

**New Jersey**

**Ensuring State-Level Readiness for an Aging Society: Formulating a Healthy Aging Roadmap**

The aging “baby-boomer” population will place unprecedented demands on the nation’s public health and aging services networks. Among CDC’s priorities is to ensure that these networks are more closely linked and are able to readily share and build on their respective expertise, outreach, and data for action. A statewide plan for healthy aging is among the critical foundational elements for meeting the challenges of an aging society.

In 2007, with CDC support through an “opportunity grant” under the SENIOR grant program, New Jersey organizations undertook the development of the *Blueprint for Healthy Aging in New Jersey*. This document was to provide for a first ever compilation of easily-referenced, county-level material designed to: 1) educate key decision makers and others on the health status of older New Jersey residents; 2) raise awareness of health benefits from the adoption of healthy behaviors; 3) highlight evidence-based health promotion programs that can be supported and replicated throughout the state; and, 4) provide both the public health and aging services networks with needed data to effectively plan, implement, and evaluate health promotion efforts directed towards older adults. The reports’ development process had a key benefit in that it required a broad base of partners working closely together. A variety of internal offices within the New Jersey Department of Health and Human Services (NJ DHHS) actively participated, as well as local health departments, county offices on aging, senior centers, hospital wellness programs, parish nurses, and local provider agencies, among others.

The NJ DHHS undertook critical activities to ensure that the content of the first ever *Blueprint* would be complete, accurate, and up-to-date. For example, a survey was conducted to obtain information on existing data, local health promotion programs, and current strategies pursued by local agencies to promote older adult health. To guide and assist individual communities in their efforts directed toward older adult health, information on key health behaviors for older adults and examples of model programs and strategies were identified, compiled, and highlighted in the *Blueprint*. To emphasize personal success stories, the NJ DHHS sought examples from an identified community resident in each New Jersey county on the positive impact healthy behaviors had on their lives, even if initiated in older age. Innovative marketing and dissemination strategies were showcased in the *Blueprint* to help jumpstart community efforts in health promotion for older adults.

New Jersey’s *Blueprint* has served to focus, coordinate, and catalyze community-based efforts throughout the state in support of healthy aging. To accompany widespread dissemination of the *Blueprint*, DHHS staff trained community partners in using the tool for awareness raising, policy development, and expansion of health promotion programming for older adults. Among those trained were the Executive Directors of all New Jersey area agencies on aging and public health officers in each county. Extending its benefits, the *Blueprint* was instrumental in enabling New Jersey to successfully compete for a grant from the National Council on Aging to build a statewide system to support chronic disease self management. It has also served as the catalyst for a state-based program funding community-based, minority organizations to implement chronic disease self-management programs. Given its breadth, depth, and scope, the tool continues to catalyze and facilitate the work of community-based agencies and organizations in their efforts to promote and preserve the health of their older residents.