



South Carolina Institute of  
Medicine & Public Health

## TASKFORCE MEETING NOTES:

### Social Isolation in Older Adults

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These meeting notes are from the Social Isolation in Older Adults Taskforce Meeting.

**March 14, 2023 | 10:00 A.M. TO 1:00 P.M | Saluda Shoals River Center**

**Zoom [recording](#) | Passcode: k\*KIk6Pv**

#### Meeting Attendees

Tom Amaro

Sara Barber

Peggy Baxter (Zoom)

Justin Blomdahl

Andrew Boozer

Kara Bopp (Zoom)

Phil Bors (Zoom | Presenter)

Robert Breen

Jennifer Brewton

Ali Burnette (Zoom)

Megan Byers (Zoom)

Tracey Coleman

Cindy Corbett

Elexias Cotton (Zoom)

Charmaine Fuller Cooper

Rowan Goodrich

Marisette Hasan (Zoom)

Nancy Kennedy

Hillary Johnson

Joe Kunkel (Zoom)

Kathy Mayfield-Smith

Regina Moore

Michelle Nienhius

Melissa Price

Lisa Ragland

Bill Simpson

Serra Sizemore

Andrea Smith (Zoom)

Davia Smith

Eleanor Stein

Dori Tempio (Zoom)



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## Notes

Agenda item: Faith Communities & Social Isolation; Rev. Dr. Regina Henderson Moore

Presenter: Rev. Dr. Regina H. Moore, Executive Director & CEO, Christian Action Council SC

Discussion:

- Social holiness: holiness existing in relationships with others
- Steps to overcome isolation:
  - Leverage technology
  - Be persistent
  - Think creatively and courageously
  - Lean into ALL strengths
  - Create a D.R.E.A.M. team
    - Dial in friend
    - Resource expert
    - Educator
    - Advocate
    - Mentor
- Takeaway Question: What one thing can a faith community do to overcome isolation in seniors?

Agenda item: Technology & Social Isolation Case Studies

Presenter(s): Andrew Boozer, Executive Director, Senior Resources, Inc.

Discussion:

- Palmetto Care Connections Digital Literacy Training Program
  - Provided: hands on training, tablet or Chromebook and 1 year of internet access
- Program has moved into 13 counties and trained over 1,000 seniors since launch
- Opened the door for telehealth in these 13 counties
- Ensure connection with online engagements
  - Church, Words with Friends and social media platforms
- Department on Aging's Joy for All Robotic Pets Program
  - Provided: interactive stuffed animals issued to seniors with early stage Alzheimer's or dementia to combat loneliness
    - 74 pets distributed



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- After success: interactive stuffed animals issued to seniors who scored high on the loneliness scale
  - Options: dogs, cats, parakeet

#### Meals on Wheels Greenville County Companion Charlie Program

- Tablet specialized for Seniors
  - 36 participants
- Daily engagement for homebound seniors
- 1 year Internet access
- Connections not only with family and friends, but also with Meals on Wheels staff
- Includes opportunities to customize tablet to include entertainment like news sites, frequently visited websites, programmed alerts or check-ins, quarterly administered loneliness assessment
- Labor intensive but opportunity to be large scale because information can be collected remotely

#### Senior Resources Columbia Virtual Resource Support Library Program

- 30 minute webinars relevant to senior citizens (Topic of the Month)
- Open to the public, broadcasted across Facebook
- Resource library on the website

#### • Questions:

- Which programs are available beyond the areas they're housed in?
  - Virtual Resource Support Library
  - Joy for All Pets
  - Digital Literacy Training
- Do the participants get to keep Tablets/Chromebooks? What happens when the 1 year ends?
  - Yes, they keep the technology
  - Promote and provide assistance to help participants enroll in programs that offer affordable Internet access and continuum of support

#### Agenda item: Socially Connected Communities

Presenter(s): Phil Bors, MPH, Senior Project Director, Healthy Places by Design

- Strong social connections and networks can boost a person's survival by 50%
  - More likely to thrive because they feel safe, and trust their community and government



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- Social Isolation is more often observed through an individual lens instead of a systemic issue, in part due to social isolation and loneliness being regarded as one in the same
- Socially Connected Communities:
  - Design safe public spaces that encourage social connection
  - Transportation by means other than cars is stigmatized and dangerous
  - Red-lining has created racially divided communities, pushing students into impoverished schools
- All sectors have a role to play
- Efforts improve trust with residents and leaders
- Opens a future for everyone to find a sense of belonging
- Examples:
  - Happy to Chat Benches
  - Community installments like play areas, or seating areas
- Check out:
  - *Taskforce to End Loneliness and Build Community*
    - *Massachusetts AARP*

#### Questions:

- Any southern examples?
  - West Virginia
- Local planning departments who do zoning, etc, what policy levers are there that encourage building socially connected zones?
  - Include planners, elected officials, who are around the table
  - Transportation and planning engineers influence social connectedness
- Based on programs, what have you seen as far as financial insecurity? Have you seen any particular programs that look at ways to improve financial security by building social connectedness?
  - Adequate information about promising practices around food security, housing, etc, is available, but financial security requires more exploration
- Any ideas how you approach integrating connecting community members with the resources that may be available, but may not be used to their fullest potential? For example, school buses, nutrition in schools, infrastructure...
  - Co-locate: when opening new schools, build beside parks and/or resource centers
  - Individual level decisions regarding opening spaces for public use, such as school playgrounds
  - Facilities are available, creativity is required to use them to their greatest potential

#### Agenda item: Small Group Discussions

- Meeting participants developed recommendations based on presentations from the morning



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- Meeting participants worked in small groups to provide additional context for recommendations 1 through 20

#### Conclusions:

- April meeting is the final meeting and will be focused on finalizing recommendations
  - Reach out to Justina Siuba with any further concerns or feedback that arises beyond the March 14<sup>th</sup> meeting
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