

## CASE STUDIES: Homelessness Prevention

### On-Site Service Coordination Helps Older Adults Maintain Housing

#### Area Office on Aging of Northwest Ohio, Inc.

Toledo, OH

[www.areaofficeonaging.com](http://www.areaofficeonaging.com)

*USAging highlights successful programs and partnerships to provide inspiration for AAAs and other community-based organizations to advance their work in homelessness prevention. Find more case studies at [www.usaging.org/research](http://www.usaging.org/research).*

Area Office on Aging of Northwest Ohio, Inc. (AOoA), the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) serving Toledo and surrounding counties, **administers a housing service coordination program in two affordable apartment complexes for people age 62 and over**—one of which the AAA owns and operates. The full-time service coordinator's role is to help the older adult to successfully age in place. Service coordinators can act as a liaison for residents to help bridge the gap between the individual and the resources they need to remain housed in the community of their choosing.

Service coordination through AOoA's program is offered to every individual at move-in. About half of the building's residents utilize the service immediately, while others access the program only when they need assistance. Access to the program is also available through referral at any time. Referrals may come from the individual's family, case managers or health support staff, or the individual themselves.

The service coordinator conducts an initial assessment which is updated annually. The assessment identifies potential threats to housing stability and the service coordinator uses this information to connect the individual to available resources, benefits and services. Common services include benefits assessments, housing application assistance, scheduling or advocacy, issue resolution with housing enrollment or renewals, and service delivery coordination. Additionally, the service coordinator may help mediate a dispute between neighbors, assist with discussions about reasonable accommodations or help to resolve landlord/tenant issues.

More broadly, AOoA reports that service coordination supports housing stability by addressing health-related social needs through programs such as nutrition, transportation, visiting nurses and assistive technology. Service coordination connects individuals to options that they may otherwise not be aware of to help them age comfortably and safely.

#### Success Story

Often, the actions taken by a service coordinator may make all the difference between being adequately housed or at risk of losing safe housing. For example, a program participant was in danger of losing her housing subsidy because she did not complete the annual recertification process due to medical issues. The older adult went to the service coordinator for assistance after realizing she could not afford to pay the increased rent. The service coordinator worked with the public housing authority to recertify the individual's income so she could keep her voucher and, critically, save her housing.

## Partnerships for Housing Stability

Beyond on-site service coordination, the AOoA is a sitting member on the Toledo Lucas County Continuum of Care and the Lucas County Housing Stability League. This allows for collaboration with other local agencies to address housing needs of consumers who reach out to the AAA's Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC). The local ADRC employs two Housing Specialists to address housing-specific calls from consumers, which cover topics such as eviction prevention, rental assistance, searches for affordable and accessible housing, home repairs and ramp installation, and any other housing-related needs.

## Outcomes and Sustainability

Funding for on-site service coordination comes from local tax levies, state and federal funds, and private housing developers. When housing developers request letters of support from the AAA, AOoA takes this opportunity to educate the developers about service coordination and encourages them to enter into a memorandum of understanding in which the developer can show an increased commitment to providing safe, affordable, stable housing for low-income individuals in the community by funding an on-site service coordinator position to complement the AAA's existing local services.

AOoA recognizes that while much of what AAAs do is focused on helping older adults remain at home, that is impossible if the individual does not have a place to call home. For this reason, AOoA also develops additional affordable, accessible housing across the state of Ohio with assistance from partners and stakeholders. Find out more about these and other best practices from AOoA of NW Ohio in the [HSRC Office Hour series featuring the state](#).

## Advice for AAAs



- **Provide dedicated time for your service coordinator** to attend local meetings, councils, committees and training. Continued community involvement and partnerships will allow for greater awareness of local resources.
- **Establish on-site service coordination**, which is more effective since service coordinators can anticipate needs and step in to proactively offer assistance. Plus, being on site helps establish trusted relationships.
- **Use client assessments that ask about issues related to housing instability.** Have mitigation strategies available in all case management activities.

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