



COVID-19 & CITIES: SUPPORTING AGING POPULATIONS

Panelists:

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ANTRON WATSON, Age-Friendly Director, AARP Massachusetts

Co-Sponsored by the Boston University School of Social Work

Moderated by Katharine Lusk, Co-Director of the Initiative on Cities

- Q&A session will be held after both speakers
 - Submit a question at any time using the Q&A feature at the bottom of your Zoom window
 - Please upvote questions submitted by other attendees that you would like our panelists to answer
 - We will do our best to answer as many questions as possible.

COVID-19 & Cities: Supporting Older Adults

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Agenda

1. What are the unique challenges for older adults?
2. Who supports older adults?
3. How have they responded to COVID-19?
4. Importance of behavioral health training and mitigating social isolation in support of older adults and their families.

Center for Aging & Disability Education & Research at Boston University

- The Center for Aging and Disability Education and Research (CADER) is dedicated to strengthening the workforce that provides health and long-term supports and services to older adults and people with disabilities through education, training, and research
- Originally funded in 2002 by The Atlantic Philanthropies
- Now funded through grants and state and local contracts across the country

Unique Challenges for Older Adults

- Depression is one of the most common mental health issues facing older adults
- In U.S., about 20% of older adults report being depressed
- The suicide rate among older adults is one of the highest of all age groups
- Older adults with untreated behavioral health concerns are significantly more likely to have poor health outcomes

Unique Challenges for Older Adults

- One in three adults say they lack regular companionship, and 1 in 4 say they feel isolated from other people at least some of the time
- Individuals who report high levels of perceived social isolation have a greater risk of hospitalization and emergency room visits
- Individuals who are more socially connected have a 50 percent reduced risk of early death relative to those who are less socially connected

Unique Challenges for Older Adults

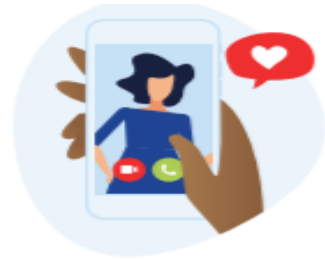
Risk factors for isolation include:

- Transportation
- Poor health and well-being
- Life transitions
- Societal barriers
- Lack of access and inequality

Who Supports Older Adults?

- National Organizations
- Statewide Organizations
- Community-based Organizations
- Faith-based Organizations
- Advocacy Groups
- Family and Caregivers

Responses to COVID-19



SOCIALIZE



EXPLORE



UNWIND



CONNECT

Responses to COVID-19 in MA

- Nursing Home Family Resource Line
- Telehealth and Telephonic Support
- Telephonic Wellness Checks
- Volunteers to deliver meals and groceries
- Online tools and resources
- Bi-weekly roundtable with EOEA, DMH, and DPH around social isolation

Suggestions around mental wellness during COVID-19

- Connect with loved ones
- Limit news consumption
- Care for living things
- Take care of your body
- Find activities that bring you joy
- Keep your mind active
- Use calming techniques
- Find ways to laugh
- Create short personal videos

Training and workforce development is more important than ever

- Senior Centers
- ASAPs/AAAs
- Faith-based Leaders
- Interprofessional Training
- Age Friendly Initiative in New Bedford

What Can You Do?

- Check in on the people in your life who live alone
- Connect with your community-based agencies
- Volunteer through the aging network
- Get involved with advocacy efforts
- Age-friendly initiatives are in important vehicle to making changes at the State and Local level

Resources

- To find your local Area Agency on Aging, contact the [Eldercare Locator](#), a national center that supports older Americans in connecting to local resources
- To find your local Senior Center, go to [NCOA's](#) website for information
- [Daily Caring](#) provides a list of low cost internet options
- [Senior Planet](#) is hosting free online classes for older adults on topics including introduction to social media, how to use zoom, and virtual social gatherings
- Take a virtual exercise class at the [YMCA](#) or through your local Senior Center or Area Agency on Aging



Age-Friendly Communities

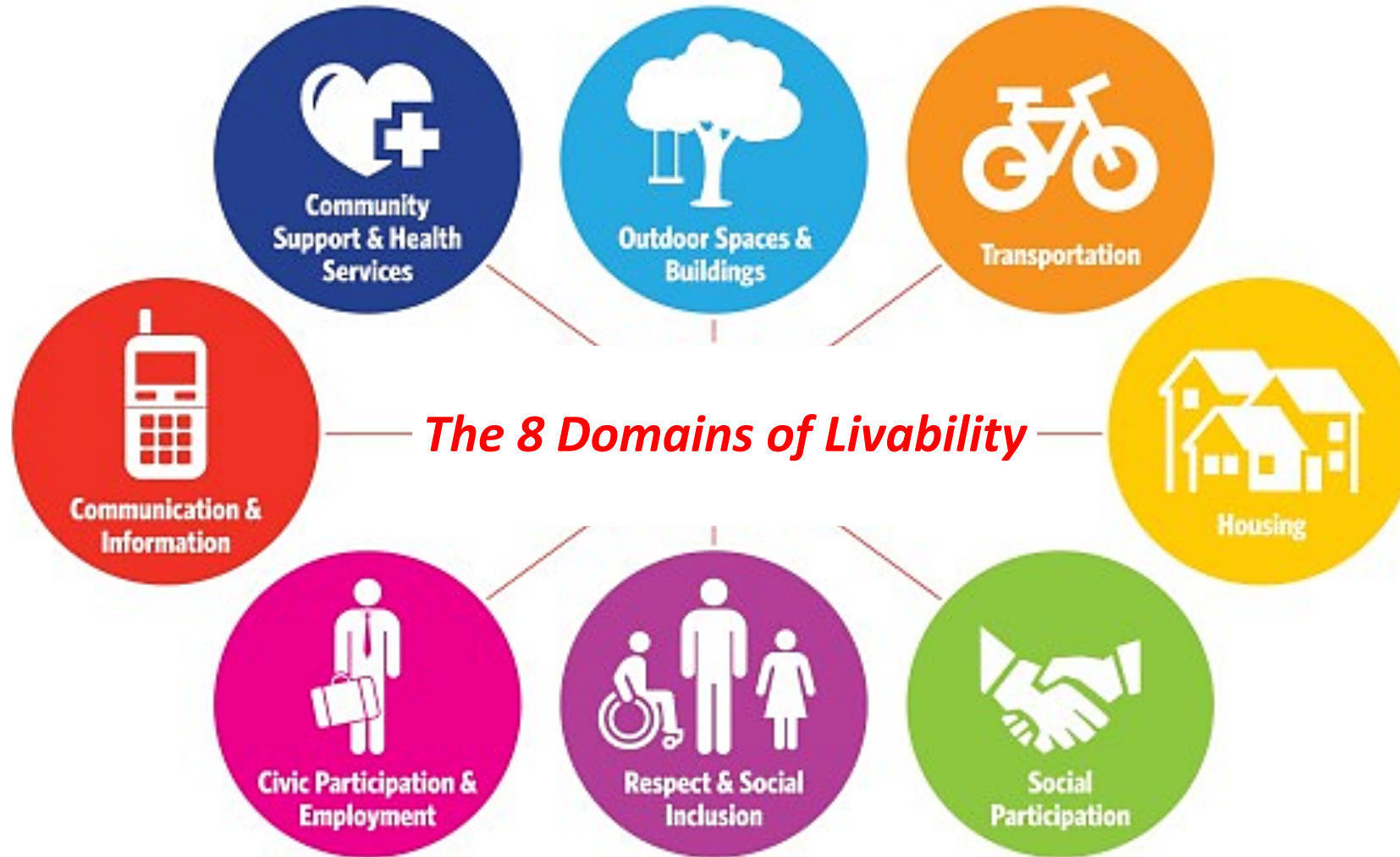
Age-friendly communities

*An age-friendly community is one that is free from physical and social barriers and is supported by **policies, systems, services, products and technologies** that:*

- promote health and build and maintain physical and mental capacity across the life course; and*
- enable people, even when experiencing capacity loss, to continue to do the things they value.*



What makes a community a great place to live?



Pre-Covid focus areas

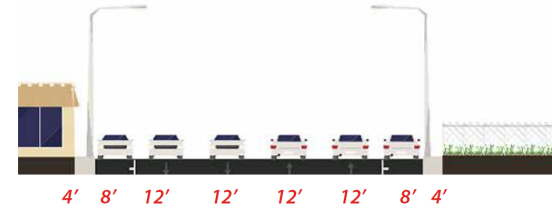
Housing



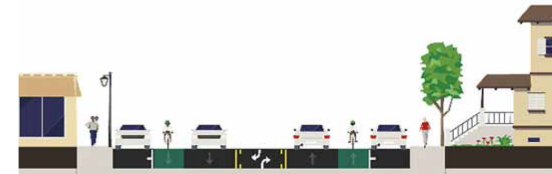
Parks and Public Space



Transportation



BEFORE: This roadway is designed primarily for motor vehicles. Wide, multiple travel lanes encourage faster speeds. The likelihood of drivers making lane changes increases the risk of crashes.



AFTER: A road diet opens up space for bike lanes, wider sidewalks, landscaping and pedestrian-scale lighting, all of which increase a community's ability to attract new development along the roadway. Narrower, single travel lanes encourage moderate and slower speeds that reduce crash risks.



What are the needs- Now

- Communication
 - How are residents getting the information they need at this time
- Community Support and Health Services
 - Obtaining Meals
 - Meeting immediate/current health needs
- Social Participation
 - Preventing social isolation



S.M.I.L.E. PROJECT

Sending Messages of Inspiration, Love, and Empathy



An intergenerational collaboration of the Barnstable Council on Aging, Barnstable Public Schools, and UKSD Empowerment & Leadership Club



Chelmsford



Collaboration with Chelmsford TV to:

- Reach beyond e-mail to connect with the community
- Provide information
- Answers questions during quarantine



Boston

Establishing a call center to screen for needed assistance

- Make referrals to Meals on Wheels programs for prepared meals programs
- Adding to grocery delivery list
 - Deliveries to older adults
 - Families unable to access youth meal sites
- Helping navigate challenges
 - Mortgage and rent relief
 - Insurance and access to medication
 - Connecting to additional services
 - Simply talking to residents in isolation (Nesterly)



COURTESY COASTLINE ELDERLY SERVICES

First-responders in New Bedford are helping distribute meals to the city's older adults and others in need of assistance during the global coronavirus pandemic.



Moving forward...Local Leaders and Volunteers

Respect and Social Inclusion



- Create online programming for schools and senior care facilities on topics of shared interest to students and older adults
- Ask children to make and deliver greeting cards to Meals on Wheels recipients and people in senior care facilities

Transportation



- Modify transit schedules, stations and seating to enable social distancing
- Provide specialized services for essential workers
- Suspend transit fares
- Increase paratransit services
- Enlist volunteers to deliver needed items to people who can't leave their homes or use their usual modes of transportation

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings



- Close streets to motor vehicle traffic so people can safely walk and bicycle while social distancing
- Automate crossing signals so pedestrians won't need to touch the crosswalk buttons

Housing



- Provide 24/7 services and shelter for individuals and families experiencing homelessness
- Work with local leaders and legislators to enact and enforce a moratorium on evictions
- Capitalize on relationships with funding sources to provide financial assistance to older adults and others struggling with housing costs
- Create a housing grant program for people with low-incomes and/or a job loss due to COVID-19

Social Participation



- Start a daily, community-wide "appreciation clap" for health care workers and first responders
- Create a drive-in theater by projecting a movie onto a wall near a parking lot
- Host a "dragging Main" event so residents can get out and see other people by driving slowly along their community's main roadway
- Ask local entertainers to perform online or outside of their homes

Communication and Information



- Work with businesses and internet service providers to expand access to affordable high-speed internet
- Create a "friendly voice" call program for checking on people who live alone
- Establish information hotlines and distribute "necessity bags" that contain needed supplies

Health Services and Community Supports



- Work with municipal offices, houses of worship and first responders to coordinate deliveries and visits to people who can't go out
- Provide vouchers for groceries and household goods to residents in need
- Expand where SNAP (supplemental nutrition assistance program) benefits can be used
- Conduct wellness checks and implement quarantine measures in senior care facilities
- Prioritize assistance to people with underlying medical conditions
- Stock book-swap boxes (such as Little Free Libraries) with needed items
- Improve access to fresh foods from farm stands, farmers' markets or community supported agriculture (CSA) harvests by enabling pre-orders and providing free or low-cost grab-and-go and home delivery options

Civic Participation and Employment



- Connect people with educational and social opportunities through online "virtual" academies
- Promote online volunteerism for advocacy or service campaigns
- Foster local economic assets, such as maker spaces or by adapting commercial properties for needed but temporary uses

Emergency Preparedness



- Add safety resources and tips to utility bills and local government mailings
- Create tool kits that can help older adults manage in the event of a power outage, food shortages or other disruptions
- Use or adapt existing emergency plans and resources

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Learn More...

Visit us on the web at:
aarp.org/livable

To get Involved:
aarpcommunityconnections.org/

Email me at:
awatson@aarp.org



Q&A

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Upcoming Webinar:

Visit bu.edu/ioc to join our mailing list and stay-up-to date with future webinar announcements.



Wednesday, June 10th, 1:00-2:30pm EDT

Register: bit.ly/ioczones610

Join us for an online briefing to share new research and perspectives on how the federal Opportunity Zones policy is working for cities, including how it can be used as a tool for COVID-19 economic recovery. The webinar will feature findings from the national Menino Survey of Mayors (Boston University) about mayoral perspectives on Opportunity Zones, followed by a discussion with The Rockefeller Foundation, Citi Ventures, and the Economic Innovation Group (EIG) about on-the-ground observations, new data resources, and strategies for ensuring cities, investors, and developers can deliver on the policy's goal to improve the lives of low-income Americans