



State of Illinois
Illinois Department on Aging



FY 2025-2026
**ILLINOIS SENIOR HOUSING
RESIDENTS' ADVISORY COUNCIL**
Annual Report

December 2025

The Authority and Purpose of the Illinois Senior Residents' Advisory Council

The Illinois Senior Residents' Advisory Council (the Council) was created March 31, 2022, by Public Act 102-0986.

As outlined in statute the objective of the Council "is to create a space and opportunity for senior Illinoisans to connect with each other and meet with representatives from the Department on Aging and the Department of Public Health in order to share their ideas on how the State can improve the quality of life for its senior residents. The Council will also give senior Illinoisans the opportunity to share their findings and recommendations on targeted services and supports for seniors with the Governor and the General Assembly."

The Senior Residents' Advisory Council is making recommendations in this final report related to the following:

1. How best to disseminate information to seniors on available supports and services with the use of State agency websites, informational materials, and outreach personnel.
2. How to ensure availability of targeted services for seniors and to eliminate any gaps in service for seniors.
3. How to improve State policy concerning seniors and congregate living arrangements for seniors in the wake of COVID-19.

Council Mandates and 2025 Goals

- Mandate (1): Identify barriers to seniors feeling supported by and connected to their communities.
- Mandate (2): Evaluate available resources and services for seniors.
- Mandate (3): Evaluate State outreach to seniors.
- Mandate (4): Evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on congregate living arrangements for seniors.
- Mandate (5): Written Reports. The Council will prepare written reports on the following dates December 31 in 2023, 2024.
- Mandate (6): The Final written report with recommendations will be due December 2025, the Council shall submit a written report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the results of its findings and evaluations under subsection (d).

Member Recruitment

The Department continuously worked on securing new members to fulfill any vacancies in the Council. The Council struggled to identify persons to fill the Southern Illinois and Western Illinois seats. The Council successfully recruited a new member for the Southern Illinois vacancy, and there was continued search to fill the Western Illinois seat.

Senior Resident's Advisory Council Members

The following members served on the Council as of December 31, 2025:

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| Mary Killough – Chair (Pamela Martinez-Ruiz – IDoA Designee) | Dennis Powell |
| Edna Lee – Co-Chair | Alice Quinlan |
| Sharon Ewing | Katrina Smith – IDHS DD Shapiro Center |
| Rhonda Jacobs | William T. Wilson |
| Dilane Knights | Leo Davis |
| Margie Logman - resigned 8/23/24 | Burtrell Selph Sr. – IDHS DD Ludeman Center |
| Julie Lewis | Representative Dagmara Avelar |
| Adam Moore – IHDA | Representative Bradley Stephens |
| Deborah Palmer | Senator Dave Syverson |
| | Sr. Sameer Vohra (Jennifer Epstein – IDPH Designee) |

The body held its first quarterly meeting on January 24, 2023, to discuss the purpose of the Council and operational matters (future meeting dates, required trainings, etc.) in furtherance of its statutory mandate to propose recommendations on how to disseminate information to seniors on services, eliminating gaps on services and improving State policy concerning living arrangements for seniors. The Council has convened on January 24, 2023, April 26, 2023, July 25, 2023, October 24, 2023, January 23, 2024, April 23, 2024, July 23, 2024, October 22, 2024, January 28, 2025, April 22, 2025, July 22, 2025, and October 28, 2025, and created the following subcommittees to ensure intentionality in its work:

Training and Outreach/Community Engagement – The Training and Outreach Subcommittee sought to develop an outreach plan to identify service provider training needs and improve competency in the delivery of health, housing, and long-term support services to the aging community. In addition, we sought to create an outreach plan to identify social isolation causes and isolation prevention tools.

HealthCare - The Healthcare Subcommittee sought to address gaps in services highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic and enhance healthcare access for Illinoisans who are aging. We aimed to assure that health care is delivered in a safe and welcoming manner by increasing provider competency, assuring that patients know their options and rights. We sought to increase healthcare utilization among the Aging Population by examining how our patients utilize healthcare and the overall patient experience.

Housing – The Housing Subcommittee sought to identify and address challenges to Seniors aging well in their homes and concerns with the provision and availability of affordable housing, access to home care services and long-term care. This was accomplished through a comprehensive review of data, analysis of existing resources and provision of testimony which informed recommendations for policies, procedures and best practices to address this issue.

Council Activities to Date and Recommendations

- Created purpose statement in April 2023.
 - The Council will examine the impact of State and local laws, policies, and regulations on congregate living arrangements and make recommendations to ensure equitable access, services and benefits, and overall quality of life of seniors to feel supported by and connected to their communities.
- Held brainstorming sessions to identify targeted topics related to senior living, resources and benefits of those living on congregate living arrangements. Those topics included:
 - Isolation Prevention
 - Keeping seniors in their homes
 - Ensuring seniors feel connected to their communities
 - Addressing gaps in services highlighted by the COVID 19 pandemic
 - Improving IDoA's outreach to seniors statewide
- The Council held an in-person meeting at Ruth Shriman Housing (4040 N. Sheridan Rd., Chicago, IL. 60613) in during the Official Quarterly meeting on October 22nd, 2024, from 3:00 PM to 4:30 PM. Ruth Shriman House is an independent living facility that helps seniors access affordable housing. Residents of the facility were invited and attended the meeting to learn about the Council and share their perspectives.
- The Council continuously examined how IDoA works with the Area Agencies on Aging, Community Organizations and sister agencies to ensure the highest quality programs and services for older adults in Illinois.

Training and Outreach/Community Engagement

The Subcommittee convened on May 15, 2024, June 26, 2024, July 17, 2024, August 21, 2024, September 18, 2024, October 16, 2024, December 18, 2024, January 15, 2025, February 19, 2025, March 19, 2025, April 16, 2025, May 21, 2025, June 18, 2025, July 16, 2025, August 20, 2025, and October 15, 2025, and:

- Discussed current mandatory training offered at the state level and if it covers topics related to seniors and expand knowledge on senior services, independent living and assisted living facilities.
- Reviewed marketing and occupancy of senior buildings around the state.
- Examined emergency preparedness for medical alerts, evacuations as well as management in case of another public health emergency like COVID-19 in congregate living buildings.

Recommendations:

- The Council was required to take the state annual mandatory trainings to which the Subcommittee took a deeper look into. After reviewing the trainings, the Subcommittee found that there could be an implementation of a training related to seniors for agencies that work with this population in their daily activities.
 - There needs to be a training focused on senior needs and behaviors to understand their emotions, fears, decision-making, motivations and way to build trust for those agencies who work with a large senior population on the state.

- o If a mandatory training for this is not possible now, there should be a library with research on topics pertaining to senior living and needs or behaviors available to agencies who have constant contact with seniors. This will allow for people who work in independent living or assisted living facilities to have a way to research and find answers to any challenges they might face on their daily work.
- The Subcommittee spent time reviewing marketing materials for senior living buildings around the state. Although these buildings do a good job on reaching centers in the community to collaborate and have a connection when seniors attend centers looking for housing assistance, the Council recommends the following:
 - o There is a need to further reach seniors within the most rural areas of the state to make sure they are aware of the housing options available to them.
 - o Effective communication and easily accessible information are two of the main improvements needed for senior living buildings. Although information is accessible online, a senior citizen might struggle to go from one website to the other to complete applications and find all the information they need regarding a building.
 - o Improving the marketing rules for arranged living buildings will help improve the occupancy rates as well as reduce the turnover.

Healthcare

The Subcommittee convened on May 15, 2024, June 26, 2024, July 17, 2024, August 21, 2024, September 18, 2024, October 16, 2024, December 18, 2024, January 15, 2025, February 19, 2025, March 19, 2025, April 16, 2025, May 21, 2025, June 18, 2025, July 16, 2025, August 20, 2025, and October 15, 2025, and examined the following:

- Strategies to mitigate insurance fraud that has increased in recent years and has affected a big portion of the senior population due to lack of awareness and knowledge of the insurance market.
- This year, Congress passed HR 1 (OBBA) which among other provisions, made significant changes to Medicaid and SNAP which will result in Illinoisans losing benefits. The changes will affect vulnerable populations and those who might have limited job opportunities and resources.
- The senior population faces challenges in navigating prescription regimens and their insurance plans to be able to have readily available medications.

Recommendations:

- A plan needs to be developed to create awareness and ways in which seniors can detect common scams such as fake medical alerts and impersonation of insurance agents. This plan should be shared in arranged living facilities to reach as many seniors as possible, as well as in hospitals, libraries and other entities that serve a big senior population. The plan should cover the following:
 - o Unsolicited calls: how to recognize, respond and report these numbers.
 - o Legitimacy of claims: how to detect if a claim comes from their legitimate insurance provider and how to verify this information.
 - o Report suspicious activity: where and how to make a report when there is doubt regarding a claim or call related to health insurance.

- As we face cuts in different areas and reduction or elimination of services, the people of the state should be consulted to see how they will be affected by these changes. Depending on the actions taken on the upcoming years, the Subcommittee recommends the following:
 - Although home and community-based care are considered optional Medicaid services that states may offer, the state should continue to offer a robust array of HCBS as they are much more cost-effective than nursing facility care.
- Help organizations develop community-driven solutions to help seniors understand their medications, their right to affordable medications and be informed about their treatment options. Provide assistance to seniors in programs available to them that might help secure medication funding and help them reduce expenses.

Housing

The Subcommittee convened on May 15, 2024, June 26, 2024, July 17, 2024, August 21, 2024, September 18, 2024, October 16, 2024, December 18, 2024, January 15, 2025, February 19, 2025, March 19, 2025, April 16, 2025, May 21, 2025, June 18, 2025, July 16, 2025, August 20, 2025, and October 15, 2025, and researched:

- How independent living facilities are secured and keep record of visitors without breaching the "independent" aspect of the arrangement.
- Ensuring social connectedness and meaningful engagement in community activities.
- Needs for additional support services in senior living facilities around the state.

Recommendations:

- Independent living facilities should have available a report on safety and security for the building. When seniors are deciding whether to move to an independent living facility they should be provided with a detailed report emergency call system, alarms, visitor check-ins and gated entries.
 - By doing this, there is transparency and a sense of security knowing that even if the facility is dedicated to independent living, there is still safety and clear communication.
 - It is important for the facilities to clearly communicate with families as well. Keeping everyone informed regarding these regulations, changes and emergencies creates a sense of community and increases trust.
- Seniors and individuals living alone might face social isolation. Independent living facilities should foster a sense of community since the start of the process for a senior to move into the facility. Although many facilities have systems in place to prevent social isolation, there should be a clear set of standards in case of another pandemic where social isolation was an issue. Independent living facilities should start implementing innovative solutions such as technology-based activities and other environments that will allow seniors to interact encouraging safety and social connectedness.
- Independent living facilities should examine ways to better connect their residents to mental health services through community partnerships and other innovative models.

Conclusion

As discussed, the Senior Housing Residents' Advisory Council identified factors that can be improved for seniors to offer a better quality of life and better support senior Illinoisans. The Council used their discussions and findings to start working towards preventive actions to help seniors in congregate living by being informed about insurance fraud, marketing, trainings, prescription regimes, social isolation, and mental health services.

New standards for congregate facilities can be set up to help with the quality of life of residents. Attention should be given to developing stronger training curriculums for individuals working with seniors, to be able to understand behaviors and preferences. Mental health should also be one of the focuses since it is imperative for seniors to live with dignity and prevent feelings of abandonment and isolation.

Planning for social connectedness and community engagement should be developed and integrated into facility operations along parallel to safety planning.

As outlined in the statute the Illinois Senior Residents' Advisory Council is set to terminate and dissolve after the submission of its third report on December 31, 2025. In accordance to the governing statute and the established timeline, the Council has now reached the conclusion of its work.

**For printed copies, additional information, or to submit comments and questions
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**Senior HelpLine: 1-800-252-8966; 711 (TRS)
8:30am to 5:00pm Monday through Friday**

**24-Hour Adult Protective Services Hotline:
1-866-800-1409; 711 (TRS)
ilaging.illinois.gov**

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