

**Area Plan on Aging
South Alabama Regional Planning Commission
Fiscal Years 2025-2029**

If you are an older individual, person with a disability, caregiver, professional working in the aging/disabilities sector, or any other interested person and would like to provide input on the 2025-2029 Area Plan on Aging of the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission, please send comments by emailing the Area Agency on Aging Director, Julie McGee on or before September 12, 2025 at jmcgee@sarpc.org.

Executive Summary

Background

The Area Agency on Aging was designated and implemented as a work program of the **South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC)** in 1972 and is designated by the State of Alabama and its Department of Senior Services as the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for Region 8, comprised of Baldwin, Escambia and Mobile counties in Alabama, and the grantee for funds from the Older Americans Act (OAA). The OAA requires each designated AAA to prepare and develop an Area Plan to be approved to provide services under the OAA and serves as the contractual agreement between the Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS) and SARPC.

The AAA operates within SARPC in cooperation with the Alabama Department of Senior Services and the U.S. Administration on Community Living. SARPC is a local governmental regional planning commission, officially organized in 1968 and serves Baldwin, Escambia and Mobile counties. It is one of twelve regional commissions in Alabama as provided for in Act 1126 of the 1969 Alabama Legislature. SARPC works with its member government representatives to discuss and resolve common problems, especially those that transcend political boundaries. The scope of SARPC's work programs covers a range of activities that include community and economic development, transportation planning, senior employment and the Area Agency on Aging.

The Area Agency on Aging serves as the focal point on matters concerning older persons in our planning and service area. The AAA is the central advocate for persons age 60 and older in Region 8 and functions as an umbrella agency for services to older persons by assessing identified needs and available resources, planning, and coordinating a comprehensive service delivery system, pooling resources, and providing certain services for contracting with sponsors in the community for priority services. The AAA is a strong and viable entity, capable of advocating for, and providing technical assistance to, persons/agencies concerned with older adults. While all persons 60 years and older can access available services regardless of circumstances, preference for services will be given to older individuals and caregivers who are older individuals with the greatest economic and social need, and to older relative caregivers of children with severe disabilities, or individuals with severe disabilities. The greatest economic need means the need resulting from an income level at or below the Federal poverty level. Greatest social need means the need caused by noneconomic factors, to include populations ADSS and its Area Agency on Aging (AAA) partners will target who are those with physical (including those with assistive technology (AT) needs and blind/visually impaired) and mental disabilities, language barriers, racial or ethnic status, Native American identity, chronic conditions (listed below with special emphasis on those living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias) and living in rural locations throughout the state.

The mission of the Area Agency on Aging is to promote the dignity and independence of older persons by serving as an advocate for older people, and by overseeing the development of a comprehensive and coordinated system of care that is responsive to the needs and preference of older people and their family caregivers.

The AAA carries out its mission under the Older Americans Act by working with the Alabama Department of Senior Services, the Administration on Community Living, other federal, national and state partners and the aging network. The Older Americans Act (OAA) was passed by Congress in 1965 as a response to concerns by policymakers about a lack of community social services for older persons, and the Administration on Aging was created, later renamed to the Administration on Community Living to incorporate certain disability services. State Units on Aging were established by the Administration on Aging, and the Alabama Commission on Aging, renamed the Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS), was established. ADSS achieves its mission by contracting with the 13 regional Agencies on Aging in Alabama to provide services. Although older adults may receive services under many other federal programs, the OAA is considered a major vehicle for the organization and delivery of social and nutrition services to persons aged 60 and over and their caregivers.

ADSS administers core OAA statewide programs on aging and other related programs funded by the Administration for Community Living, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the U.S. Department of Labor, the Alabama Medicaid Agency, and the State of Alabama. These programs are operated through SARPC and the other regional AAAs in conjunction with the Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC) screening and counseling program called One Door Alabama. SARPC and the other AAAs act as local planning and service agencies with many state and local service providers. In addition, SARPC's AAA receives funding from other federal, state and national organizations to provide certain local services.

Current Status

The older adult population continues to grow as the youngest baby boomers reached age 60 in 2024. Alabama, like the rest of the U.S., continues to experience significant growth in its senior population, as between 2020 and 2040, census projections indicate the numbers of older Americans will grow to 1,144,172, a 34% increase that will result in more demand for support and services. In addition, there are more than 800,000 people with disabilities in Alabama, which is also anticipated to grow. There are an estimated 761,000 caregivers in Alabama, with 75% of care estimated to be provided by family and friends, often at significant hardship. In SARPC's region, Baldwin County has one of the highest rates of older adults among Alabama counties.

One of the top ten causes of death in Alabama is Alzheimer's Disease. The Alzheimer's Association estimated there were 103,000 persons living with Alzheimer's who were age 65 and older. Racial and ethnic disparities also exist for Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia (ADRD) with the CDC reporting African American are two times, and Hispanics one and a half times as likely to develop ADRD than Caucasians. Other groups with higher rates are women, people with intellectual or developmental disabilities and American Indians. Alabama is reported to have the second highest Alzheimer's Disease mortality rate in the U.S. Social determinants of health have been identified as contributing to cognitive decline. Modifiable risk factors for dementia include depression, hearing loss, physical inactivity, poor diet and obesity, poor sleep quality, sleep disorders, tobacco use, traumatic brain injury and alcohol use. Efforts to prevent cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular disease may also reduce the risk of cognitive decline and dementia.

In SARPC's service area there are an estimated 16,615 adults 60+ and older below the poverty line, with 7,014 being minorities. Many underserved minority and rural populations have limited access to medical services to address health problems such as ADRD and chronic illnesses such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Lack of medical care, limited transportation resources, access to nutritious foods and poverty are all components of the social determinants of health care affecting people living in poverty.

Provision of Aging Services

Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) are administered through ADSS and provided by SARPC and the other AAAs and the aging network. As the population ages and lives longer with disabilities, HCBS will be of continued and growing importance as Alabama and our service area experiences a dramatic demographic shift with older adults and persons with disabilities preferring to remain in their own homes and in the community, where they want to live, with the people they choose to live with, and with the ability to participate as fully as possible in their communities. In addition, with a significant loss of defined retirement plans, many older adults are reaching old age with limited incomes with approximately one third only having social security as a source of income. Planned services focus on implementing our mission to promote the quality of life and independence of older adults by 1) helping people stay at home through wellness programs and services that address Social Determinants of Health such as nutrition and transportation and HCBS; 2) assisting caregivers, including older relative caregivers and persons living with ADRD; 3) helping seniors remain independent, active and involved through senior centers, volunteer opportunities, employment and programs that promote social connections; and 4) helping seniors find needed resources through the ADRC such as benefit and financial assistance, elder rights and legal services, SHIP health insurance counseling, prescription assistance, recreation and transportation. The 2024 Needs Assessment conducted by ADSS in cooperation with the AAAs indicated the top four needs were Help Staying at Home, Concerns about Scams, Need for information on Medicare and Medicaid, and the availability of meals. SARPC's Area Plan addresses all these top needs. The top seven most requested services through SARPC's ADRC are as follows:

FY 23-25

1. E/D MW (5712)
2. Meals (1896)
3. Farmers Market (1361)
4. SNAP (969)
5. Al Cares (879)
6. Legal (635)
7. SHIP (420)
8. SenioRx (101)

In addition, SARPC supports the State Plan goals of the Alabama Department of Senior Services to address the current health and social service landscape noting a rapidly aging population with high rates of ADRD, and caregiver burden. The 2025-2029 Alabama State Plan on Aging has the following five goals which will influence the development of the Area Plan:

- Goal 1:** Provide strong and effective core Older Americans Act Services and other home and community-based services while strengthening oversight and quality management.
- Goal 2:** Plan for future emergencies, encouraging healthy and independent lives.
- Goal 3:** Reach and serve individuals with the greatest economic and social need.
- Goal 4:** Coordinate and maintain strong and effective home and community-based services for older adults and people with disabilities.
- Goal 5:** Engage, educate, and assist caregivers regarding caregiving, caregiving rights, and resources in the service area and Alabama.