

# Elders as Resources



for Children & Families

## *The Casey Point of View on Elders as Resources*

The primary mission of the Annie E. Casey Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. Elders are important resources for family success and community well-being. They are resourceful family members, key contributors to the community, and valuable policy allies for issues of children and youth.



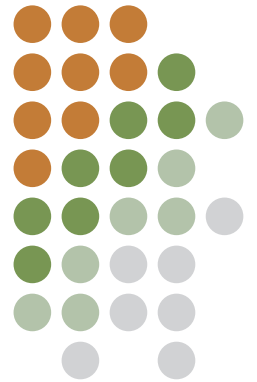
The Annie E. Casey Foundation  
[www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org)



# Elders as Resources Series

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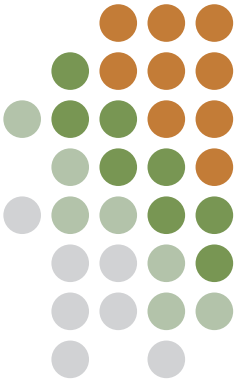
## Ideas for Policy and Practice

*The following ideas focus specifically on the potential of retiring leaders of nonprofit organizations for continued contributions to their fields.*

- **Elderhostel instruction.** Retiring or down-phasing nonprofit executives have extensive knowledge about social policy and practice that could be shared through programs such as Elderhostel, which provides learning opportunities for people age 55 and over. ([www.elderhostel.org](http://www.elderhostel.org)) Age peer nonprofit executives could share their insights with members of their generation, which has the highest rate of voting and the greatest potential for policy impact.
- **Application of expertise to critical areas of need.** Retiring nonprofit executives could lend their expertise to strengthen the ability of community-based organizations and institutions to engage in effective advocacy, develop effective programming, and enhance the provision of services. (1) Their wealth of experience and a range of networks superbly position retiring executives for effective policy advocacy. (2) Because the field of aging services is expanding, senior level experience is in demand in this arena. (3) The growing interest by faith-based institutions in accessing government funds has revealed the need for capacity building and staff expansion to enable them to provide services.
- **Transfer of expertise to microenterprise development.** Nonprofit executives could transfer their expertise to the development of small businesses by lower-income individuals as volunteers with the Service Corps of Retired Executives. ([www.score.org](http://www.score.org))
- **Generational transfer of expertise.** Retiring leaders and incoming younger professionals can improve their ability for cross-generational communication and respect through courses designed specifically for passing the baton of leadership from one generation to the next. (e.g., [http://environment.yale.edu/post/1822/professional\\_skills\\_module\\_topics/](http://environment.yale.edu/post/1822/professional_skills_module_topics/)) For example, NEA-Retired is using the experience and expertise of retired teachers to help new professionals navigate the work and stay in the profession. ([www.nea.org/retired/programs/outreach-mentoring.html](http://www.nea.org/retired/programs/outreach-mentoring.html))

*Elders as Resources Series – #1*

# Elders as Resources for Leadership



# Elders as Resources in Social Networks

## Mutual Assistance.

- **Policy.** Additional federal support for subsidized guardianship would give states the flexibility to use foster care funds so that children could exit the child welfare system into safe, stable homes of relatives.
- **Practice.** San Diego County’s Helix Charter High School offers a Grandparents Shadow Day that allows grandparents raising grandchildren to better understand the student’s day at school by visiting their classrooms. (Generations United – “Public Policy agenda for the 109th Congress”)

## Mentoring and Coaching.

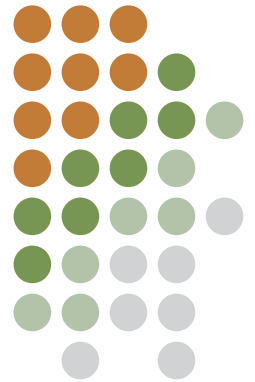
- **Policy.** Silver Scholarships encourage older adults to volunteer with children. In exchange for volunteer hours, elders receive an educational scholarship they can give to a child they mentor, a grandchild, or use themselves. ([www.connectmichiganalliance.org/ervemichigan/050906.htm#sil](http://www.connectmichiganalliance.org/ervemichigan/050906.htm#sil))
- **Practice.** Traveling Grannies & Grandpas in Grand Rapids, MI, offer support for parents around parenting skills and for at-risk youth through after-school activities that help them identify alternative ways of coping with stress and peer pressure. ([http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/inn\\_prog/subtopics.cfm?comID=18](http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/inn_prog/subtopics.cfm?comID=18))

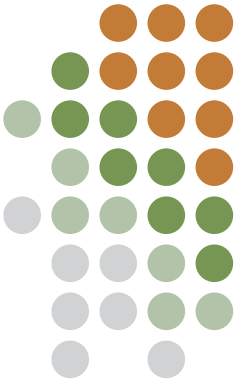
## Reciprocal Exchanges

- **Policy.** Greater flexibility in regulations, zoning, and licensing requirements for Head Start and senior centers would help eliminate barriers to intergenerational shared sites .
- **Practice.** Older adults in Philadelphia serve as Environmental Health Coaches for elementary school children. Recruited from neighborhoods that have the highest rates of asthma and diabetes, they engage children in learning about environmental triggers for chronic health conditions and help them develop action steps to protect themselves, their families, and their communities. ([www.epa.gov/aging/grants/ais/temple\\_univ.htm](http://www.epa.gov/aging/grants/ais/temple_univ.htm))

## Civic Participation

- **Policy.** The Falcon Heights, MN, mayor and city council are committed to intergenerational interaction and the incorporation of all generations into policy decisions. Formal structures within city government facilitate communication and decision-making by all generations. ([www.falcon-heights.ci.mn.us](http://www.falcon-heights.ci.mn.us))
- **Practice.** In Miami, FL, older adults help high school students organize and conduct intergenerational citizens’ action forums that address important shared issues . ([http://ipath.gu.org/documents/A0/Reaching\\_Across\\_Ages.pdf](http://ipath.gu.org/documents/A0/Reaching_Across_Ages.pdf))

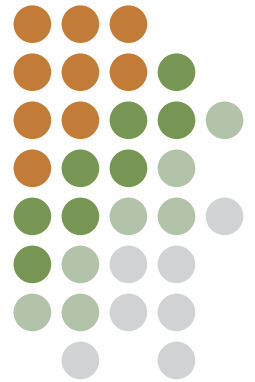


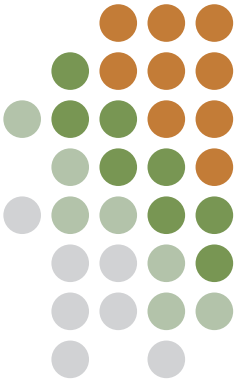


- **Mentoring for parents.** Traveling Grannies & Grandpas in Grand Rapids, MI, offers support for pregnant and parenting teens through after-school activities. ([http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/inn\\_prog/subtopics.cfm?comID=18](http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/inn_prog/subtopics.cfm?comID=18)) In San Diego's First Five program, senior volunteers help improve the verbal and social skills of young children and offer parenting lessons to young, struggling parents. ([http://aging.senate.gov/public/\\_files/hr155ps.pdf](http://aging.senate.gov/public/_files/hr155ps.pdf))
- **Intergenerational shared sites.** The co-location of senior centers and child care centers offers opportunity for young children to have individualized attention from caring adults. Facility regulations developed by the Administration on Aging (AoA) and the Administration on Children and Families (ACF) would benefit from greater flexibility for shared sites.
- **Reading readiness.** In Florida, OTTER (Older Teachers Training Early Readers) helps children enter kindergarten ready to read. (Generations United Newsletter, 10, 1, 2005) In Ohio older volunteers in the Foster Grandparent program have produced measurable improvement in educational, social and expressive language skills of young children in Head Start. ([http://nationalservicerresources.org/epicenter/practices/index.php?ep\\_action=view&ep\\_id=727](http://nationalservicerresources.org/epicenter/practices/index.php?ep_action=view&ep_id=727))
- **Seniors4Kids.** This initiative, begun in Florida and expanding to other states, mobilizes older adults in support of high quality pre-kindergarten for all children. ([www.Seniors4Kids.org](http://www.Seniors4Kids.org))
- **Older volunteers for child health.** Through the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), volunteers help get children immunized. (Generations United, *Public Policy Agenda for the 109th Congress*, 2005). A national network of free clinics for uninsured families is under development by retired medical personnel through the Volunteers in Medicine Institute. ([www.vimi.org](http://www.vimi.org))
- **Support for grandparents raising young children.** Generations United offers state by state information on services and benefits available to grandparents raising grandchildren. ([www.gu.org/factsheets.asp](http://www.gu.org/factsheets.asp))

## Elders as Resources for Education

- **Elders as tutors and mentors for students.** Experience Corps® -- now in 18 cities—supports older adults as tutors and mentors to children in urban public schools and after-school programs. Experience Corps boosts student academic performance, contributes to the success of schools and youth-serving organizations, strengthens ties between these institutions and surrounding neighborhoods, and enhances the well-being of the volunteers.  
([www.experiencecorps.org/about\\_us/index.html](http://www.experiencecorps.org/about_us/index.html))
- **Retired teachers as mentors and advocates.** Members of NEA-Retired provide valuable leadership, constructive solutions, and transition facilitation for practicing and student teachers. With over 200,000 retired members and programs in all states, this group is an under-tapped resource for support in promoting student public school success.  
([www.nea.org/retired/programs/outreach-mentoring.html](http://www.nea.org/retired/programs/outreach-mentoring.html))  
Retired members of the South Carolina Education Association have become trained lobbyists to improve public education. Their advocacy insured full funding of the state's education improvement law. ([www.aarp.org/about\\_aarp/nrta/nrta\\_programs/2006youthawards.html](http://www.aarp.org/about_aarp/nrta/nrta_programs/2006youthawards.html))
- **Shared facilities.** Facilities shared by the generations are embraced by advocates for after-school activities and parents concerned about the safety of their children. The Jefferson County, KY, School Board operates a senior center at four schools in Louisville. Originally focused on nutrition, with seniors eating their meals in the school cafeteria, the program has grown into a thriving intergenerational initiative, including seniors tutoring through the America-Reads challenge.  
([www.edfacilities.org/pubs/pubs\\_html.cfm?abstract=AgeWave](http://www.edfacilities.org/pubs/pubs_html.cfm?abstract=AgeWave))
- **Cultural exchange.** Intergenerational Bridges in Rockville, MD, pairs a student learning English with an older adult for language practice and cultural exchange in after-school programming that is mutually beneficial.  
([www.volunteermatch.org/opps/opp223120.html](http://www.volunteermatch.org/opps/opp223120.html))





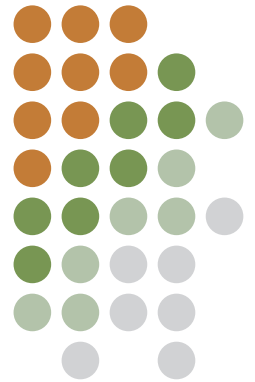
## Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

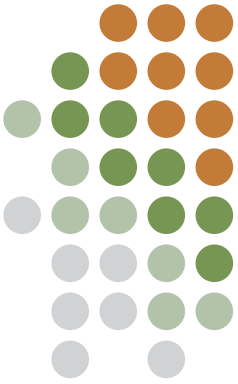
- **Subsidized guardianship.** Some states provide income support for relative caregivers and permanency for the children in their care without having to terminate parental rights. The federal government (except for some Title IV-E waivers) has yet to adopt this policy, which would provide another permanency option for youth in foster care.
- **Caregiver support.** The Older Americans Act's National Family Caregiver Support Program provides information, counseling, support services, and respite for grandparents caring for grandchildren. However, only 10% of its funds can be used for these types of families.
- **Housing options.** Elders may have to begin caring for children without warning. Prohibitive private lease agreements and senior housing should offer some flexibility for those elders who find themselves with new and unexpected responsibilities.
- **Facilitation for responsible caregiving.** Short of legal adoption, grandparent caregivers may find it difficult to cover grandchildren through their health care, obtain medical consent for the children, or enroll children in school. Some states have altered consent laws to facilitate grandparent caregiving.
- **Intergenerational community support.** Hope Meadows is a planned intergenerational community on a converted military base in Illinois. It enables children to move from the foster care system into adoptive homes, creates neighborhoods of extended support to adoptive families, and promotes purpose in the lives of older adult residents.  
([www.generationsofhope.org](http://www.generationsofhope.org))



# Elders as Resources for Income Security

- **Social Security policy allies.** Elder and child advocates are natural allies in the quest for vitality of Social Security. About 3.1 million children under the age of 18 receive Social Security benefits because a parent has died, has retired, or can no longer work because of disability. Another 2.2 million children live in households where at least one adult receives Social Security benefits. More children currently benefit from Social Security than from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Social Security is the largest source of cash benefits going to 2.4 million grandparent-headed households caring for 4.5 million grandchildren under 18. ([www.nccp.org/pub\\_wsw05c.html](http://www.nccp.org/pub_wsw05c.html))
- **Medicaid policy allies.** Elder and child advocates are natural allies in support of an effective Medicaid system. Medicaid provides the only source of health care coverage for 53 million poor and low-income people, including 38 million low-income children and their parents and 15 million seniors and people with disabilities. ([www.rinow.org/category/other/take-action/](http://www.rinow.org/category/other/take-action/))
- **Welfare to work support.** In San Diego County, CA, seniors are enlisted as mentors to help families make a successful transition from welfare to work. The older adults mentor the entire family, help the adult returning to work find appropriate day care, open bank accounts, get kids immunized, find and use health care, and otherwise help and support them. ([http://aging.senate.gov/public/\\_files/hr155ps.pdf](http://aging.senate.gov/public/_files/hr155ps.pdf)) In DeKalb County, GA, Senior Connections is piloting a project in which they take welfare to work clients to and from job sites and on the way drop off and pick up their children at daycare centers. ([http://ipath.gu.org/documents/A0/Reaching\\_Across\\_Ages.pdf](http://ipath.gu.org/documents/A0/Reaching_Across_Ages.pdf))
- **Access to available benefits.** Older volunteers and aging advocacy organizations offer support for individuals and families to be able to access public benefits for which they are eligible. Senior volunteers work with nonprofit tax preparation initiatives to ensure that low-income families claim EITC benefits they have earned. The National Council on Aging offers a BenefitsCheckUp website so that users can determine their eligibility for the more than 1,350 public and private benefits programs in the 50 states and DC. These supports are especially important for the 2.4 million children being raised by grandparents where no parent is present.

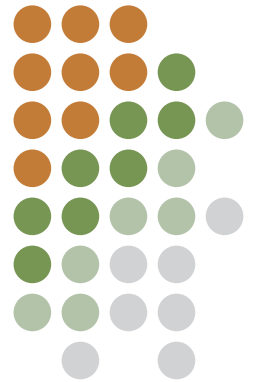


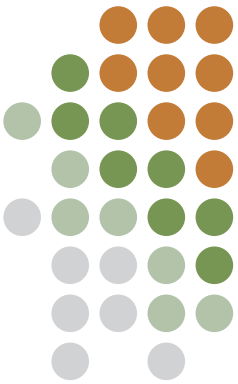


- **Employment.** Title V of the Older Americans Act – Community Service Employment for Older Americans -- provides funds to raise the prospects of unsubsidized employment for people 55 and over through training and promotes community-based part-time work for those with low incomes and low employment prospects. Transportation costs and appropriate counseling and supportive services are provided.
- **Employment skills.** Senior Corps provides grants to nonprofit organizations and public agencies for older volunteers to help organizations meet their core missions. Senior Corps works closely with organizations that help children and families in low-income communities develop computer skills that are important for employment. This avenue can be explored as a way to enhance elders' employability. ([www.seniorcorp.org](http://www.seniorcorp.org))
- **Economic supports.** The National Council on Aging offers a BenefitsCheckUp to connect elders to government programs that can help pay for property taxes, heating bills, other utilities, and other needs in order to sustain their self-sufficiency. The on-line eligibility assessment is available in forms either for individual use or for agencies who work with elders. ([www.benefitscheckup.org](http://www.benefitscheckup.org))
- **Mentoring for FES.** The Next Chapter™ initiative of Civic Ventures provides assistance to help older people undertake significant service. This initiative or comparable assistance could be utilized to develop programs for economically self-sufficient elders in lower-income communities to mentor their neighbors and youth in financial literacy, budgeting, home ownership preparation, and home improvement. ([www.civicventures.org/nextchapter/](http://www.civicventures.org/nextchapter/))
- **Housing.** Prohibitive private lease agreements and senior housing should offer some flexibility for elders who find themselves with new and unexpected responsibilities for raising their grandchildren. The federal Elder Cottage Housing Opportunity (ECHO) program could be adapted to allow elders to add onto their homes to accommodate children they did not expect to raise. (Generations United, 2004 Action Agenda)

## Elders as Resources for Children's Health

- **Targeted Medicaid alternative benefits.** Because of the health vulnerabilities that elders and children from struggling neighborhoods share, targeted alternative benefits could address both populations simultaneously, with the potential for cost-efficiencies. (Creating Healthy States: Promoting Healthy Living in the Medicaid Program, [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org))
- **Retired medical volunteers.** The Volunteers in Medicine Institute is developing a national network of free clinics using retired medical and lay volunteers to care for the working uninsured and their families. This effort has spawned new policies for volunteer licenses for out-of-state retired physicians in South Carolina. ([www.vimi.org](http://www.vimi.org))
- **Immunization mobilization.** Participants in the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RVSP) of the Corporation for National and Community Service provide help in getting children immunized by reminding parents about due dates, offering clinic information, providing transportation, and giving presentations to prenatal classes and other expectant parents.
- **Family Friends Program.** This National Council on Aging initiative matches older volunteers with families who have children with disabilities, chronic illnesses, and other at-risk conditions. The volunteers help connect families to resources and services, accompany them for medical visits, and provide respite for the parents. ([www.family-friends.org](http://www.family-friends.org))
- **Improved nutrition.** San Diego County's Senior Nutrition Advocacy Program (SNAP) pairs seniors and elementary school students over lunch in an effort to increase the fruit and vegetable intake of both groups. (P. Smith, County of San Diego Aging & Independent Services)
- **Healthier environments.** In Philadelphia older volunteer Environmental Health Coaches are recruited from low-income neighborhoods that have the highest rates of diabetes and asthma. They work with elementary school teachers to educate children about environmental triggers for chronic health conditions and develop action steps for healthier environments. ([www.epa.gov/aging/grants/ais/temple\\_univ/htm](http://www.epa.gov/aging/grants/ais/temple_univ/htm))





### Social Security

Elder and child advocates are natural allies in the quest for vitality of Social Security. About 3.1 million children under the age of 18 receive Social Security benefits because a parent has died, has retired, or can no longer work because of disability.

Another 2.2 million children live in households where at least one adult receives Social Security benefits. The intergenerational compact can be strengthened by redirecting energies focused on a distant Social Security crisis to create better school preparedness, better schools, better young adult outcomes, and better jobs.

- **Fact:** Social Security should have sufficient funds to pay full benefits until sometime between 2042 and 2052. Small changes can ensure its solvency for the next 75 years. ([http://www.aarp.org/bulletin/socialsec/ss\\_ideas.html](http://www.aarp.org/bulletin/socialsec/ss_ideas.html))
- **Fact:** Forty percent of kindergartners do not enter school fully prepared to learn. At least half of the children lack specific academic skills. The nation needs their productivity to maintain the intergenerational compact through Social Security.
- **Fact:** Elders promote better school preparation (Jump Start, Older Teachers Training Early Readers, Intergenerational Bridges), better schools (NEA-Retired), greater student success (Experience Corp), better young adult outcomes (Traveling Grannies & Grandpas), and successful transitions from welfare to work (Senior Corps, Service Corps of Retired Executives).

### Health and Wellness

Concerns about skyrocketing health care costs for elders can turn our attention to what it takes to promote healthy living on the preventive side of the equation.

- **Fact:** Many of today's major health issues are problems that cut across the generations, creating poor starts early in life that accumulate into larger problems by later life. They include obesity (30% of elders, 15% of children and youth), undernutrition (13 million children and 4 million elders experience food insecurity), inadequate health care (especially for minority groups and immigrants), and respiratory problems associated with air pollution (causing school absenteeism for younger folks and death for elders). (Viable Futures Toolkit, 2006, [www.justpartners.org](http://www.justpartners.org))

# Elders as Resources for Generations to Come

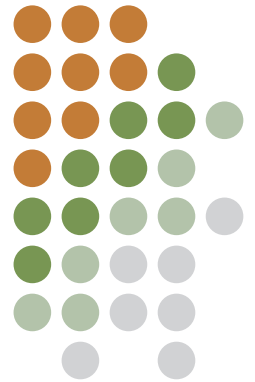
## Health and Wellness (cont.)

- **Fact:** All generations benefit from walkable communities, fresh foods, affordable & culturally competent health care, clean air, and healthy environments. These benefits are achieved through opportunity-rich neighborhoods ([www.kirwaninstitute.org](http://www.kirwaninstitute.org)), farmers markets and locally grown produce ([www.rur-dev.usda.gov/ocd/tn/tn20.pdf](http://www.rur-dev.usda.gov/ocd/tn/tn20.pdf)), reclamation of brownfields and cleanup of toxic waste ([www.policylink.org](http://www.policylink.org)), and use of community health outreach workers (Institute of Medicine, Unequal Treatment. National Academy of Sciences, 2002).

## Diversity and Democracy

Our increasingly diverse communities – within age groups and across age groups -- can become models of democracy through renewed appreciation for our common aspirations and the respective talents we bring to their realization.

- **Fact:** Every current generation in the U.S. is more diverse than it has ever been, but the highest proportion of Whites is found in those 65 and older. ([http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/aging\\_population/006544.htm](http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/aging_population/006544.htm)) If we choose to meet the needs of the growing population of elders at the expense of younger generations, we will contribute to racial inequities as well as age inequities.
- **Fact:** Local communities that use shared facilities, the arts, and resident civic participation as intercultural and intergenerational bridges and national organizations like Generations United are actively seeking ways to avoid zero-sum generational conflict that could morph into racial/ethnic conflict. Because half of all Americans age 50 to 70 want work that helps others ([www.civicventures.org](http://www.civicventures.org)), this predominantly White cohort has the chance to build a legacy of intercultural as well as intergenerational collaboration.

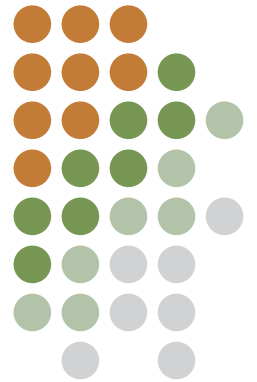




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