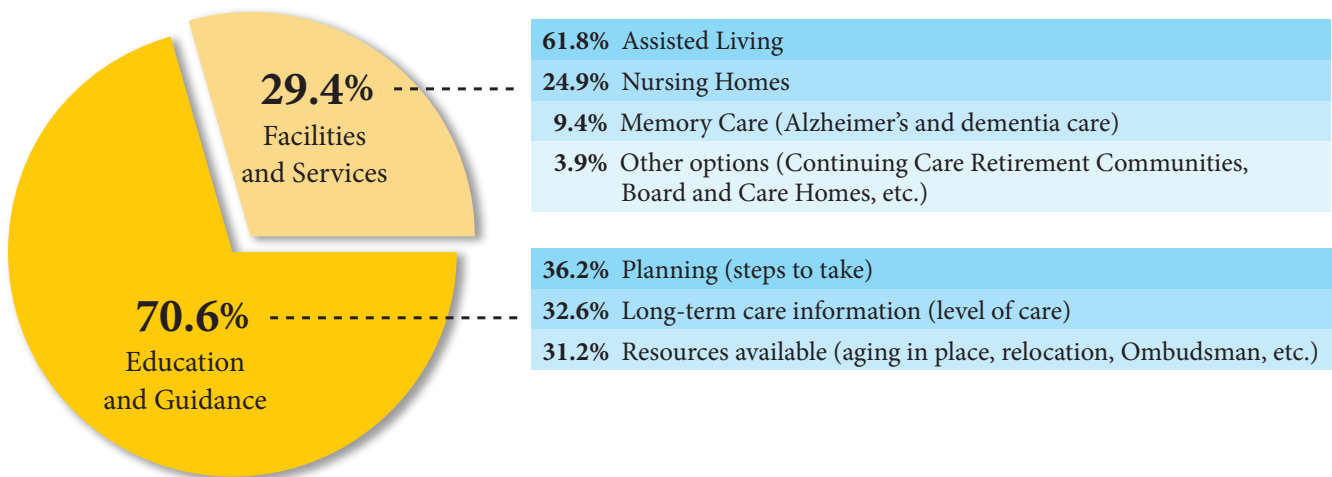


Information and Services Consumers are Seeking

Medical Services

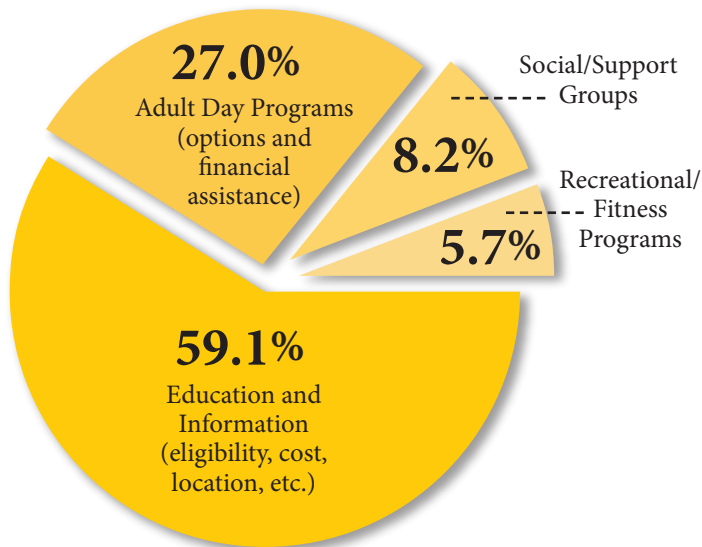


Long-Term Care



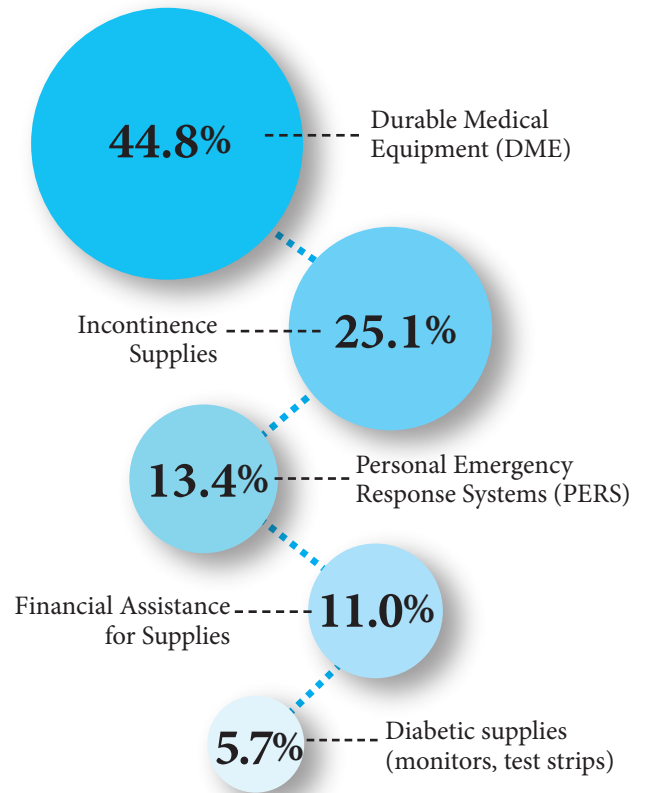
Information and Services Consumers are Seeking

Community Programs*

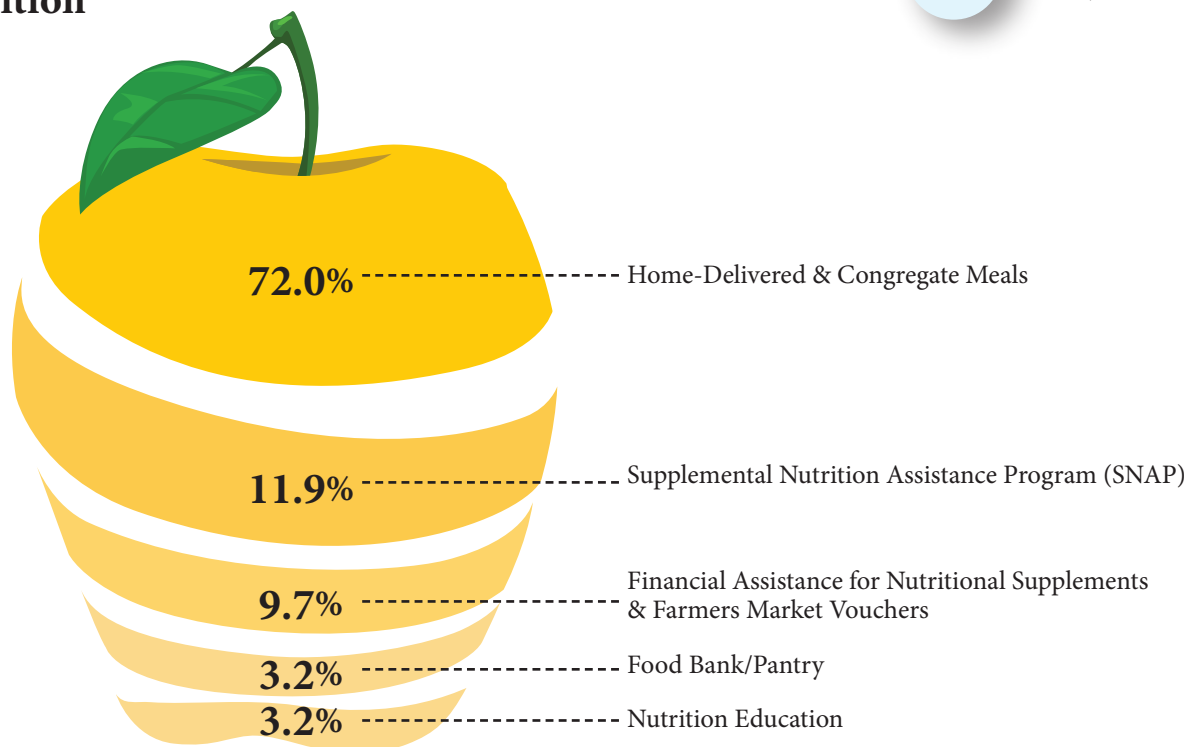


*This data is part of the home and community-based services category.

Medical Supplies



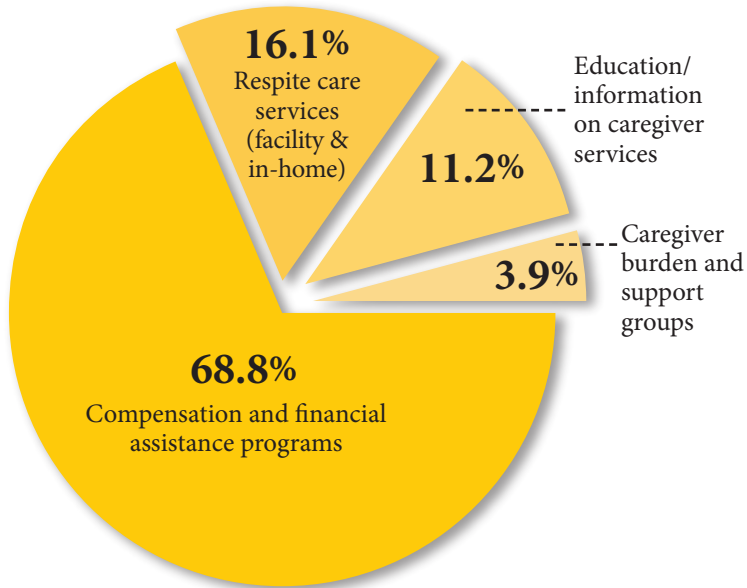
Nutrition*



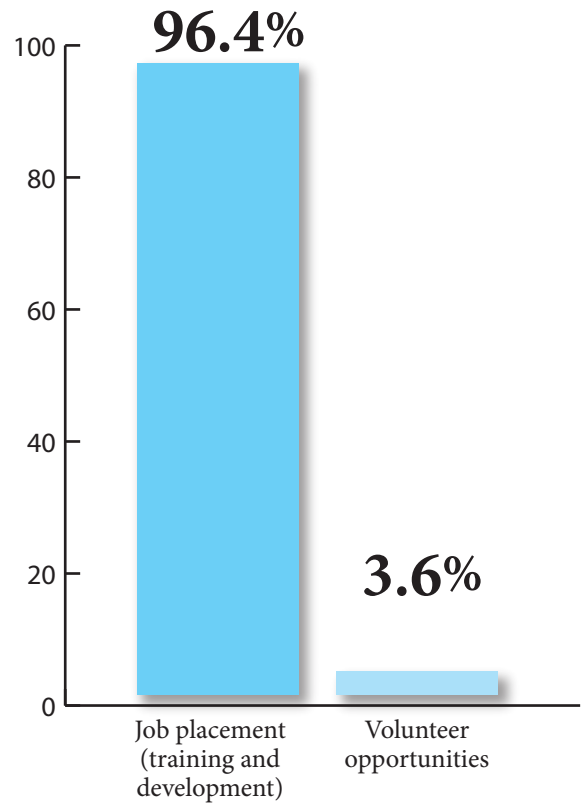
*This data is part of the home and community-based services category.

Why Are They Contacting Us?

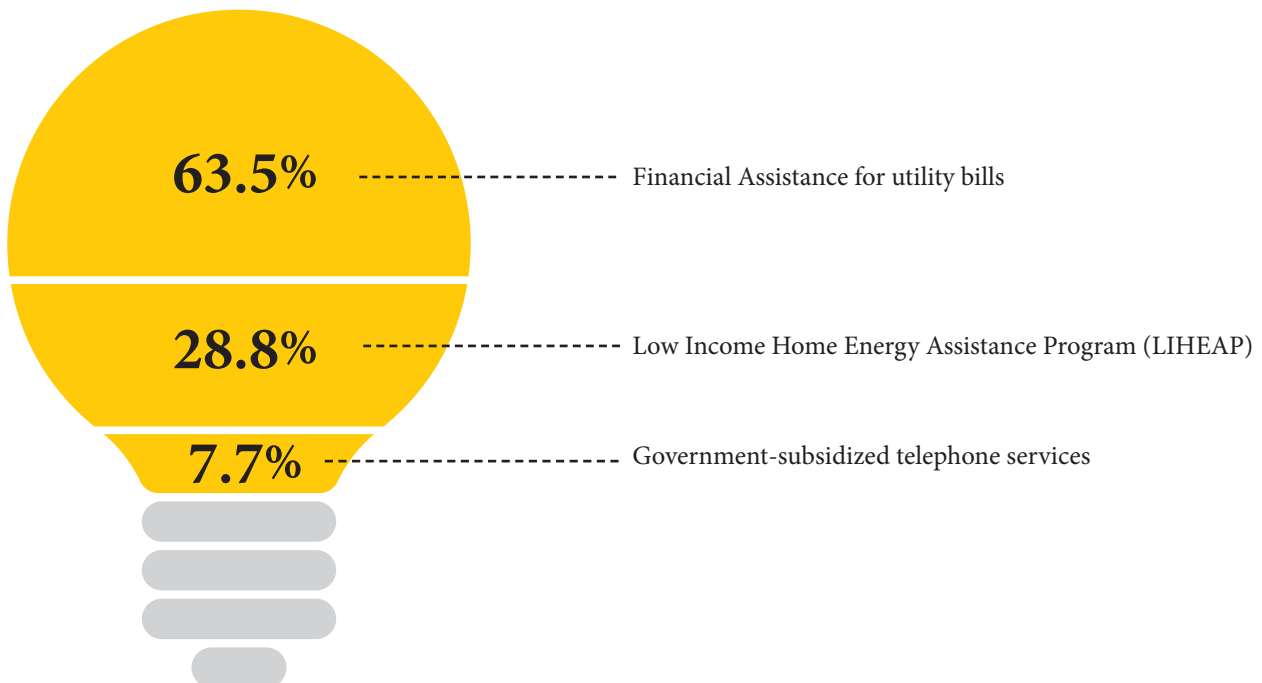
Caregiver Resources



Employment Services



Utilities*



*This data is part of the housing category.

Conclusion

The Eldercare Locator was established to connect older adults and caregivers to valuable local resources they might otherwise not discover on their own. Once a call is taken and needs are assessed, callers are referred to the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) or other appropriate resources in their community for services. The information, referrals and services AAAs provide on virtually all of the issues referenced in this report can be life-changing for older adults and caregivers.

The program has been successful in connecting older adults with vital, community-based resources—98 percent of callers say they're highly satisfied with their experience—because, at a time when many information and referral programs are automated, the Locator remains committed to providing person-to-person assistance. This approach not only ensures that support is expertly matched to need, it provides those who request assistance with peace of mind that is only possible through human interaction.

In publishing this report, we hope that more Americans—of all ages—will learn about the important role that the Eldercare Locator and AAAs play to ensure that more Americans can live with dignity and independence in their homes and communities.

We also hope that this report will inform the important work being carried out by the Aging Network and the many other stakeholders dedicated to improving quality of life for our aging population—today and in the years to come.



The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) would like to recognize the Administration on Aging (AoA), part of the Administration for Community Living (ACL), for its foundational and ongoing leadership of the Eldercare Locator since it was established in 1991. By connecting older adults and caregivers to local resources and information, the Eldercare Locator plays a major role in our shared goal of helping older adults live independently, with health and dignity, in their homes and communities for as long as possible.

Report & Project Lead

Mary Osborne, Program Director, Eldercare Locator, n4a

Data Analysis

Jacqueline Oliver, Call Center Supervisor, Eldercare Locator, n4a

Writing and Editing

Sandy Markwood, CEO, n4a

Amy E. Gotwals, Chief, Public Policy & External Affairs, n4a

Dallas Jamison, Director, Communications, n4a



Connecting You to Community Services

The Eldercare Locator, a public service of the Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is a nationwide service that connects older Americans and their caregivers with information on senior services.

www.eldercare.gov
800.677.1116



advocacy | action | answers on aging

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) is a 501(c)(3) membership association representing America's national network of 600+ Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and providing a voice in the nation's capital for the more than 250 Title VI Native American aging programs.

The mission of n4a is to build the capacity of its members so they can better help older adults and people with disabilities live with dignity and choices in their homes and communities for as long as possible.

www.n4a.org
202.872.0888



This project was supported, in part, by grant number 90IR0002-01-00, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Administration for Community Living policy.