

Summary of Grand Junction Breakout Group Discussions

Red Group (facilitated by Steve Child)

Priorities and Gaps in Services:

1. Financial supports for seniors/financial insecurity
2. Expenses associated with medical care
3. Medicaid eligibility concerns/refusal by providers to accept Medicaid
4. Caregiver supports/quality homecare
5. Quality long-term care/need to address workforce issues and problems with employee turnover
6. Advocacy for senior services within community
7. Affordable housing
8. Access to resources/need for centralized source/need to educate the public about what services are available
9. Create livable communities
10. Transportation options, including services for disabled
11. Need for different transportation funding formula outside of Front Range
12. Need to address urban-rural disparities/ensure adequate services in rural communities
13. Need to address accessibility of services/lack of access forces reliance on family
14. Better use of technology to improve access to services/need to address lack of internet access in some rural areas

Solutions:

1. More supports to help seniors remain in their homes for as long as possible
2. Technology
3. More money to AAAs to support transportation and mobility options
4. Reliance on senior volunteers to fill gaps in service providers
5. Two-gen/multigenerational approach to volunteerism/support opportunities for two-way education/reliance on youth service organizations (key club, girl scouts, boy scouts)

Yellow Group (facilitated by Mindy Kemp)

Priorities and Gaps in Services:

1. Training for support staff (CNAs) and protective services staff
2. Improved level of care in nursing/assisted living facilities, more support and training for staff
3. Provider shortage in nursing/assisted living facilities
4. More supports needed to help seniors age in place
5. More opportunities for social and recreational interactions
6. Improved transportation options
7. Affordable housing

8. Need to address problems associated with limited state funding/population growth increases demands on public funding
9. Need to improve treatment and placement options for older adults with behavioral health issues
10. Need to help/encourage migrant workers to access services

Solutions:

1. Establish sin tax to raise revenue
2. Marijuana Tax Cash Fund (MTCF) used to purchase old buildings that can be converted into senior care facilities
3. Increase use of community collaborations to address problems/needs in community
4. Higher wages and better training to reduce provider shortages and turnover
5. More training and supports for family care providers
6. Immigration reform/more people needed to fill jobs
7. Prioritize aging issues
8. Broaden scope of volunteer pool (jails?)
9. Integrated affordable housing (seniors with younger populations - i.e. college students) (DU experimented with co-location of seniors and students within dormitories - outcome?)
10. Educate public on how to support seniors in local neighborhoods
11. Need to encourage/support early retirement savings
12. Need to build homes that are age-friendly
13. Need state aging coordinator
14. Need more input from rural communities
15. Need to change perceptions of aging within our culture
16. Responsibility for aging population needs to be shared among all levels of government

Blue Group (facilitated by Gene Rose)

Priorities and Gaps in Services. There is a need for more:

1. Professional behavior services, including psychiatric and mental care in Western Slope
2. Affordable housing for seniors, including ADA accessible
3. Doctors that accept Medicaid
4. Financial resources for senior centers
5. Transportation options for seniors
6. Transportation programs in rural areas
7. Standardized curriculum on senior issues
8. Deregulation of duplicative regulations
9. Qualified caregiver services
10. Of a central, accessible location for information on health care
11. Marketing of available services to seniors
12. Actions to lift Medicaid restrictions
13. Education on available technology options for seniors
14. Funding/incentives for new and creative solutions to address aging issues

15. Training for local caregivers
16. Options for health care services
17. Respite Care and caregivers

Solutions:

1. Housing
 - a. Rent is prohibitive, need for Homestead Act to go away
 - b. Create incentives for landlords and developers to create living spaces for seniors
 - c. Get housing authority to take more active role in promoting and requiring housing for seniors
 - d. Reduce waiting lists for housing
 - e. Stop housing spaces designated from seniors be given to other renters
 - f. Create senior housing where none exists, such as Palisade and Fruita
2. Behavioral Services
 - a. Create mental health services for region; none currently available -- many shipped to Eastern Plains (average of 15 people denied services per month)
 - b. Build a behavioral center in Western Slope or convert an existing facility into a center
 - c. Create incentives/requirements for doctors to follow patients into care facilities
 - d. Facilitate conversations with providers to coordinate services; currently services are fragmented
3. Caregivers
 - a. Address high mortality rate for caregivers
 - b. Provide more education for caregivers, particularly before a crisis
4. Address the disciplinary climate, which restricts those providing care
5. Break molds of current system and look for innovative solutions
6. Create pilot program funding sources so communities can try new solutions to existing problems
7. Protect critical programs when the economy goes bad
8. Public / Public Officials
 - a. Help regions understand the process it takes to make changes
 - b. Provide advice on how to communicate with key decision makers, such as county commissioners and state legislators. We need to know how to lobby effectively.
 - c. Educate commissioners, state legislators on what it is like to live like a senior
 - d. Help public understand senior issues

Green Group (facilitated by Ben Moultrie)

Two overarching themes from the needs/gaps session:

- Independence - what types of things can we do to improve and ensure independent living for those who desire to continue living independently as they age? This includes access to services, transportation, housing, retirement, caregivers, etc

- Community based problems & solutions -- things like disparities between urban (Grand Junction) and rural (outlying communities) workforce development, caregiver respite will need to come from the community. More public education, and in particular, education of legislators, needs to happen so that there is better understanding about the community and system needs so they in turn support the development of infrastructure and the provision of funds when communities are strategically planning and addressing aging system needs.

Solutions:

- Shift our perceptions and ideas about retirement--people living and working longer
- Address elected officials varying sensitivities and knowledge about aging issues
- Address negative stigma of considering GJ as a 'retirement community' -- look to Colorado Springs who has been able to show positive economic benefits to having an aging population.
 - Planning Group could provide data about the wealth of the aging population to help negate the negative economic development argument of being defined as a retirement community.
- Making sure aging services and resources are well utilized and that they are easy to access
- Coordinating and building awareness about the human resources and capacity that supports the aging community
 - 211 is underutilized - how do we make more people aware about the different resources that exist to support services?
- Make grant dollars and/or program dollars criteria more specific to the differences that exist in rural communities. Most are geared toward big communities and/or big urban problems and programs delivery.
- Engage the state's community foundations on the community level needs around aging specifically (collectively or individually).