

July 19, 2015

The 2015 White House Conference on Aging and the shifting needs of older Americans

This past week, the White House held its Conference on Aging, which has been hosted every decade since the 1960s to discuss the most pressing issues facing older adults. This year, recognizing the 50th anniversary of the Older Americans Act, Medicare, and Medicaid, and the 80th anniversary of Social Security, the conference brought together older Americans, caregivers, advocates, community leaders and experts from across the country to discuss retirement security, healthy aging, long-term services and supports, and elder justice.

Last fall, The New York Women's Foundation released a report, *Blueprint for Investing in Women 60+*, highlighting the challenges faced by older women, who make up much of the 31% of NYC seniors living in poverty. We found that many older women are taking on care giving duties in the place of their adult children who are unable to fulfill these responsibilities due to drugs, imprisonment or illness. These women are caring for their grandchildren despite needing care and support themselves. This burden has a severe impact on their ability to address their own needs, leaving them particularly vulnerable to health and financial difficulties.

Older immigrant women and women of color are particularly vulnerable to these conditions, with 40% of NYC seniors identifying as non-white and 46% born abroad. This is in stark contrast to the demographic of the NYC senior population in 1965 when the Older Americans Act was first passed. At that time, 85% of older New Yorkers were white, US citizens, and English speaking. This shift in population reflects a dire need to re-examine the services available to seniors to meet their changing needs. Our report includes recommendations for direct service providers, philanthropy, and government agencies as to how they can better support this population. Recommendations include: continue to build effective and innovate nutrition and fitness programs, support caregivers—both older women caregivers and those that care for older adults, and promote collaboration across sectors, cultures and generations.

Please see the links below for more information:

White House Conference on Aging <http://whitehouseconferenceonaging.gov/>

Voices from the Field: Blueprint for Investing in Women 60+
<http://oldnywf.gbtesting.us/voices-from-the-field/>

Brooklyn Independent Media: BK Live 7.14.15: Poverty & the Elderly
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rd9Pnb-Y5GM&feature=youtu.be>

Women's eNews: Aging Immigrants Often Work as Unpaid Caretakers
<http://womensenews.org/story/labor/150703/aging-immigrants-often-work-unpaid-caretakers>

Gotham Gazette: Under-reported Abuse Given Higher Priority in New City Budget
<http://www.gothamgazette.com/index.php/government/5812-under-reported-abuse-given-higher-priority-in-new-city-budget>

Huffington Post: A Message from the White House Conference on Aging: Value Our Elders and Those Who Care for Them http://www.huffingtonpost.com/aijen-poo/a-message-from-the-white_b_7794458.html