

Executive Summary

The Jayhawk Area of Aging Agency conducted a comprehensive survey on the current and future needs of the elderly in the area they serve: Shawnee, Douglas, and Jefferson counties. Surveys were collected at a number of sites including: meal sites, service groups, church settings, senior living apartments and service providers. In total, 1,144 surveys were collected at 50 sites between winter 2008 and spring 2009.

In the survey, information was collected on a variety of subjects including: nutrition, community services, household activities, health care needs, morale, transportation, housing, care giving, finances, legal issues, employment, usage of senior centers, activities, specific areas of need, and demographics. Responses to the surveys are summarized and the percentages given are based on the total number of surveys, 1,144, unless otherwise stated.

A comparison of the demographics of survey participants to the demographics of Kansas Medicare enrollees shows that this survey represents the gender and ethnicity of Kansas's seniors. Kansas Medicare enrollees are 40% male and 60% female. Survey participants are 38% male and 62% female. Kansas Medicare enrollees are 90% white, 5% African American, and less than 1% Hispanic. Survey participants are 86% white, 3% African American, and 2% Hispanic. A larger number than expected of Native Americans are represented in the survey, 7%. This could be due to a misinterpretation of the ethnic categories, the large population of Native Americans in Douglas County, or an anomaly of site based surveys.

Because of the differences in the categories used to summarize age and income, those demographics cannot be compared to Kansas Medicare enrollees. However, survey participants have an even distribution across age categories. Examination of age by category showed that 12% are between 61-65; 16% are between 66-70; 19% are between 71-75; 17% are between 76-80; and 28% are over 81 years of age. Examination of income by category showed that 8% has a household income less than \$10,000; 10% have an income between \$10,000 and \$13,499; 11% have an income between \$13,500 and \$19,999; 17% have an income between \$20,000 and \$29,999; 17% have an income between \$30,000 and \$49,999; 9% have an income between \$50,000 and \$74,999; 3% have an income between \$75,000 and \$99,999; and 2% have an income of more than \$100,000.

According to data from the USDA Economic Research Service, the distribution of rural and urban in the survey is consistent with the distribution of rural and urban across the state. Across the state, 36% of the population is rural and 64% of the population is urban. 30% of the respondents to this survey identified themselves as living in a rural area as compared to 70% identifying themselves living in an urban area. While distribution by county shows variance as compared to census estimates, the most populace county, Shawnee has the most responses, 63%; the second most populace county, Douglas has

the second highest number of responses, 38%; and Jefferson County the least populace has the lowest number of responses, 14%.

Participants are active and currently living independently. The majority of the respondents are married, 51%, currently driving, 74%, and living in their own home, 70%. 93% feel able to safely stay in their current living situation. 67% participate in church or religious activities. 82% meet with friends and family regularly. 57% participate in a hobby. 54% attend movies, sporting, and cultural events.

The focus of this survey is to better understand the current and future needs of seniors. Participants were given a list of 23 concerns and asked to indicate, which are areas of concern now or likely to be in the next five years. The primary need or area of concern for participants is maintaining personal independence. 755, or 66%, of those responding indicate this is an area of concern. This continues to be true when needs are examined by gender, age, ethnicity, urban/rural, and county. The second most commonly indicated need or area of concern is the expense of medication and medical care. 475, or 42%, of participants indicate this is an area of concern. This also continues to be true when concerns are examined by gender, age, ethnicity, and urban/rural. While still important for participants in Douglas and Jefferson counties, their second highest area of concern is access to transportation.

The most common household need indicated is major home repair and upkeep, 35%. Yard work, 30%, and minor home repairs, 30%, are also indicated as areas seniors need help. The least commonly indicated household activities are laundry, 10%, and meal preparation, 10%. When examining future needs, responses stay consistent and an additional 10% in each category indicate they will need help and an additional 25% indicate they might.

When looking at health and health concerns, participants describe their health as good, 55%, or excellent, 11%. The majority indicate they have a primary care doctor, 92%. 57% of participants report exercising on a regular basis. The most common reason indicated for not exercising is medical. The majority are concerned with the cost of healthcare, 67%, and the cost of medicine, 67%.

Conclusions

While the majority of participants surveyed are healthy and living independently, 30% indicate they will need assistance in their home in the next five years. Many of the future needs indicated by seniors relate to living independently, the biggest concern of seniors. Transportation, household assistance, and yard work/home repair are the most common future needs. The second area of concern for seniors is the cost of medication and medical care. A third of participants have difficulty paying for medications at least sometimes. To best address the needs and future needs of seniors, these issues will need to be considered.

Nutrition

A number of questions in the survey address nutrition. The majority of participants do not have difficulty paying for, 64%, or preparing food, 59%. The majority of participants eat three meals a day, 53%. Only a third of participants indicate that they have been to a congregate meal site. Of those who indicated they go to a meal site, most indicate they go daily, 42%. Half of the participants indicate they eat at a restaurant one or more times per week. One third of participants indicate they have participated in home delivered meal services. Of these individuals, one-third indicate they participate daily and one-third indicate they have participated only once. Written comments suggest that those participants who used the services only once did so during a time of poor health and discontinued services when health improved.

Do you find that it is difficult to buy enough food for yourself?				
Blank	(a) Yes, always	(b) Sometimes	(c) Rarely	(d) No, never
39 (3%)	47 (4%)	160 (14%)	163 (14%)	735 (64%)
Do you find it difficult to be able to cook your food?				
Blank	(a) Yes, always	(b) Sometimes	(c) Rarely	(d) No, never
39 (3%)	62 (5%)	195 (17%)	171 (15%)	677 (59%)
Do you eat three meals a day?				
Blank	(a) Yes, always	(b) Sometimes	(c) Rarely	(d) No, never
34 (3%)	607 (53%)	333 (29%)	116 (10%)	54 (5%)

Have you ever gone to a congregate meal site?	Yes	379 (33%)	
If yes, how often do you go? N=379			
(a) daily	(b) once a week	(c) 2 or less times a month	(d) only once
149 (42%)	66 (18%)	75 (21%)	69 (19%)
How often do you eat at a restaurant?			
Blank	Per Week	Per Month	Seldom
54 (5%)	536 (47%)	284 (25%)	270 (24%)
Have you ever used home delivered meal services (Meals on Wheels)?		Yes	379 (33%)
If yes, how often do you go? N=158			
(a) daily	(b) once a week	(c) 2 or less times a month	(d) only once
58 (37%)	19 (12%)	27 (17%)	54 (34%)

Services

Participants are asked to indicate which, if any, of a list of ten common services they have used. The most commonly used service is transportation, 15%. The least common used service is adult day care, 2%. All services, except transportation, are used by less than 8% of the survey participants.

Please indicate if you have ever used any of the following services:				
	Yes	No	Don't know	Blank
Elder Law Services	70 (6%)	935 (82%)	14 (1%)	125 (11%)
Case Management	56 (5%)	940 (82%)	13 (1%)	135 (12%)
Respite Care	44 (4%)	947 (83%)	14 (1%)	139 (12%)
Personal or Attendant Care	92 (8%)	919 (80%)	10 (1%)	123 (11%)
Adult Day Care	24 (2%)	979 (86%)	7 (1%)	134 (12%)
Personal Emergency Devices	65 (6%)	937 (82%)	7 (1%)	135 (12%)
Homemaker Services	87 (7%)	925 (81%)	7 (1%)	125 (11%)
Minor Home Repair	89 (8%)	911 (80%)	9 (1%)	135 (12%)
Bill Paying Services	36 (3%)	963 (84%)	8 (1%)	137 (12%)
Transportation Services	168 (15%)	856 (75%)	6 (1%)	114 (10%)

Household

Survey participants were given a list of six common household activities and asked which, if any, they need help with. The most common household activity indicated is major home repair and upkeep, 35%. Yard work, 30%, and minor home repairs, 30%, are also indicated as areas seniors need help. The least commonly indicated household activities are laundry, 10%, and meal preparation, 10%. When examining future needs, responses stay consistent and an additional 10% in each category indicate they will need help and an additional 25% indicate they might. When asked who participants go to when they need help, two-third indicate children, a third indicate spouse, and a third indicate paid help, with children being indicated as the most help.

Do you find yourself needing help with the following activities?				
	Yes	No	Don't know	Blank
Laundry	113 (10%)	941 (82%)	3 (0%)	87 (8%)
Lawn and yard work	347 (30%)	701 (61%)	5 (0%)	91 (8%)
Meal preparation	111 (10%)	930 (81%)	7 (1%)	96 (8%)
Minor home repairs	347 (30%)	688 (60%)	13 (1%)	96 (8%)
Major home repair and upkeep	403 (35%)	628 (55%)	10 (1%)	103 (9%)
Regular house cleaning	247 (22%)	748 (65%)	11 (1%)	138 (12%)
Other – write-in (family, building maintenance man, etc.)	20 (2%)			

In five years, do you find yourself needing help with the following activities?				
	Yes	No	Don't know	Blank
Laundry	241 (21%)	500 (44%)	284 (25%)	119 (10%)
Lawn and yard work	466 (41%)	365 (32%)	198 (17%)	115 (10%)
Meal preparation	232 (20%)	509 (44%)	278 (24%)	125 (11%)
Minor home repairs	415 (36%)	399 (35%)	209 (18%)	121 (11%)
Major home repair and upkeep	482 (42%)	323 (28%)	205 (18%)	134 (12%)
Regular house cleaning	369 (32%)	408 (36%)	266 (23%)	101 (9%)

When you need assistance, where do you go for help? N=1144		Most help? N=809
Spouse	382 (33%)	239 (30%)
Children	697 (61%)	391 (48%)
Neighbors/Friends	389 (34%)	72 (9%)
Church	165 (14%)	13 (2%)
Senior Center	83 (7%)	7 (1%)
Paid Help	384 (34%)	71 (9%)
Other	58 (5%)	16 (2%)
None (write-in)	18 (2%)	

Health Care

A number of questions regarding health and health care are examined in the survey. The majority indicate they have a primary care doctor, 92%. 57% of participants report exercising on a regular basis. The most common reason indicated for not exercising is medical. The majority are concerned with the cost of healthcare, 67%, and the cost of medicine, 67%. Nearly a third of participants indicate they have at least some difficulty paying for prescriptions and half indicate they never have difficulty paying for prescriptions. The majority of participants indicate they sometimes, 24%, or always, 46%, understand their health insurance. The majority of participants indicate they are of good, 55%, or excellent, 11%, health. Only 3% of participants indicate their health as poor.

Do you have a primary care doctor?			
Yes	1082 (92%)	No or Blank	62 (5%)
If not, do you know how to find a primary care doctor? N=62			
Yes	17 (27%)	No or Blank	45 (67%)
Do you exercise on a regular basis (1/2 hour - 3 to 4 times per week)?			
Yes	649 (57%)	No or Blank	495 (43%)

Reasons for not exercising (write-in) n=304	
Medical	79 (26%)
Lazy	35 (12%)
Busy	25 (8%)
Not physically able	22 (7%)
Weather	21 (7%)
Time	20 (7%)
Unmotivated	10 (3%)
Other demands	9 (3%)
Age	7 (2%)
Interest	6 (2%)
Energy level	5 (2%)
Access to equipment	4 (1%)
Discomfort	3 (1%)
Discipline	3 (1%)
Expense	3 (1%)
Transportation	2 (1%)
Fear of injury	1 (0%)
Need assistance	1 (0%)

Are you concerned with the cost of health care?				
Blank	(a) Yes, always	(b) Sometimes	(c) Rarely	(d) No, never
30 (3%)	772 (67%)	209 (18%)	68 (6%)	65 (6%)
Are you concerned with the cost of medicine?				
Blank	(a) Yes, always	(b) Sometimes	(c) Rarely	(d) No, never
35 (3%)	769 (67%)	182 (16%)	81 (7%)	77 (7%)
Do you understand your health insurance coverage?				
Blank	(a) Yes, always	(b) Sometimes	(c) Rarely	(d) No, never
40 (3%)	523 (46%)	380 (33%)	61 (5%)	40 (3%)
Do you have difficulty paying for prescription drugs?				
Blank	(a) Yes, always	(b) Sometimes	(c) Rarely	(d) No, never
46 (4%)	91 (8%)	240 (21%)	213 (19%)	554 (48%)
What is your current health status?				
Blank	(a) Excellent	(b) Good	(c) Fair	(d) Poor
30 (3%)	124 (11%)	629 (55%)	330 (29%)	31 (3%)