

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-15-190](#), a report to congressional requesters.

Why GAO Did This Study

Research has shown that many older adults want to age in their homes and communities, and their ability to do so often depends on the availability of home and community-based services and other supports. GAO was asked to review the availability of such services.

This report addresses (1) federal programs that fund these services and supports for older adults, (2) how these services and supports are planned and delivered in selected localities, and (3) agencies' efforts to promote a coordinated federal system of these services and supports. GAO reviewed federal program documents and interviewed federal officials. It also visited programs in the Atlanta, Georgia region, Montgomery County, Maryland, and San Francisco California, chosen based on efforts made to enhance their system of HCBS and supports, recommendations from federal agencies and experts, varied governmental jurisdiction, and geographic dispersion.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that HHS facilitate development of a cross agency federal strategy to ensure efficient and effective use of federal resources for HCBS. HHS concurred and HUD, DOT, and USDA did not comment.

View [GAO-15-190](#). For more information, contact Kay Brown at (202) 512-7215 or brownke@gao.gov.

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OLDER ADULTS

Federal Strategy Needed to Help Ensure Efficient and Effective Delivery of Home and Community-Based Services and Supports

What GAO Found

Five federal agencies within four departments fund home and community-based services and supports that older adults often require to continue living independently in their own homes and communities. The Administration on Aging (AoA) and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Transportation (DOT), and Agriculture (USDA) provide funds, often through state agencies, to local governments and community-based organizations.

Federal Agencies That Fund Home and Community-based Services and Related Supports for Older Adults, by Department

		Home and Community-based Services and Related Supports			
		Nutrition Services	In-home Services	Affordable Housing	Transportation
Department of Health and Human Services	Administration on Aging; Administration for Community Living	X	X		X
	Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services	X	X		X
Department of Housing and Urban Development	Office of Multi-Family Housing Programs			X	
Department of Transportation	Federal Transit Administration				X
Department of Agriculture	Food and Nutrition Service	X			

Source: GAO analysis of documents from the departments listed. | GAO-15-190

The Older Americans Act of 1965 (the Act) requires AoA to promote and support a comprehensive system of services.

In the three localities GAO visited, local area agencies on aging, assisted by other community-based organizations, took the lead in planning and delivering services and supports for older adults, paid for with a mix of federal, state, and local funding. An Atlanta organization employed home-care aides for older adults and delivered meals. Senior housing developments across the three localities connected more frail residents to in-home services. In San Francisco and Montgomery County, grassroots organizations known as villages provided help with errands. Officials in two localities reported that flat funding of certain state funds, combined with the growing number of older adults, has resulted in waiting lists for affordable housing and in-home services.

The Act requires AoA to facilitate collaboration among federal agencies; however, the five agencies that fund these services and supports for older adults do so, for the most part, independently. GAO's work on interagency collaboration has found that collaboration is important for federal efforts that involve more than one agency. HHS, through AoA, has indicated that competing priorities for its limited resources prevent it from leading development of a cross-agency federal strategy. However, developing such a strategy could help ensure that the five agencies' resources for HCBS and supports are used efficiently and effectively.