



# Senior Needs Assessment



Valley Senior  
Services Council  
and the  
Valley United Way



Community Results Center  
September 2007

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Community Results Center (CRC) of the United Way of Connecticut conducted a needs assessment for the Valley Senior Services Council and the Valley United Way to help determine the top needs of older adults in Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour, and Shelton. This needs assessment is based on research with residents and with agencies that provide services to older adults, and a review of administrative data. The report identifies the major issues that were brought to light by discussions with residents and service providers and includes recent research that suggest promising practices in those areas.

### POPULATION INFORMATION

- Nationally, the population of those 65 and older is expected to double over the next 25 years due mainly to increases in longevity and to the aging of the baby boomers. Currently, those age 65 and older comprise close to 13 percent of the population. It is estimated that by 2030, those 65 and older will comprise 20 percent of the population.
- In 2000, there were 13,680 residents in the Valley who were 65 years of age and older, representing 14.5 percent of the total population. This age group increased six percent between 1990 and 2000, higher than the 3.6 percent rate of growth at the state level.
- While the oldest age group, those 85 and older, accounts for less than two percent of the population in the Valley, the size of that age group grew 46 percent between 1990 and 2000. That is greater than the 37 percent increase at the state level. Oxford, Seymour, and Ansonia showed the most growth in this older age group.



#### ***Race***

- In 2000, eight percent of the total population in these five Valley towns were members of racial and ethnic minorities. Minorities comprise close to four percent of the 65 and older population in these five Valley towns, an increase of about one percentage point since 1990.

#### ***Poverty***

- Nationally, 9.9 percent of individuals 65 years of age and older live at or below the federal poverty level, while in the Valley 5.2 percent of those in that age group live at or below the poverty level.
- The poverty rate for women in this age group is higher than for men at 12.4 percent and 7.0 percent respectively. Close to 70 percent of those ages 65 and older living in poverty in the Valley are women.



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### *Calls to 2-1-1 and to the AASCC*

- In the Valley, in 2006, there were over 8,500 requests for service received by Connecticut's 2-1-1 information and referral service. This service provides callers with information and crisis support 24 hours a day. Over 500 requests were from callers ages 65 and older. Older adults call most often for information on utility assistance, medical information, and medical transportation.
- The Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut (AASCC) also provides telephone information and referral services. In 2006, AASCC provided information to 1,657 callers in the Valley. Most of those callers contact the AASCC through the CHOICES information and referral program. Over 1,200 calls made to the AASCC from older Valley residents were regarding insurance matters.

#### Top Calls

- Utility assistance
- Medical Information
- Medical Transportation

Source: 2-1-1

### REVIEW OF PAST RESEARCH

Research has been done by several different entities over the past seven years that either focus on or include a review of issues concerning older adults in the Valley. The findings and recommendations of the following reports are briefly summarized in this report in order to shed light on issues that have arisen in the past which may or may not have been resolved. These reports include:

- Addressing Needs and Opportunities in the Lower Naugatuck Valley: A Funding Strategy, May 2000 (Mount Auburn Study)
- Valley Eldercare Provider Response to the Mount Auburn Study, February, 2001
- Report of the Pilot Senior Center Needs Assessment Project in the Lower Naugatuck Valley Towns, May 2003
- Valley Needs and Opportunities Project: Report on Progress, March 2005
- Agency on Aging Needs Assessment, 2005

### PRIORITIES

During focus groups and interviews older adults and service providers focused on several areas of need for older adults:

#### Transportation

While there are various transportation services available to older adults in the Valley, there were several areas of need identified. Older adults and providers suggested that service is needed on evenings and weekends, that all services need to accommodate wheelchairs, that personal assistance needs to be available to assist passengers from their homes, and that the length of wait time for return trips needs to be shortened.



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### Social Service Support

Service providers for older adults say that there is a lack of centralized social service support in each town. They also cite the lack of social service support at housing facilities. Providers stressed the need for a social services professional who could provide outreach and direct services to older adults in the Valley. Discussions with residents also focused on their need to understand where to find the resources. Older adults specifically concentrated on the help they need finding assistance for medical and insurance issues, in-home care, and household maintenance.



### Housing

While older adults express a strong desire to remain in their homes as long as possible, many suggested there are challenges to fulfilling that desire. Older adults wanting to remain in their present housing often find it difficult to maintain their home or modify it to support changes in their physical mobility. They also say it can be challenging to find reliable and affordable assistance with household chores and yard work. Older adults also say if they do want to move to senior housing, there are long waiting lists. And they suggest that since much of the senior housing in the Valley consists of efficiency apartments, the units are often not adequate for their needs. The presence of young adult disabled residents in housing that had been dedicated to older adults was also mentioned as a safety concern for older adults.



### Healthcare

For older adults there are many statistics that magnify the importance of disease prevention and early detection. Among them is that the cost of health care for someone over 65 is five times greater than it is for someone under 65, and that 95 percent of health costs for older adults are for chronic illnesses.<sup>1</sup> As the population of older adults continues to increase, the promotion of programs that support the health and well-being of older adults becomes more critical. Residents and providers discussed the need for continued health screenings and educational programs for older adults.

