

Intergenerational Opportunities in the Older Americans Act 2020 Reauthorization

Overview

In 1965, Congress enacted the Older Americans Act (OAA) to provide grants to states to develop and improve services and programs to help older people. The services and programs provided by the OAA have made notable differences in the lives of millions of older adults and those who care about them. Throughout the Act's 54-year lifespan, Congress has modified and amended it through the reauthorization process to ensure that older individuals maintain maximum independence in their homes and communities. Previous reauthorizations have added and expanded opportunities for intergenerational programs.

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

Current Context

The OAA was reauthorized through the Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020 which was signed into law on March 25, 2020. The Act—which includes a series of bipartisan intergenerational provisions that Generations United helped champion—has been reauthorized through 2024. The following identifies the intergenerational opportunities that have been expanded or newly created through this reauthorization of the Older Americans Act.



National Family Caregiver Support Program –

Sec. 217 and Sec. 218 The National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP) provides grants to state agencies on aging that award funds to area agencies on aging (AAA's) for caregiver support. The NFCSP was among the first intergenerational additions to the OAA and has allowed various family caregivers to qualify for support, including grandparents and other relatives age 55 and older who are raising children. NFCSP support services include: educating caregivers on what services are available; assisting caregivers in accessing the services; individual counseling; organizing support groups or caregiver trainings; respite care; and supplemental services that complement care provided by the caregiver. Previously, there was a 10% cap on the funds that could be spent on grandparents and other relatives raising children.

The reauthorization law removes the 10% cap, allowing states to determine how to best spend their funds and to best meet the needs of their communities. It also allows the Secretary of Health

and Human Services to award funds for activities of national significance that improve supports provided to older caregivers.

Grant Program for Multigenerational Collaboration – Sec. 306

The OAA reauthorization expands upon an existing grant program to encourage projects that focus on multigenerational collaboration. It specifies that these programs can and should reduce social isolation which occurs most commonly in the youngest and oldest generations. Key goals to be developed when carrying out intergenerational activities are creating meaningful roles for participants, ensuring reciprocity in relationship-building, promoting lifelong learning, reducing social isolation and building social connectedness. The reauthorization specifies that programs supporting older caregivers of children including kinship navigator programs qualify for these grants. The grant periods for these programs are at least three years. Programs serving both young and old should be prioritized, and the Assistant Secretary shall give preference to shared site

programs such as co-located childcare and long-term care facilities. Qualifying organizations operating the grants shall use multigenerational coordinators.

Transportation – Sec. 305 The OAA has historically supported programs that make transportation accessible to older adults. The reauthorization includes support for existing and new programs to modernize their provision of services through updating technology. It also establishes that information on how to use different types of transportation must be made more accessible to older Americans. It encourages transportation programs to identify opportunities to share resources to reduce costs of transportation services. One way to share costs for these transportation services is by using an intergenerational model and creating a program that benefits multiple generations.

Interagency Coordinating Committee on Healthy Aging and Age-Friendly Communities – Sec. 124 The reauthorization modernizes the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Healthy Aging and includes support for age-friendly communities so older adults can age in place. The act requires the committee to seek input from nonprofits and other community organizations, allowing intergenerational programs to share their knowledge and expertise to help make their communities more age-friendly. Age-friendly communities are defined as those that allow older adults to participate fully in their communities by giving them the supports to do so, including through social opportunities, civic participation, and volunteerism, all of which offer avenues for intergenerational connections.

Nutrition – Sec. 210 and Sec. 306 Nutrition programs have been a longstanding part of the OAA.

The act authorizes congregate nutrition programs designed to provide healthy meals to also present opportunities for social engagement, information on healthy aging and meaningful volunteer roles. The act encourages multigenerational nutrition and meal service programs, where possible, such as through partnership with schools or other places that provide meals for children. It recommends that states, in consultation with area agencies on aging, reduce the administrative burden for these programs and help direct limited resources to where services are needed most. This could benefit communities using intergenerational meal program models.

Report on Social Isolation – Sec. 126 The reauthorization includes a provision that requires the Secretary on Aging to review existing programs in the OAA to determine if and how they address social need and make recommendations on how programs can improve and address negative impacts associated with social isolation for older adults.

Intergenerational programs, especially shared site programs, have demonstrated their abilities to do just that. A report on social isolation should look to intergenerational programs as a model for their ability to reduce social isolation for participants.

Extension of Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act – Sec. 605 In 2018 Congress passed the Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act which created a council to examine the needs, supports, and services for families where grandparents and other relatives are raising children. The council is charged with issuing a report to Congress on their findings. The OAA reauthorization extends the act for an additional year.

For more information on the Older Americans Act and resources on intergenerational programs and grandparents and other relatives raising children visit www.gu.org

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