

NORTH CAROLINA SENIOR TAR HEEL LEGISLATURE 2019 FACT SHEET

SENIOR CENTERS

The Senior Tar Heel Legislature requests that the General Assembly maintain the current General Purpose funding and increase this funding by a recurring \$350,000 to continue to meet the vital needs of North Carolina's growing population of older adults.

Senior centers are community focal points on aging that provide a wide array of programs and services. They offer an essential link to other community programs and benefits that contribute to the physical, mental, and economic well-being of older adults and support their efforts to remain independent and engaged in their communities. In many areas of the state the senior center is the only place in the community where important services such as nutrition programs and transportation can be accessed. Currently there are 171 senior centers in North Carolina that are either operational or under development in 97 counties. There are three counties without a senior center (Gates, Henderson, and Union).

There are two funding streams for senior centers through the Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS).

Senior Center General Purpose funding is designated for the purpose of supporting existing and developing senior centers. The state's General Purpose funding has continued to remain level as the number of older adults continues to climb. Senior centers continue to struggle financially to meet the rising costs of operations, administration, and providing programs and services to meet the needs of the current senior population and its expected growth.

General Purpose funding drives the certification program and the certification program drives senior center excellence. Over 60% of the senior centers in the state are certified as Centers of Excellence or Merit. Prior to the implementation of the certification program there was inconsistent quality, performance, and accountability across the state. The certification process brought positive changes by providing a standardized set of measurable indicators of best practice that applied to all senior centers. These positive changes have been documented by the DAAS and they now know that certified centers offer more services and programming and provide cost saving services to the communities they serve. *To ensure these high standards and outcomes this funding needs to be available to senior centers.*

Senior Center Operations is an allowable service through the Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) and is funded at the discretion of counties. The number of centers funded for operations reflect those with full-time programs and the capacity to meet the DAAS Senior Center Operations service standards.

Investing in home and community-based programs, such as senior centers, makes social and economic sense. While accessing community-based services and supports, seniors are able to stay mentally and physically healthy in their own communities as long as possible. If these supports are not available seniors are at risk for depression, suicide, self-neglect, hospitalization and chronic illness. Therefore, maintaining independence in one's home with community support contributes to more positive outcomes, especially when it comes to health. These improved outcomes can, in turn, lead to cost savings over time.