

## INTERGENERATIONAL ELEMENTS IN THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT

### THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT (OAA)

In 1965 the OAA was enacted to provide grants to states to develop and improve services and programs to help older persons. The services provided by the OAA have made a precious difference in the lives of millions of older adults and those who care about them. The OAA was reauthorized in 2006 and now includes significant additions to the National Family Caregiver Support Program, and exciting new provisions for multigenerational demonstration projects.

Intergenerational programs encourage young and old to share their talents and resources and support each other in relationships that benefit both the individuals involved and the whole community.



Photo: Maxine Gilmeister

### INTERGENERATIONAL PROVISIONS IN THE OAA NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM (NFCSP)

The NFCSP was the first major intergenerational initiative in the Older Americans Act. Important changes made during the 2006 reauthorization have extended its support to many more families. The age limit has been lowered from 60 to 55 for grandparents and other relatives raising children to qualify for supportive services through NFCSP. Support services include: information to caregivers about available services; assistance to caregivers in gaining access to the services; individual counseling; organization of support groups and caregiver training; respite care; and supplemental services to complement care provided by caregivers. Up to ten percent of funds can go toward support services for grandparents and other relatives raising children. (Section 320 of the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2006, Public Law 109-365).

### DEMONSTRATION, SUPPORT AND RESEARCH PROJECTS

The 2006 reauthorization provided for grants to fund multi-generational activities and civic engagement activities. The Act gives examples of a range of activities, as well as defining some important terms. To be eligible for a grant, an organization can:

- promote volunteerism, and facilitate the development of and participation in multigenerational activities and civic engagement activities through the use of a multigenerational coordinator;

- support grandparents or other older relatives raising children; or
- involve older volunteers in providing support and information to families with special needs.

A multigenerational coordinator is someone who nurtures productive, sustainable working relationships between individuals from older and younger generations. This is the first time that the role has been defined in law. (Section 417).

### BROADER OPPORTUNITIES FOR CIVIL ENGAGEMENT

The Administration on Aging shall increase opportunities for older adults to participate in national service programs,

and foster capacity-building initiatives which focus on developing older adults as a community resource. (Section 202).

### OLDER AMERICAN COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

The program promotes paid community service for unemployed low-income adults aged 55 or over. The service must contribute to the general welfare of the community, which may include support for children, youth and families. (Section 502).

### SUPPORTIVE SERVICES AND MULTIPURPOSE SENIOR CENTERS

Area Agencies on Aging are required to make efforts to coordinate services with agencies and organizations carrying out intergenerational programs or projects. Grants are made to states for providing services to encourage and facilitate regular interaction between students and older individuals including visits in long-term care facilities, multipurpose senior centers, and other settings. (Section 311).

### NUTRITION SERVICES/MEAL PROGRAMS

State nutrition projects should provide meals that, where feasible, encourage arrangements with schools and other facilities serving meals to children in order to promote joint intergenerational meal programs. (Section 316).

### FAMILY FRIENDS PROGRAM

The Family Friends program operates in 26 locations throughout the U.S. and is funded in part from a grant under the OAA. The National Center for Family Friends at the National Council on Aging provides technical assistance to the network of projects, measures project outcomes, and develops innovations. In its original design, volunteers 55 and older provided weekly in-home support to families who have children with disabilities or chronic illnesses. Over the years, Family Friends has branched out to support homeless families, grandfamilies, and families in which the parents have cognitive delays. Volunteers also provide support in hospitals, clinics, and schools. A Family Friends volunteer provides a customized support to each family. For example a volunteer might model positive parenting skills, offer respite, accompany family to doctor visits and teacher meetings, reinforce therapies, and best of all, encourage and listen.

### DISEASE PREVENTION AND HEALTH PROMOTION SERVICES

Programs that offer multigenerational participation provided by an institution of higher learning, a local education agency or community-based organization are included in the OAA definition of disease prevention and health promotion services. (Section 102).

### THE OAA BUILDS STRONG COMMUNITIES OLDER ADULTS SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

Through a wide range of programs across the United States, older adult volunteers are providing: friendship and support to sick or disabled children and their families, practical assistance with everyday tasks, teaching, mentoring and advocacy, as well as a lifetime of experience. They are teaching a new generation

### THE NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM (NFCSP)

Through the NFCSP, caregivers can access supports including information, assistance, individual counseling, support groups and caregiver training, respite care and supplemental services. This comprehensive approach is aimed at serving three specific target groups - family caregivers of older adults, grandparents and older relative caregivers of children and older adults caring for an adult relative with a disability. Since this program began helping grandparents and other older relatives raising grandchildren in 2000, it has provided support, to older caregivers like the Kentucky grandmother who delayed a needed operation because she feared that she would not be able to care for her grandson during her recovery. Without the short-term home help provided by the NFCSP, her grandson might have been placed in foster care.

of children, supporting families in need, and helping to keep their communities strong and cohesive.

When older adults are actively involved in the community, everyone benefits. Intergenerational programs bring together diverse groups and networks and help to dispel inaccurate stereotypes. They tend to multiply human resources by engaging volunteers and maximize financial resources by sharing sites or supplies.

### COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR OLDER ADULTS

Intergenerational programs provide a huge range of services to older adults. These services are extremely cost-effective: a little help can keep older adults independent for longer, and reduce reliance on hospitals or expensive institutional care. Intergenerational programs can provide: errand services, companionship, neighborhood safety, meal delivery or home maintenance services.

About 2.5 million grandparents are raising their grandchild or grandchildren, and many more older adults care for a relative with a disability. Intergenerational programs like the National Family Caregiver Support Program provide much needed help to families in difficult situations.

Intergenerational programs also provide many volunteer and service opportunities for older adults. These opportunities allow older adults to remain productive, useful and valued members of society, and prevent them from becoming isolated and lonely. Volunteering can give older adults the opportunity to learn from different sections of the community, as well as to forge new friendships with people of all age-groups.

For more information please contact Generations United at 1333 H Street, NW • Suite 500 West • Washington, DC 20005 202-289-3979, fax: 202-289-3952, email [gu@gu.org](mailto:gu@gu.org).

*Generations United (GU) is the only national membership organization focused solely on improving the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs, and policies. GU represents more than 100 national, state, and local organizations representing more than 70 million Americans. GU serves as a resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. GU provides a forum for those working with children, youth, and older adults to explore areas of common ground while celebrating the richness of each generation.*



The GU web site at [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org) contains additional information about intergenerational programs and policies.

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