

FACT SHEET

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 2000 and includes the new National Family Caregiver Support Act.

In addition, the OAA contains several provisions that are intergenerational. These little known areas call for programs that encourage the young and old to share their talents and resources and support each other in relationships that benefit both the individuals and the community.

PROVISIONS INCLUDE:

Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Services

Includes in its definition, programs that offer multigenerational participation provided by an institution of higher learning, a local education agency or community-based organization. (Section 101)

Supportive Services and Multipurpose Senior Centers

Requires Area Agencies on Aging 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 school-aged children and older individuals such as multipurpose senior centers and visits in long-term care facilities. (Section 311)

National Family Caregiver Support Act

Provides \$125 million dollars for multifaceted systems of support services to family caregivers of individuals 60 and older and grandparents and other relatives 60 and older who raise children. 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. Ten percent of funds can go toward support services for older grandparents and other relatives raising children. (Section 316)

Nutrition Services/Meal Programs

Encourages state nutrition projects to promote intergenerational meal programs by making arrangements with schools and other facilities serving meals to children. (Section 339)



Training, Research, and Discretionary Projects and Programs

In making grants and contracts, requires that special consideration be given to programs that provide expanded, innovative volunteer opportunities to older adults, including those that provide multigenerational service by older individuals to children. (Section 417) Grants are also awarded to organizations specifically to provide computer and enhanced Internet access to older adults at elementary schools, secondary schools, and institutions of higher education. (Section 415)

Community Service and Employment

Establishes an older American community service program to promote older adults engaging in compensated community service which includes social, health, welfare and educational services (including literacy tutoring), legal and other counseling services. (Section 502)

WHY DO INTERGENERATIONAL PROVISIONS BELONG IN THE OAA?

In addition to the benefits outlined above, intergenerational programs provide a number of cost-effective services to older adults such as:

- Errand Services
- Companionship
- Neighborhood Safety

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- Meal Delivery
- Home Maintenance Services
- Supportive Services to Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children

WHY SHOULD OLDER ADULTS VOLUNTEER?

Older adult volunteers receive a number of benefits from intergenerational interaction associated with “successful aging” including:

- Remaining productive, useful and valued members of society
- Applying the skills of a lifetime to new challenges
- Learning from young people and forging new friendships and experiences
- Conveying cultural information to a new generation
- Decreasing loneliness and isolation

THE FAMILY FRIENDS PROGRAM:

AN EXAMPLE OF HOW THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT CAN SUPPORT OLDER ADULTS THROUGH INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS

The Family Friends Program began in 1986 with the recruitment of volunteers over the age of 55 to work specifically with children with disabilities, including those suffering from chronic illness. Today, the Family Friends model of utilizing older volunteers continues to prove effective with a number of other populations such as those at risk of school failure, teen pregnancy or substance abuse.

Older adult volunteers provide:

- Friendship to the children and their families
- Support
- Practical assistance with everyday tasks
- Their lifetimes of experience

The Family Friends program has been funded since 1991 in part by the Administration on Aging through a demonstration project grant under the OAA. Today there are 35 Family Friends projects that operate throughout the US. Technical assistance is provided by The National Council on the Aging.

THE NEW NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT ACT: AN INTERGENERATIONAL INITIATIVE

The National Family Caregiver Support Program will provide supportive services to informal family caregivers providing care to an older relative with a serious chronic illness or disability and to grandparents and other relatives raising children.

When the National Family Caregiver Support Program was initially proposed, grandparents and other relatives raising children were not included in those eligible to receive supportive services. With the help

of Senators DeWine (R-OH), Kennedy (D-MA), Mikulski (D-MD), and Jeffords (R-VT), GU has pioneered the inclusion of grandparents and other relatives raising children in the NFCSA based on the belief that older Americans give care as often as they receive it and play a key role in holding American families together.

In 1999, GU Executive Director Donna Butts testified before the Senate Subcommittee on Aging on behalf of the National Family Caregiver Support Program. Sub-committee Chairman DeWine (R-OH) asked Butts to report specifically on grandparents and other relatives raising children and how this population might benefit from such a program. This testimony led to their inclusion in the program.



GENERATIONS UNITED (GU) is the national membership organization focused solely on promoting intergenerational strategies, programs, and policies. GU represents more than 100 national, state, and local organizations representing more than 70 million Americans and is the only national organization advocating for the mutual well-being of children, youth, and older adults. 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 the elderly to explore areas of common ground while celebrating the richness of each generation.

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202/ 289-3979, fax: 202/289-3952, email gu@gu.org. The GU web site at www.gu.org contains additional information about intergenerational programs and policies.

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