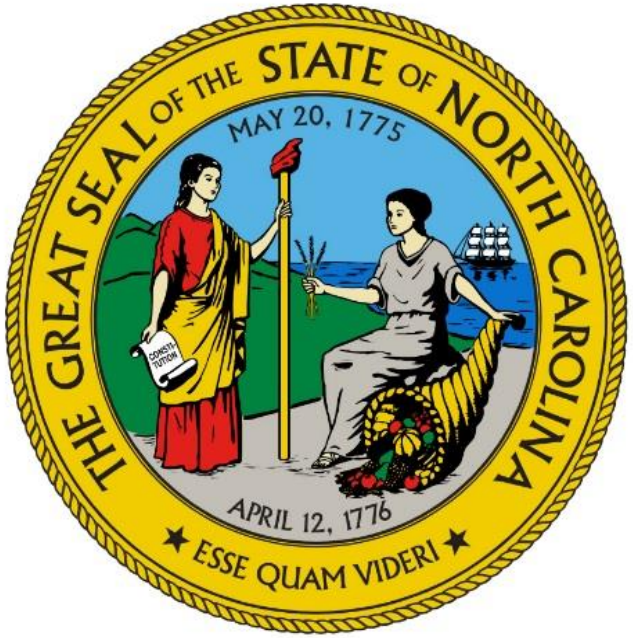


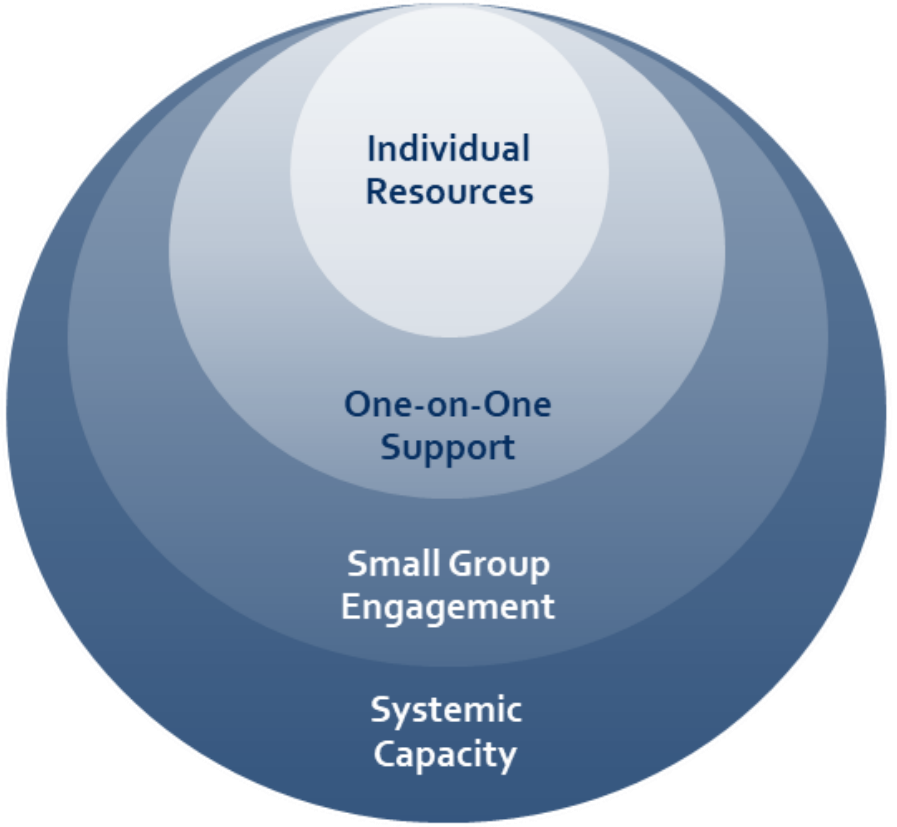
Calling "Mr./Ms. Lonely": Social Isolation, Loneliness, and Elevated Suicide Risk

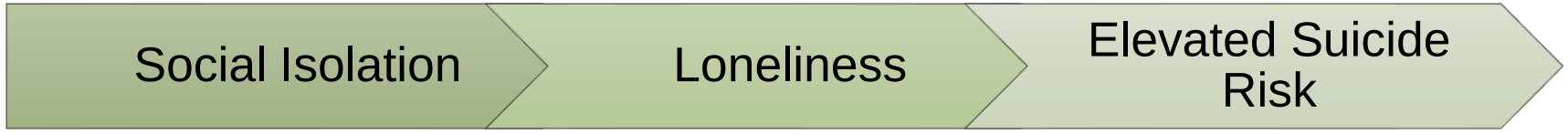
Rebecca Freeman
NCDHHS, Division of Aging and Adult Services

August 4, 2022

DAAS Social Isolation Workgroup

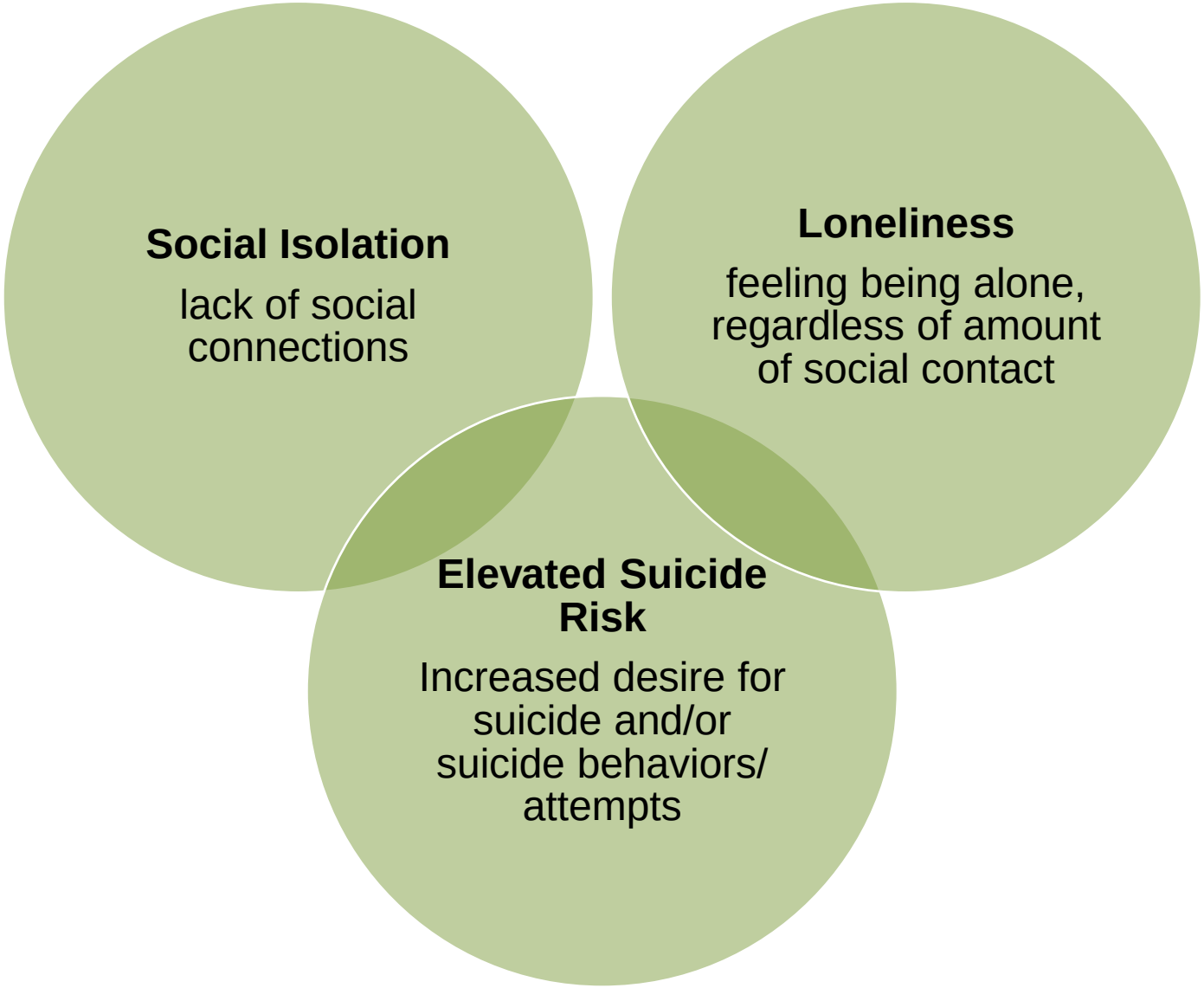
Original Mission: Establish a **comprehensive person-centered** plan to **address social isolation, loneliness**, and **elevated suicide risk (SILES)** among adults living in North Carolina.





Key Terms- SILES

Social **I**solation, **L**oneliness, and **E**levated **S**uicide Risk

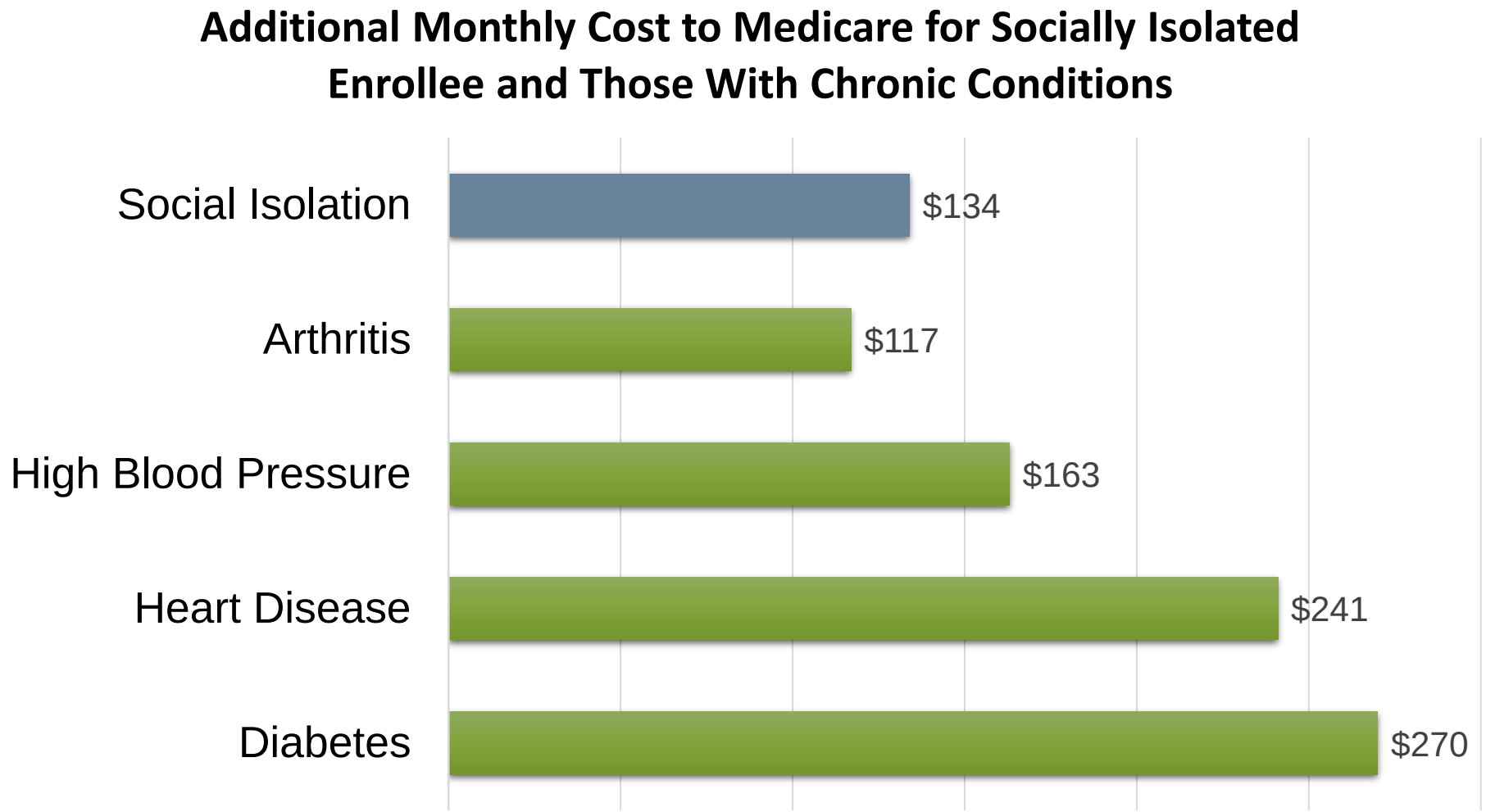


Health Impacts

High Blood Pressure	Heart Disease	Obesity	Weakened Immune System
Anxiety	Depression	Cognitive Decline	Alzheimer's
	Death	Cancer*	

https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/162549/0212_NPHA-loneliness-report-FINAL-09112020-handle.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y

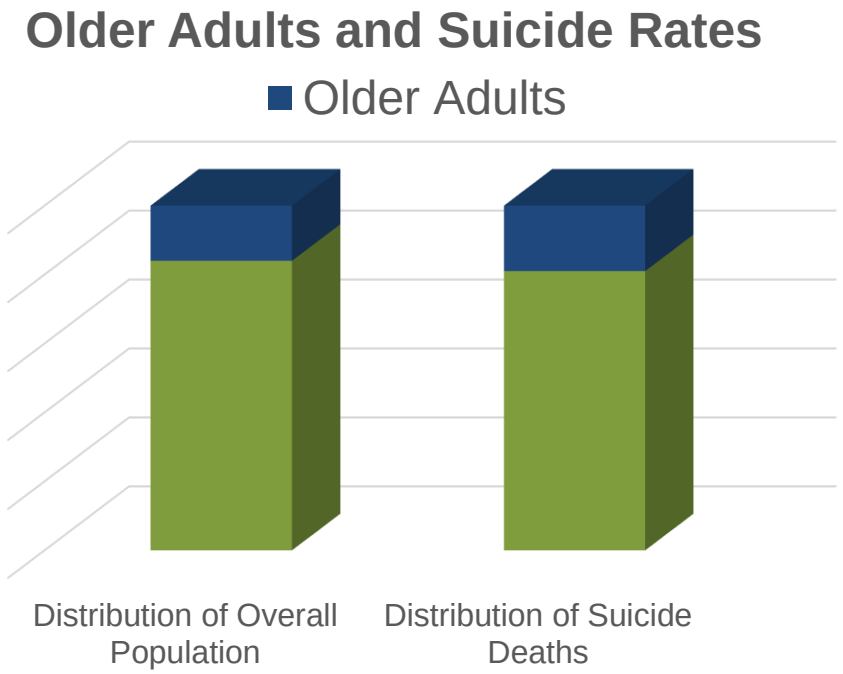
Financial Impacts



https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/2017/10/medicare-spends-more-on-socially-isolated-older-adults.pdf

Suicide and Older Adults

- **Every 65 minutes, an older adult dies by suicide in U.S.**
- **Five to 25 times more incidences of suicide than what is reported**



Lang, W. A., Ramsay, R. F., Tanney, B. L., Kinzel, T., Turley, B., & Tierney, R. J. (2013). *ASIST trainer manual* (11th ed.). Alberta, Canada: LivingWorks Education Incorporated

SPRC Key Steps to Reducing Loneliness and Social Isolation Among Older Adults

UNDERSTAND loneliness and social isolation and their effects on older adults

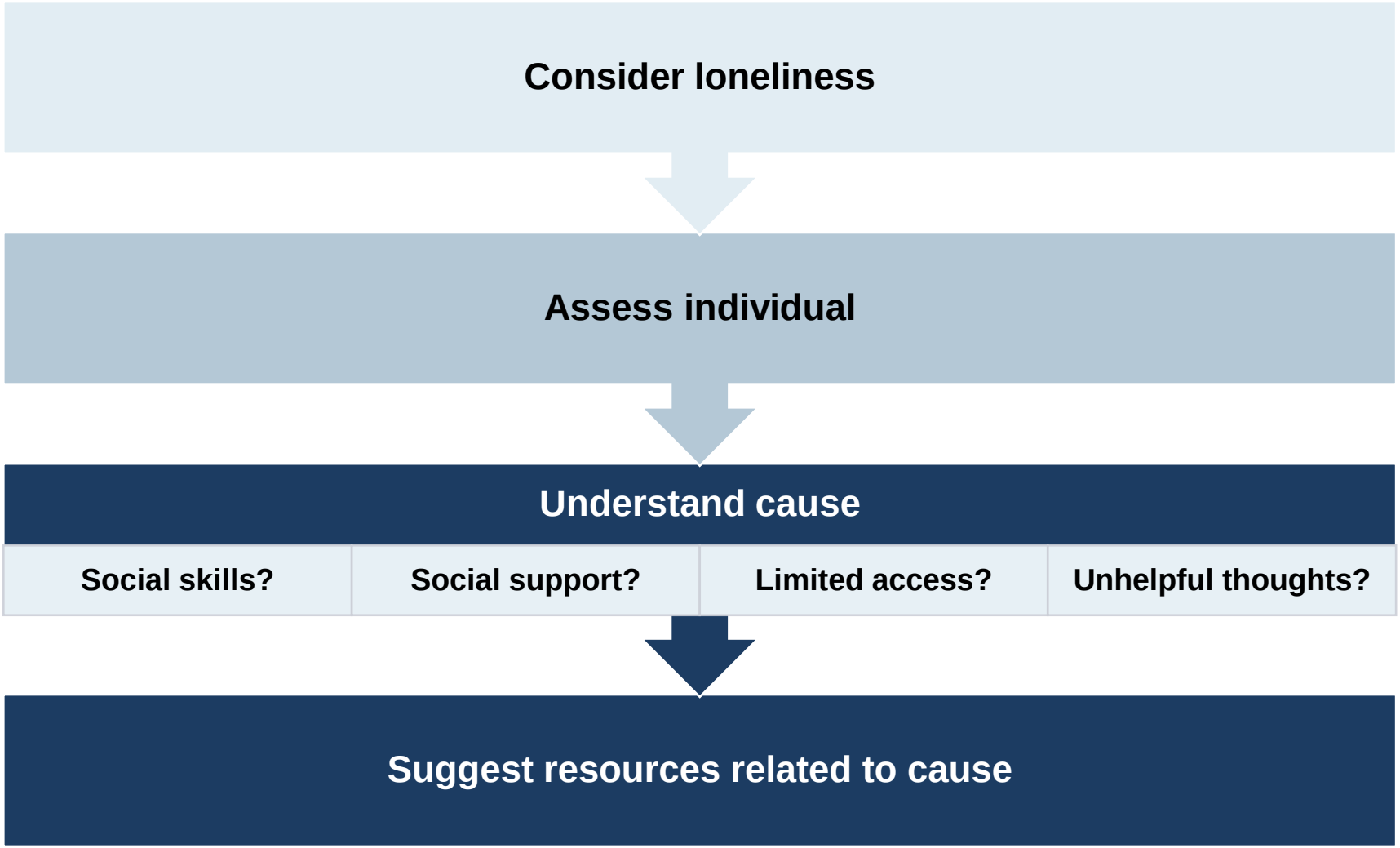
IDENTIFY AND ASSESS loneliness and its risk factors in older adults

CONNECT lonely and socially isolated older adults to services or resources ***matched*** to their personal needs and preferences

Suicide Prevention Resource Center

https://sprc.org/sites/default/files/Reducing%20Loneliness%20and%20Social%20Isolation%20Among%20Older%20Adults%20Final.pdf

SPRC Recommended Action Steps



https://sprc.org/sites/default/files/Reducing%20Loneliness%20and%20Social%20Isolation%20Among%20Older%20Adults%20Final.pdf

Division of Aging and Adult Services: Initial SILES Efforts

Develop research-based intervention to support individuals in need

- Assess impact of COVID and capacity to address SILES
- Train staff in two interventions: ASIST and BE

Develop statewide social engagement web resource

SILES Survey

	Social Isolation due to Loneliness	Mental Health Concerns	Suicide Risk
Impact of Covid-19 % who rated high or very high	92%	85%	44%
Change in Prevalence % who responded increased	95%	88%	64%
Agency Collects Data % who responded no or not sure	No- 69% Not sure- 19%	No- 63% Not sure-19%	No- 70% Not sure- 20%
Dedicated Staff to Evaluate Risk % who responded no or not sure	No- 67% Not sure- 22%	No- 67% Not sure- 21%	No- 72% Not sure- 20%
Agency's Overall Capacity to Identify % who rated high or very high	48%	46%	32%

Belonging and Empathy (B.E.) Training

Belonging

- all people want and need
- thwarted belongingness is key risk factor for suicide
- even one important connection can create sense of belonging

Empathy

- Way to help people feel they belong
- Ability to recognize, understand, and experience thoughts and feelings of another person
- Developed through practice
- Three components:
  - Nonjudgment
  - Warm understanding
  - Unconditional positive regard

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training

2-day, 14-hour, standardized suicide intervention training (11th edition)

- SAMHSA Evidence Based Registry (Gould, 2013)
- National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs
- Adopted by branches of U.S. Armed Forces
- Recognized by Centers for Disease Control and internationally
- Used in crisis centers across country

Social Engagement Web Pages

- Social Isolation and Loneliness Self-Assessments
- Resources
- Senior Center Locator
- List of Virtual Events
- Contact Forms

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Are you looking for opportunities to stay engaged and connected?

Older adults are at increased risk for loneliness and social isolation because they are more likely to face factors such as living alone, the loss of family or friends, chronic illness, and hearing loss.

LEARN ABOUT SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

FIND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Social Engagement Self-Assessment

This assessment, the Lubben Social Network Scale (LSNS-6), is a validated tool designed to measure social isolation risk by measuring the number and frequency of social contacts with family and friends. This brief, six question assessment can be self-administered. Scores of 0-12 suggest that an individual is at-risk for social isolation. Scores of 13-30 suggest stronger social connectedness.

FAMILY: Considering the people to whom you are related by birth, marriage, adoption, etc.

1. How many relatives do you see or hear from at least once a month? (Required)

○ none ○ 1 relative ○ 2 relatives ○ 3-4 relatives ○ 5-8 relatives ○ 9+ relatives

2. How many relatives do you feel at ease with that you can talk about private matters? (Required)

○ none ○ 1 relative ○ 2 relatives ○ 3-4 relatives ○ 5-8 relatives ○ 9+ relatives

3. How many relatives do you feel close to such that you could call on them for help? (Required)

○ none ○ 1 relative ○ 2 relatives ○ 3-4 relatives ○ 5-8 relatives ○ 9+ relatives

FRIENDSHIPS: Considering all of your friends including those who live in your neighborhood.

4. How many of your friends do you see or hear from at least once a month? (Required)

○ none ○ 1 friend ○ 2 friends ○ 3-4 friends ○ 5-8 friends ○ 9+ friends

5. How many friends do you feel at ease with that you can talk about private matters? (Required)

○ none ○ 1 friend ○ 2 friends ○ 3-4 friends ○ 5-8 friends ○ 9+ friends

6. How many friends do you feel close to such that you could call on them for help? (Required)

○ none ○ 1 friend ○ 2 friends ○ 3-4 friends ○ 5-8 friends ○ 9+ friends

Results

https://healthyagingnc.com/social-engagement-landing-page/

Loneliness Self-Assessment

Thank you for filling out the assessment.

You can put a description of the score here.

Your Score: 0

Would you be interested in the Loneliness Assessment?

Would you like to be contacted?

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM MAP

UCLA LONELINESS ASSESSMENT

Measuring Loneliness Scale
UCLA

A. How often do you feel that you lack companionship? *

- ○ Hardly ever
- ○ Some of the time
- ○ Often

B. How often do you feel left out? *

- ○ Hardly ever
- ○ Some of the time
- ○ Often

C. How often do you feel isolated from others? *

- ○ Hardly ever
- ○ Some of the time
- ○ Often

Results

https://healthyagingnc.com/ucla-loneliness-assessment/

Social Engagement Resources

The resources and engagement opportunities listed below are here to help you identify ways you can be more engaged, learn about the risk factors of social isolation and loneliness, and a link to the social engagement opportunities map. If you have any questions about these resources, please contact us.

Ways to Stay Engaged

Check out this list below of suggested services and programs to combat isolation for at-risk individuals or find additional ways to get engaged:

Area Agency on Aging

https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/aging-and-adult-services/adult-day-services/daas-area-agencies-aging

Area Agencies on Aging are regional hubs for resources and support for older adults and their caregivers. They can provide referrals to programs such as telephone reassurance, congregate nutrition, volunteer opportunities as well as to services. Area Agencies on Aging can also help direct you to a Senior Center, which is also a great resource. More information on senior centers can be found below! You can visit this site above to find your local Area Agency on Aging.

Public Libraries

https://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/nc-libraries/library-directory

The public library system in NC offers several ways to engage. The programs and services offered vary across the state. Having a current library card can provide you access to books and magazines online, learning a foreign language, researching your genealogy, and virtual programming to learn a new skill or hobby. Ask about large print materials, delivery of library books, or assistance with getting set up to listen to books online via a tablet or iPad. Visit this site to find your local branch.

Cooperative Extension

https://www.ces.ncsu.edu/directory/

NC Cooperative Extension has a local office in each county in North Carolina. They offer a wide variety of educational classes both in-person and online. Examples of current classes would be vegetable gardening, flower gardening, cooking, arts and crafts and photography. Visit this site to find your local Cooperative Extension branch.

Social Bridging Program

https://healthyagingnc.com/social-bridging-project/

The Social Bridging Program assist individuals that are currently experiencing social isolation or loneliness, are in need of technical assistance, are in search of resources in their community, or would benefit from regular social interaction over the phone. Visit this link to get connected.

Health Promotion Programs

https://healthyagingnc.com/programs/

Senior Centers, YMCA's and local recreation centers across North Carolina offer programs to lower the risk of chronic diseases and falls, improve long-term effects of chronic diseases or falls, manage diabetes and help improve your balance. Several organizations have transitioned these programs from an in-person setting to an online setting. Visit this site to find a class.

https://healthyagingnc.com/social-engagement-resources/

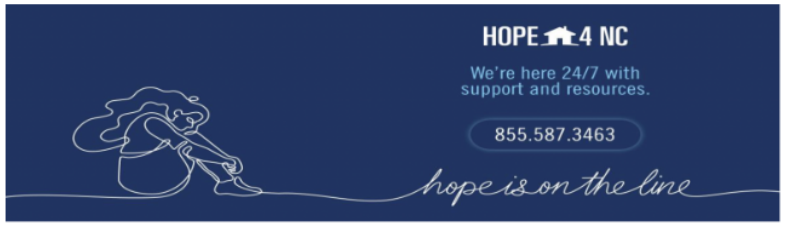
Social Engagement Resources

Find a Senior Center

To learn more about any of these resources or other ways to combat social isolation in your local community, ***find your local senior center by using this map.***

Get Emotional Support

If you'd like to speak with someone immediately due to feeling of loneliness or the impact COVID-19 has had on you in any way, contact Hope4NC now.



The stress of life, especially during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, can feel overwhelming. But you don't have to handle it on your own. With support and someone to listen, you can find a way through. Hope4NC is here to connect you with the help you need, whenever you need it. Call us at 1-855-587-3463 24/7 for free and confidential emotional support, counseling referrals and community resources. Hope4NC includes a Crisis Counseling Program tailored for COVID-19, which will provide immediate crisis counseling services to individuals affected by the ongoing public health crisis.

Additional Social Engagement Resources

here

Show 25 per page Reset Search:

Resource	Description	Action
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	Call 1-800-273-8255, Veterans Press 1 or click the link to chat with a representative online.	Visit
Social Isolation and Loneliness	This CDC website resource lists the health risks associated with social isolation and loneliness. Learn about social isolation and loneliness prevention, and see more resources on how you can combat the risk factors of social isolation and loneliness.	Visit

2 resources

Do you have additional resources you would like to add? Please contact us here.

FIND A SENIOR CENTER NEAR YOU | ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES | BACK TO MAIN PAGE

https://healthyagingnc.com/social-engagement-resources/

Find A Senior Center

Staying connected and engaged in activities is important to the physical and mental well-being of everyone. One way for older adults to do this is through one of NC's multipurpose senior centers. Senior centers have long been a great community resource that provide services, information and education on additional aging resources, as well as offering a variety of health, fitness, and creative art activity classes. Learn more about the impact of NC's senior centers **here**!

Senior centers are a great way for older adults to stay engaged and take advantage of the social opportunities that free online activities can offer.

Use this map to find a class to attend in-person at your local senior center, or you can attend a virtual class anywhere in the state. If you have any questions, **contact us!**

Find a Senior Center near you by entering your address, city, state, and/or zip code in the form below and choosing a radius. If you don't see your senior center listed, then **register here** to add it to the map.

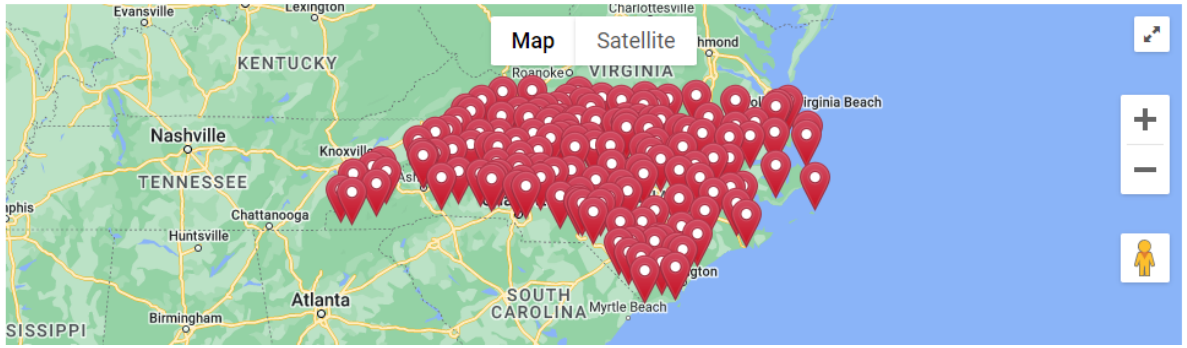
Enter Your Address...

693 Palmer Dr, Raleigh, NC, USA

25

Submit

Showing all 154 locations



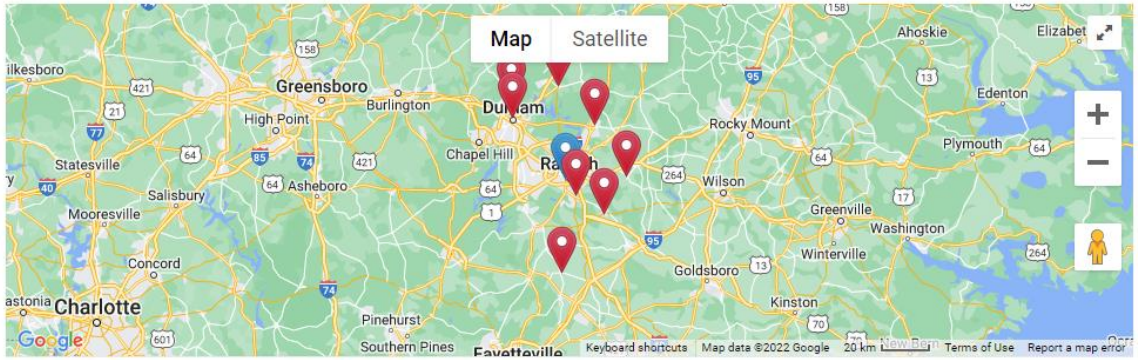
https://healthyagingnc.com/senior-center-locations/

RESULTS

Find a Senior Center near you by entering your address, city, state, and/or zip code in the form below and choosing a radius. If you don't see your senior center listed, then **register here** to add it to the map.

Showing all 8 locations within 25mi from 693 Palmer Dr, Raleigh, NC, USA

10 Per page



1)

Garner Senior Center 5.0 mi

205 E Garner Rd, Garner, NC 27529, USA

2)

Clayton Center for Active Aging 13.7 mi

303 Dairy Rd, Clayton, NC 27520, USA

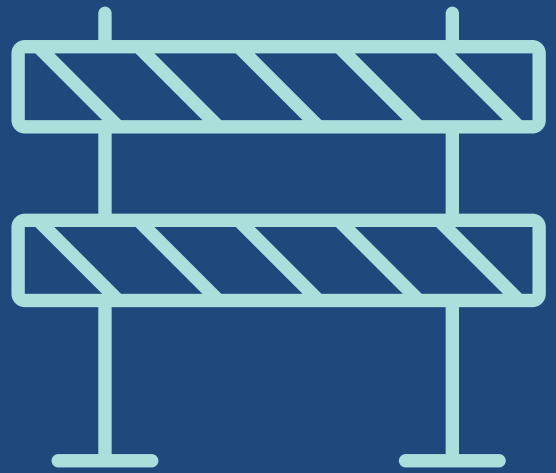
3)

Eastern Wake Senior Center 16.0 mi

323 Lake Dr, Wendell, NC 27591, USA

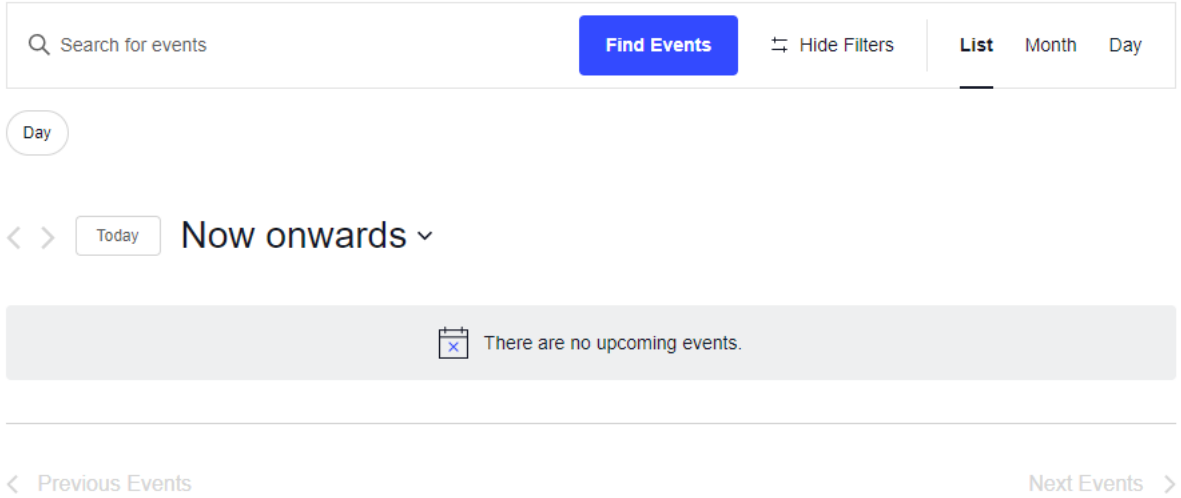
Virtual Social Engagement Opportunities

Under Construction



Staying connected and engaged in activities is important for our physical and mental well-being. Even when you aren't able to get out, joining a class online can sometimes help you feel connected to others. It can be fun to try something new such as a line dance class or a Mindful Meditation Breathing group. Some participants really enjoy "meeting" people from all over the state.

There are lots of ways to connect with other older adults online and take advantage of the social opportunities that free online activities can offer. You can also invite your friends or family and enjoy a fun virtual activity together! Scroll through the list of virtual social engagement opportunities below to find an activity or program that interests you. If you're able to get out and are looking for in-person social activities, you may want to consider checking out your local senior center. Click here to see our map of senior centers. If you have any questions please contact us!



https://healthyagingnc.com/scevents/

Division of Aging and Adult Services: 2022 SILES Efforts

B.E. and ASIST Trainings

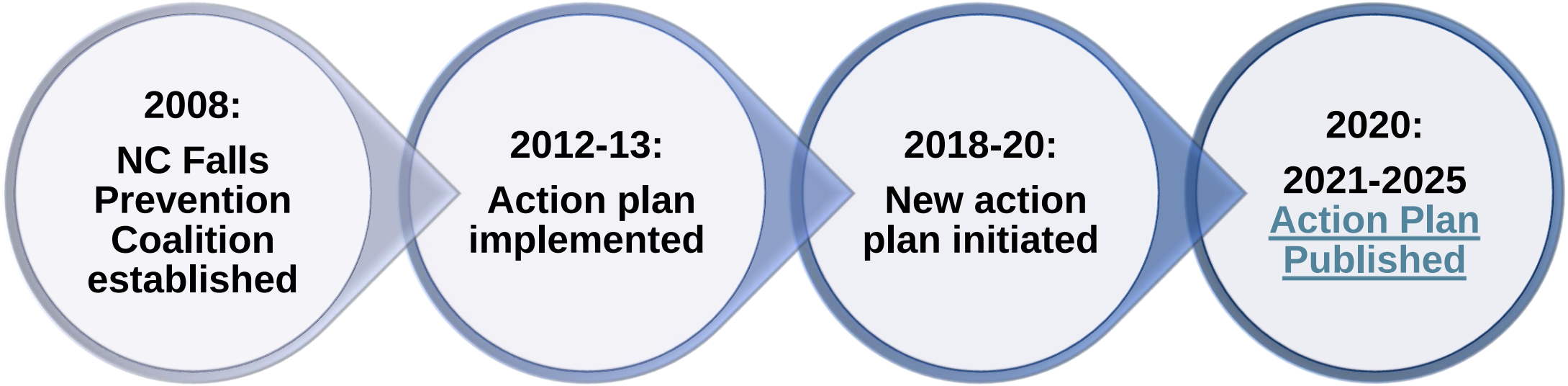
Social Engagement Web Resource

Task Force on Healthy Aging

FMAP Funding

Task Force on Healthy Aging

Began with Work of North Carolina Falls Prevention Coalition



DPH, DAAS, UNC Center for Aging and Health

Coalition building, evidence-based programs, data, resources, education, partnership, policy

Planning retreat held. Discussed potential need for task force.

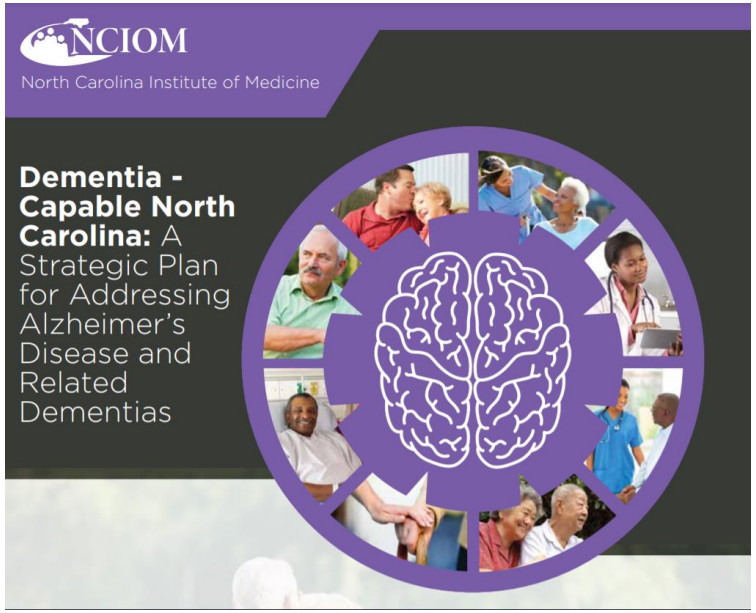
Recent NCIOM Studies

- Carolinas Pandemic Preparedness Task Force (announced 2021)
- Task Force on Maternal Health (2020)
- Healthy North Carolina 2030 (2019)
- Task Force on Serious Illness Care (2019)
- Task Force on Access to Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (2019)
- Task Force on Accountable Care Communities (2018)
- Task Force On Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia (2016)

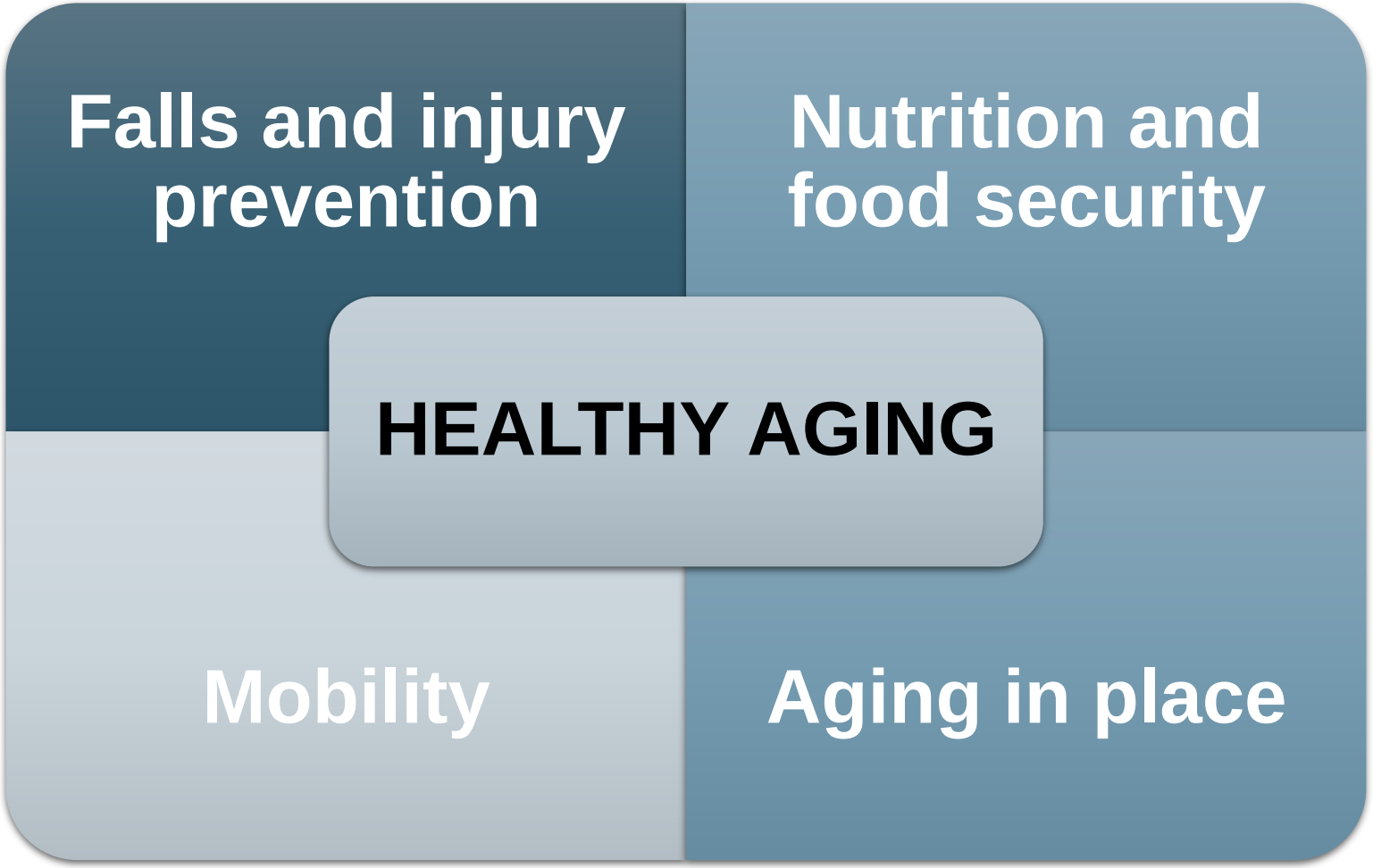
November 3, 2021- Healthy Aging Task Force Announced!

NCIOM Successes

- **50-90% of recommendations partially or fully implemented**
- **Example: Dementia Capable NC**
  - **Alzheimer's statewide Brain Health Registry**
  - **Dementia-friendly hospitals**
  - **Dementia Coalition**
  - **Legislation to create guardianship reciprocity**
  - **Dedicated staff position at DAAS**

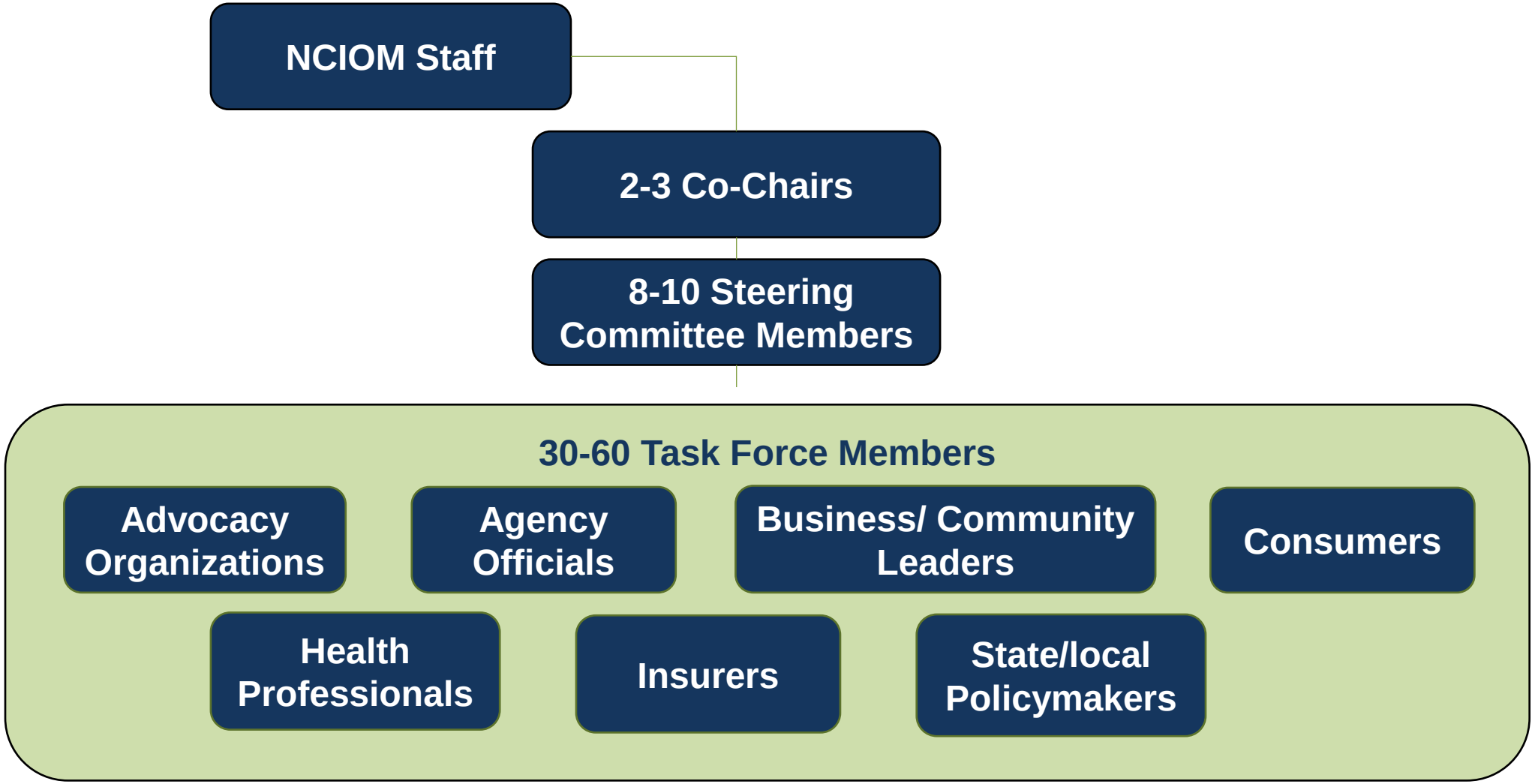


NCIOM Heathy Aging Task Force Framework



Based on Association of State and Territorial Health Officers (ASTHO) recommendations.

Task Force Composition



Contributing Funders

$188K

NCDHHS
Division of Aging and Adult Services
$30K

NCDHHS
Division of Public Health
$30K

AARP NC
$5K

Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) for Medicaid

FMAP Spending Strategy

Hire consultant to convene DHHS-wide group to address SILES

Implement 1-3 efforts

$1M for 3 years

Report

Combatting Social Isolation, Loneliness, and Elevated Suicide Risk Among Older Adults in North Carolina

April 2022

By Keren Hendel and Will Shipman
with contributions from Dr. Matthew Fullen, Ph.D. and Dr. Laura Shannonhouse, Ph.D.

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Executive Summary

Social isolation (the objective deficit in social relationships) and loneliness (the subjective deficit between an individual's desired and actual social relationships) are public health issues that affect the health and wellbeing of many North Carolinians. The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) seeks to develop a strategy to reduce social isolation, loneliness, and elevated suicide risk (SILES). Given the barriers to addressing SILES and the resources of NC DHHS, this strategy should include the formation of a task force, improved social isolation and loneliness screening, and support for community-based organizations.

Social isolation and loneliness contribute to higher morbidity and mortality and are widespread. Social isolation and loneliness are associated with greater mortality and increased risk of stroke, heart disease, dementia, diabetes, high cholesterol, chronic conditions, anxiety, depression, and suicide. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 43 percent of adults over age 60 in the United States reported feeling lonely and 25 percent of adults over age 65 were considered socially isolated. By the middle of the pandemic, almost two-thirds of people aged 50 and older in the nation reported social isolation.

Three Recommendations

Creates SILES task force led by DHHS executive leadership that includes NC DHHS Divisions, community-based organizations, older adult advocates, and researchers

Incorporate UCLA 3-Item Loneliness Scale into existing Medicaid HCBS screening tools and NCCARE360 screenings and build referral pathways to existing SILES programs; referral services should expand over time

Fund existing community efforts and pilots through grants, prioritizing innovative programs that support high-need groups

Division of Aging and Adult Services: Next Steps

Continue Developing Social Engagement Web Resource

Address Digital Equity

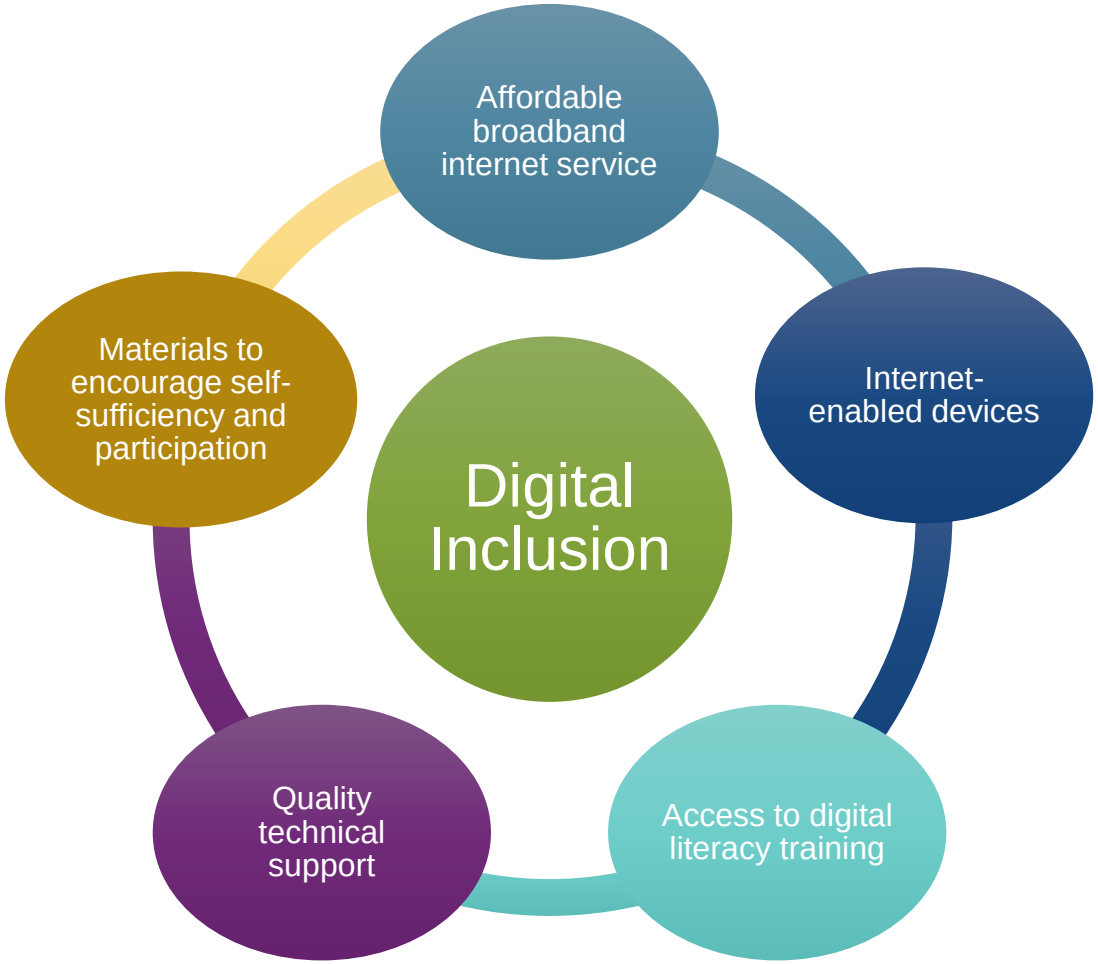
Expand and Sustain Trualta

Expand Social Bridging Program

Digital Equity

Digital Equity

When everyone has IT capacity needed to participate fully in society



www.digitalinclusion.org/definitions

New Funding

$43 Million in ARPA funding

- ARPA – Social Isolation Digital Technology Purchases
- ARPA – Social Isolation Digital Training and Programming

$1M in Medicaid FMAP funding

- Expand Trualta caregiver support platform
- Address digital inclusion

Upcoming Opportunities

Broadband Infrastructure Office

Skill Assessment Tool	Statewide Digital Resource Directory	State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program	State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program
		• $60 Million to be divided among states	• $250 Million to be divided among states

Trualta Caregiver Platform

Caregiving in North Carolina

1 in 5 adults in NC are caregivers

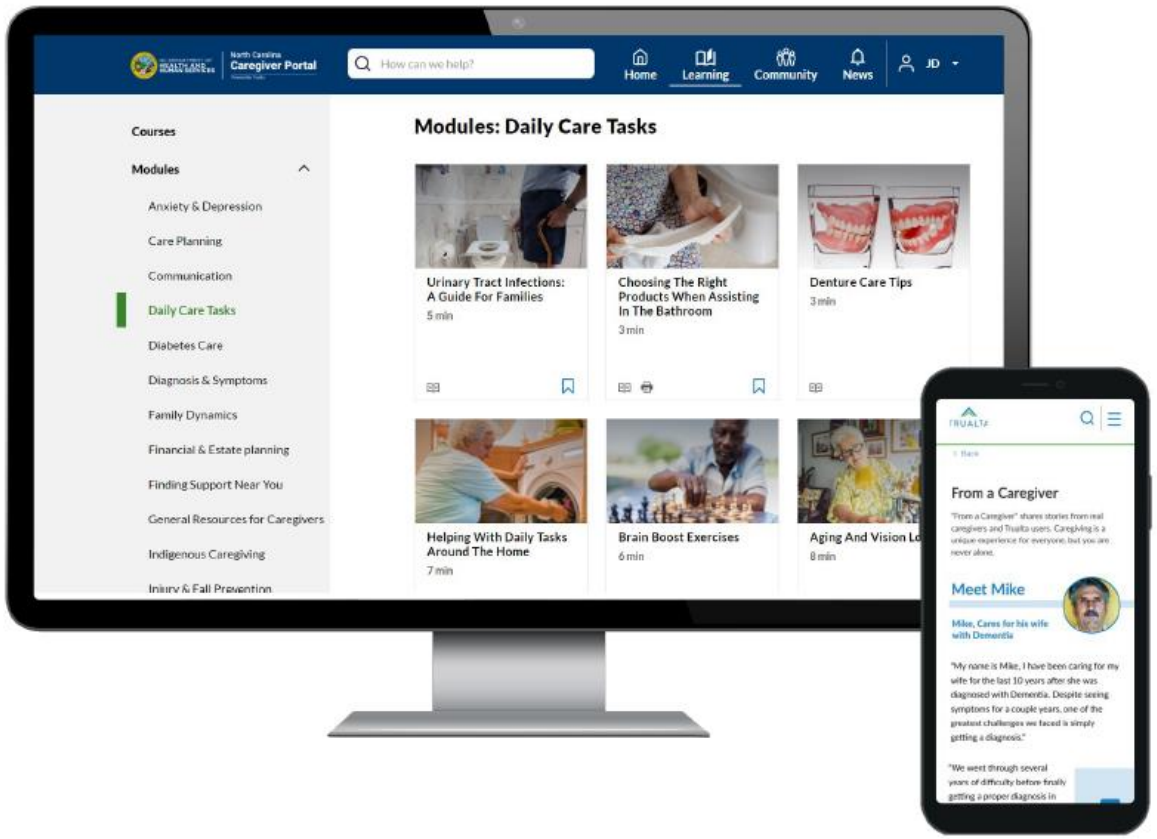
479K

Caregivers providing care to those living with Alzheimer's

$7.15B

Value of unpaid care to those living with Alzheimer's

Trualta Caregiver Platform



Caregivers register to access an interactive eLearning environment

Short, quick lessons created by experts in aging

Accessible 24/7

No app required

Social features like virtual support groups.

Nc-cargivers.com

Trualta NC Metrics

550+ caregivers

82 counties

7000+ portal visits

150+ new users in last 60 days

148 badges completed

6000 modules viewed

Nc-cargivers.com

Social Bridging

Target Audience

Currently experiencing social isolation or loneliness

In need of technical assistance

Looking for resources in community

Would benefit from regular social interaction over the phone

Social Bridging Program

Volunteers make wellness check-in calls to understand individual needs

NCCHW staff act as bridge between community members and resources

Assist people with computer, tablet, or cell phone troubleshooting

Connect people to video chat programs and/or social media

Connect community members with resources such as transportation services and meal deliveries

Talk and listen

Building Resilient Inclusive Communities (BRIC)

Creating Connections

North Carolina's Plan to Address Social Isolation

BRIC Strategies: State Level

Collaborate with task forces/coalitions that support equitable social connectedness during COVID-19

- Implement new or improved community strategies that emphasize feasible, innovative social connectedness efforts for older adults at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19
- incorporation of existing networks of community health workers encouraged

Partners

Community & Clinical CONNECTIONS for Prevention & Health Branch
NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

North Carolina Injury & Violence PREVENTION Branch

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Aging and Adult Services

OMHHD
OFFICE OF MINORITY HEALTH AND HEALTH DISPARITIES
Healthy Communities. EveryOne Matters.

N.C. Center for Health & Wellness at UNC Asheville

CGWEP
Carolina Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program

AARP

North Carolina FALLS PREVENTION Coalition

NCIOM

CHATHAM COUNTY NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC HEALTH

NEW HANOVER COUNTY
Senior Resource Center

PIEDMONT TRIAD REGIONAL COUNCIL

Task Force on Healthy Aging

BRIC Strategies: Local Level

Implement 2+ equitable programs for older adults living in high burden communities

- offer online & in-person activities that encourage personal interactions, collaboration with existing programs (e.g., mental health or Arthritis Programs, AARP, or other)

Implement 2+ equitable intergenerational programs to foster healthy, ongoing, mentoring relationships

Mustard Seed Community Health

COVID adaptation

- Promoting opportunities for social connectedness within patient population

Equity

- Charitable clinic providing high-quality primary and behavioral health care to underserved, immigrant population
- Prioritized by zip code and intergenerational families
- Hired bilingual community health worker to lead efforts

Policies, systems, & environmental change

Mustard Seed Community Health
Empowering Our Community with Good Health

BRIC
BUILDING resilient inclusive COMMUNITIES

Mustard Seed Community Health Approach

Offer group and individual therapy sessions

Host art classes with Creative Arts Network of NC

Screen patients for social isolation

Partner with CoMetta Connect to identify community-wide opportunities to address social isolation

Mustard Seed Community Health
Empowering Our Community with Good Health

Contacts

NC DAAS

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