

FAST FACTS

AAA Housing Navigation Services

US^Aging

Leaders in Aging Well at Home



**Most AAAs
(88 percent)
provide one or more
housing-related service.**

Learn more in the AAA
National Survey Chartbook:
www.usaging.org/AAAsurvey.

Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) link older adults and people with disabilities to the services and supports they need to live with independence and dignity at home and in their communities—and housing navigation is a natural and critical extension of that mission. This assistance is vital, as 94 percent of AAAs report a major shortage of affordable housing in their service areas. Other housing-related challenges reported by AAAs include older adults' inability to maintain or repair homes, long waitlists for housing assistance, inaccessible housing and increasing costs for rent, property taxes and long-term care.¹

Thirty-two percent of AAAs provide housing navigation services to help older adults locate or maintain safe, stable housing in the community. The most common navigational activities that these AAAs provide include:



85%

gather ongoing information
about housing



79%

support consumers with
applications for housing
assistance



64%

help consumers complete and
submit rental applications

Among AAAs that provide housing navigation services, 48 percent help consumers with multiple steps in the housing search, such as landlord communications, use of online search tools and scheduling appointments or transportation to view units. Additionally, 37 percent offer services to reduce application barriers (e.g., recovering missing documents), and 35 percent support consumers in managing housing risks, such as facilitating inspections, addressing landlord issues or managing hoarding.

¹ US^Aging, *AAAs Respond to Complex Community Needs: Trends and New Directions from the National Survey of Area Agencies on Aging, 2025*, <https://www.usaging.org/Files/02127-USAgging-2025-Chartbook-Report-508.pdf>.

How AAAs Meet the Housing Needs of Older Adults

USAgings and the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies conducted four focus groups with AAAs involved in housing navigation to learn more about their work. These discussions revealed a variety of AAA roles to meet the housing needs of older adults:

- ▶ Screen and assess consumers' eligibility for housing support.
- ▶ Provide housing-related information resources, referrals to partners and case management.
- ▶ Assist consumers and caregivers with finding housing, navigating applications and long waitlists and connecting to legal services.
- ▶ Coordinate, convene and plan across systems to align aging and housing services.
- ▶ Improve housing safety and accessibility directly or through partnerships.
- ▶ Advocate for individuals, broader improvements in community housing options or both.
- ▶ Use, secure or create flexible funding sources that can be used for gap coverage of rent, utility assistance, repairs or application fees.



Promising Practices for AAA Housing Navigation

When customizing housing navigation support to the local needs of older adults, it is important for AAAs to assess their capacity and other community resources. This selection of promising practices from the focus groups may help AAAs strengthen or expand how they assist older adults with their housing needs. Some practices are crosscutting, while others relate to four different types of AAA function: information and referrals/assistance; assessments, navigation assistance and case management; eviction and homelessness prevention; and home safety and accessibility.

CROSSCUTTING

- ▶ Engage all AAA team members in learning about housing and evolving programs and services so they can provide some initial housing-related assistance.
- ▶ Adopt a three-tiered support model that triages consumers into one of three levels. For example:
 - **Light:** Provide resource lists and options counseling to individuals who can navigate independently.
 - **Moderate:** Offer one-on-one application assistance, connect consumers with other sources of support and provide some advocacy.
 - **Intensive:** Provide care management to stabilize housing and services for individuals with complex needs. Alternatively, provide immediate crisis management while placing lower-risk consumers on a care management waitlist.



AAA Housing Navigation Services

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL/ASSISTANCE

- Add a dedicated housing line to the AAA telephone system and a searchable database for affordable and accessible housing.
- Leverage Aging and Disability Resource Center partners as the primary point of contact for incoming housing-related calls and, as needed, refer consumers to AAA housing specialists.
- Assign one resource specialist as the go-to internal expert with advanced housing knowledge for colleagues and consumers.

ASSESSMENTS, NAVIGATION ASSISTANCE AND CASE MANAGEMENT

- Train staff that conduct in-home services or assessments to identify hidden housing needs for internal referral to AAA housing specialists.
- Build relationships with landlords, public housing agencies and homeless services networks to facilitate coordination and problem-solving.
- Provide additional support to AAA housing specialists to reduce emotional distress and burnout related to helping individuals in crisis.

EVICITION AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

- Create a bi-directional referral process with legal services for individuals facing evictions who may have multiple needs. Sometimes an unmet service need, such as decluttering support or behavioral health, is the root cause of housing instability.
- Set up periodic “tours” with local elected leaders, first responders and civic groups to educate them on AAA services and the importance of early intervention in preventing housing instability.
- Meet monthly with hospital and community case managers to streamline referrals and coordinate support for individuals with high levels of medical and social complexity.
- Conduct an annual summit on older adult housing and end with a call to action for the community.

HOME SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY

- Refer home modification tasks to housing rehabilitation specialists in the community that have liability insurance and ensure modifications meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards and local building codes.
- Employ an occupational therapy assistant or other specialist to visit homes, identify specific modification needs and provide technical oversight of contractors.
- Leverage local code enforcement as a strategic tool when landlords refuse to fix severe health and safety violations in older adults’ rentals.
- Provide long-term, one-on-one assistance to help older adults navigate the multi-year process of applying and securing assistance for home repairs or modifications.
- Leverage potential flexibilities with Older Americans Act Title III-E supplemental services resources for home modifications that assist caregivers.

Challenges and Future Outlook

AAAs face several recurring challenges in providing housing navigation services. Many older adults seek help only when housing loss or another crisis is imminent, which limits the options available to prevent harm. For example, consumers may call the day before an eviction, after utilities have been shut off or after a roof leak has already made the home unsafe. AAAs also report that limited flexible funding—especially for homelessness prevention—makes it difficult to provide timely assistance that can keep older adults housed. Even agencies with some flexible funding report that available resources do not meet the need.

Workforce and organizational capacity are additional common challenges for AAAs with housing specialists. Because housing navigation work can be resource intensive and emotionally demanding, some AAAs set clear parameters to avoid overextending agency capacity. They also developed referral guidelines for consumers with complex needs who may be better served by specialized community partners. Together, these practices help AAAs manage caseloads, reduce burnout and focus staff time where they can have the greatest impact.

Despite these challenges, many focus group participants aspire to develop housing assistance programs with intensive support—such as care management to stabilize housing and services for individuals with complex needs—or to address a broad range of housing needs. They are seeking partnerships and funding to strengthen how their AAAs help address the crisis in affordable and accessible housing for older adults.

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Find more housing and services resources at
www.usaging.org/housing.

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