

Central Minnesota ElderCare Development Partnership

Connections | Collaboration | Resilience Innovation | Sustainability | Advocacy

The **Central Minnesota Council on Aging (CMCOA)** Community Development team, through its **ElderCare Development Partnership (EDP)**, empowers communities through knowledge to foster relationships, partnerships, and programs that support older adults and caregivers.

The **ElderCare Development Partnership** is Minnesota's long-term strategy for strengthening and modernizing the state's long-term services and supports system for older adults. Established under [Minnesota Statute 256B.0917](#), the EDP assists communities build to local capacity, develop innovative solutions, coordinate resources, and address service gaps, particularly in areas impacted by nursing home closures. Guided by statewide gaps analyses, regional agencies develop local goals and strategies to support older adults in remain connected, supported, and engaged where they live.

Through the EDP, the Community Development team at CMCOA collaborates with healthcare systems, public health agencies, service providers, local governments, nonprofits, businesses, and community groups to expand and enhance long-term supports. Through these cross-sector relationships, EDP identifies community priorities, pilots new approaches, strengthens existing services, and leverages both formal and informal resources to improve outcomes. This work enables communities to better respond to changing demographics and evolving care needs while creating environments where people can age successfully in place.

Beyond program development, the Central EDP team offers technical assistance to organizations, coalitions, and agencies seeking to enhance services for aging populations. Staff help identify funding opportunities, provide guidance on grant development and budgeting, connect organizations with shared goals, and promote coordination efforts that maximize resources while reducing duplication.

While EDP assists communities in pursuing funding through programs such as the **Minnesota Department of Human Services Live Well at Home, Customized Living Quality Improvement**, and **Provider Capacity grants**, as well as the regional and local **Minnesota Board on Aging Dementia grant** and other state and federal opportunities, our focus extends beyond grant funding. We work with communities to **explore a variety of resources**, including foundation grants, health system

partnerships, local government support, regional initiatives, donations, fundraising efforts, community collaborations, and in-kind contributions. By building strong local relationships and identifying diverse funding and partnership opportunities, we help communities develop sustainable programs and long-term solutions that support older adults and caregivers.

EDP offers far more than grant technical support. Because **Central EDP staff** live and work within the communities they serve, they bring firsthand knowledge of local needs, service gaps, provider challenges, and the experiences of older adults and caregivers. This local expertise allows the team to build partnerships, identify emerging issues, develop innovative solutions, and help communities strengthen services and support that enable older adults to remain independent and engaged in their communities.

Key Areas of Work:

Home and Community Based Services

EDP plays an important role in expanding and strengthening services that allow aging adults to remain safely and comfortably in their own homes. Working closely with local organizations, the team helps identify unmet needs and supports the development of programs such as transportation assistance, homemaking services, caregiver respite, chore support, and other community-based resources.

Partnerships include traditional service providers, home care agencies, Faith in Action programs, nonprofit organizations, and private-sector partners, while also encouraging innovative models of service delivery. For example, EDP has collaborated with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity to advance aging in place initiatives that improve home safety and accessibility. Through relationship-building and coordinated planning, EDP helps communities create lasting solutions that adapt to changing needs.

Strengthening Transportation Access Through Regional Partnerships

Reliable transportation is essential for older adults to remain independent and connected to their communities. The **Central EDP** team collaborates with Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs), county transit programs, and community partners to identify transportation needs, address service gaps, and improve access to healthcare, services, and social opportunities. Through involvement with the East Central and Region 5 RTCCs, Timber Trails, Mille Lacs County Transportation Advisory Council, Arrowhead Transit advisory efforts, and the Age-Friendly Multisector Blueprint for Aging Transportation Action Team, EDP helps advance local and statewide solutions that create a more coordinated, accessible, and age-friendly transportation network for older adults and caregivers.

Workforce Education and Engagement

Through workforce development efforts, the team engages current and future professionals in understanding the unique needs of older adults and caregivers. Customized presentations and educational opportunities help build awareness of aging-related issues, share best practices, and inspire individuals to explore meaningful careers in services that support older adults and help communities age well.

Several ways this has been accomplished:

- The Central EDP team partners with several **community and technical colleges** in the central region to educate their dental assistant students and faculty on dementia and aging-related support. As part of the program's curriculum, the Central EDP team leads a workshop that focuses on dementia education for dental providers and other aging-related activities such as building social connections, ageism, and Reframe Aging strategies.
- Engage community **economic development leaders**, city and county planners, business owners on the importance of supporting older adults and caregivers in the workplace. Providing opportunities to learn about aging and caregiver needs in the workforce, and best practice strategies to support them.

Public Health and Health System Relationships

The Central EDP team has established strong relationships with public health agencies and healthcare leaders throughout the region, serving as a trusted resource for aging-related planning and community engagement. Through these partnerships, staff provide expertise, demographic data, community insight, and technical assistance to help ensure aging populations are considered throughout community health assessments and community health improvement plans.

Because EDP maintains close connections with local service networks, the team is uniquely positioned to identify emerging trends, recognize service barriers, and support strategies that encourage healthy aging, strengthen caregiver resources, promote dementia-friendly practices, and expand access to community-based supports. These collaborative efforts contribute to more coordinated and age-friendly systems of care across the region.

Ageism Awareness and Education

Addressing ageism remains an important component of EDP's work. Through presentations, outreach efforts, public events, and ongoing conversations, the team encourages a more positive and realistic understanding of aging. By challenging age-related stereotypes and promoting age-inclusive perspectives, EDP helps create environments where people of all ages are valued and respected.

Building Bridges to Support, Engage, and Promote Social Connection

Together Well Toolkit (TWT) is an innovative initiative developed by CMCOA to help address social isolation and loneliness among older adults and family caregivers. The toolkit equips service providers with practical tools and strategies to increase awareness, identify individuals at risk, and support meaningful social connections. Through education, screening tools, motivational interviewing, and personalized referrals, TWT helps providers recognize and respond to social isolation and loneliness while empowering older adults and caregivers to improve their well-being, sense of belonging, and community engagement.

Through its education and outreach efforts, the Central EDP team has become a trusted resource on the growing issue of **solo aging** and the importance of social connection for older adults. Building on strong community relationships, the team partnered with **Wilder Research** to support its solos research initiative by engaging social work professionals and other stakeholders in discussions about the unique needs and challenges faced by older adults aging without traditional family support. In addition to raising awareness among community members and professionals, EDP helps foster strategies and partnerships that strengthen social connections, reduce isolation, and improve support systems for solo agers.

Building Housing Solutions for Older Adults: EDP's Role in Housing Stability and Homelessness Prevention

The Central EDP team plays an active role in regional housing and homelessness initiatives, advocating for affordable and accessible housing options that support older adults in aging safely within their communities. By participating in coalitions and community partnerships focused on homelessness prevention and housing stability, EDP ensures older adults' needs are represented in local and regional planning efforts. Through involvement with organizations such as the **Central Minnesota Continuum of Care, Rum River Housing and Homelessness Coalition, Lutheran Social Service Hope Advisory Board, housing initiatives, and the East Central Development Partnership**, EDP provides valuable insight into demographic trends, service gaps, and the unique housing challenges older adults face. These relationships help communities and economic development leaders better understand the growing demand for affordable housing, supportive services, and homelessness prevention strategies for aging populations, while promoting solutions that strengthen housing stability and community well-being.

Creating Age-Friendly and Dementia-Friendly Communities

The Central EDP team partners with communities across the region to advance Age-Friendly and Dementia-Friendly initiatives through education, technical assistance, and community engagement. Working with efforts such as **Age-Flourishing St. Cloud, St. Cloud Dementia Friends, Age-Friendly Princeton, Lakes Area Memory Awareness Advocates (LAMAA)**, and **Brainerd for All Ages**, EDP helps increase dementia awareness, strengthen caregiver support, promote healthy aging, and create communities where older adults can remain connected, engaged, and valued. Through these partnerships, EDP helps communities develop sustainable strategies that enhance quality of life for older adults and people of all ages.

Reach out to the Central EDP team:



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