

The Older Americans Act - glossary

The Older Americans Act (OAA) provides federal funds for critical services that keep older adults healthy and independent—services like meals, caregiver support, transportation, and more.

OAA is federal law, and periodically needs to be reauthorized by Congress so it can be updated to reflect direction on priorities and how the funds should be used. In general, the funds are distributed to states based on population, and then NYS (through the NYS Office for Aging – also called the State Unit on Aging) distributes the funding to the County Offices for the Aging and NYC’s Department for the Aging, also sometimes called Area Agencies on Aging (AAA). The local agencies either provide the services directly or contract out with non-profit providers.

The OAA consists of seven titles.

Titles I and II declare the Act’s objectives and establish the Administration on Aging (AoA) which is part of the federal Administration for Community Living (ACL), the federal coordinating agency for OAA services.

Title III – Grants for State and Community Programs on Aging – covers supportive services such as case management, senior center services, in-home services, transportation, and information and referral. Also included under Title III are nutrition programs, such as meals-on-wheels and senior center group meals; family caregiver support; and health promotion and disease prevention services. Funds for Title III programs are distributed based on a state’s proportionate share of either the age 60 or older population or, in the case of caregiver support programs, the age 70 or older population. Each state then has its own formula for allocating OAA funding to area agencies on aging which enables the delivery of services to local areas.

Title IV of the OAA provides support for training, research and demonstration projects while Title V authorizes the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). This program, which is managed by the Department of Labor, provides support for part-time employment for individuals 55 and over who are low-income, unemployed and have poor employment potential. Title VI covers

Grants for Services for Native Americans and provides funding to tribal organizations, Native Alaskan organizations and nonprofits representing Native Hawaiians.

Finally, Title VII provides support for programs to ensure protection of the rights of older adults, including the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program and elder abuse prevention services. The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is required to investigate and resolve complaints made by or on behalf of nursing facility residents or other institutionalized populations. Title VII funds are allocated based on the state's proportion of residents age 60 and older.