



Department of County Human Services
MULTNOMAH COUNTY OREGON

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September 1, 2009

The Honorable Ted Wheeler
Chair
Board of Commissioners for Multnomah County
501 SE Hawthorne Blvd
Portland, OR 97214

Dear Mr. Wheeler:

I am enclosing a copy of the Community Needs Survey of Older Adults that the Department of County Human Services, Aging and Disability Services Division (ADSD) under contract with Portland State University's Institute on Aging recently completed. We undertook this study to obtain information that would assist us in strategically planning to meet the needs of a growing aging population in the County. I am enthusiastic about sharing the information with you and would be happy to discuss implications of the findings.

By 2020, residents 60 years and older will make up 20 percent of the County's population. We expect that the data derived from this survey will not only be helpful for human services providers, but may be of value to other governmental entities in planning for the dramatic demographic change that is upon us.

We decided to focus the study on the residents of the County that were likely to have greater needs as they age due to their financial status. Over 500 county residents 55 years and older with incomes at or below 200 percent of Federal Poverty Level were interviewed for this study. The survey included both a random sample of households and a convenience sample of targeted racial and ethnic groups.

During the summer we have had the opportunity to review the findings in greater depth. We will use key findings to address the service gaps that disproportionately affect low-income seniors and racial and ethnic minorities.

Key findings, which can be found in the report's Executive Summary (pp. I – VIII), include:

- Racial and ethnic minority elders are faring more poorly than the white population on several measures;
- An overwhelming number of renters and owners are burdened by high housing costs;
- A significant number of older adults are not confident about their financial health in retirement;
- A substantial percentage of those interviewed are not involved in any volunteer activity; and
- Overall, respondents reported feeling safe in their neighborhoods.

We would like to meet with you to review the report and discuss how ADSD and its community partners will use this information for short and long-term planning. We can also discuss how the information may be helpful to other County departments and the cities to enhance the elder-friendliness of Multnomah County.

Sincerely,

Joanne Fuller
Department Director, DCHS

Mary Shortall
Division Director, ADSD