

## Aging Well Whatcom Initiative

# LISTENING TO OLDER ADULTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

## AGING WELL WHATCOM COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

A community assessment led by the Aging Well Initiative focused on three primary areas related to older adults in Whatcom County: demographics, housing, and listening to older adults and their families.

The **LISTENING TO OLDER ADULTS AND THEIR FAMILIES ASSESSMENT** sought to better understand what is important to older adults' quality of life, challenges and concerns, and perspectives on what programs, services, and supports for older adults and their families could be added or changed in Whatcom County.

This **LISTENING TO OLDER ADULTS AND THEIR FAMILIES REPORT** presents methodology and findings from surveys and listening sessions with older adults, people who work closely with older adults, and family members of older adults.

Findings will be used to develop an Aging Well Blueprint for Whatcom County, as well as inform community action, health improvement initiatives, and city and county planning.

Prepared by Members of Aging Well Listening Subgroup:

Mary Carlson (Whatcom Council on Aging), Marie Eaton (Palliative Care Institute), Colleen Harper (Bellingham at Home), Melinda Herrera (Rosewood Villa), and Amy Hockenberry (Whatcom County Health Department).

November 28, 2018 (DRAFT)

Whatcom County, Washington

# LISTENING TO OLDER ADULTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

## KEY FINDINGS

### WHAT'S IMPORTANT

- With responses from all three groups aggregated, the five most frequently mentioned themes were: **1) interaction, relationships, and connection; 2) family; 3) health; 4) health care; and 5) housing.**
- Looking at the responses of each group individually, **interaction, relationships, and connection** was also the theme most frequently mentioned all three groups. There were some differences among groups in terms of the other themes among the top five.

### CHALLENGES OR CONCERNS

- With responses from all three groups aggregated, the five most frequently mentioned themes were: **1) health care; 2) medical condition(s); 3) physical decline; 4) transportation; and 5) finances.**
- Looking at the challenges or concerns mentioned by each group individually, **medical conditions** were most frequently mentioned by older adults; **health care** was most frequently mentioned by people who work closely with older adults; and **interaction, relationships, and connection** was most frequently mentioned by family members of older adults.

### WHAT TO ADD OR CHANGE

- With responses from all three groups aggregated, the five most frequently mentioned themes were: **1) programs and services; 2) health care; 3) interaction, relationships and connection; 4) transportation; and 5) housing.**
- Looking at the responses of each group individually, **programs and services** was the theme most frequently mentioned by all three groups. There were some differences among groups in terms of the other themes among the top five.

The Aging Well Listening assessment consisted of surveys and listening sessions with three groups: older adults, people who work closely with older adults, and family members of older adults. The surveys and listening sessions all asked essentially the same three questions: 1) What is important to you/older adults? 2) What are challenges or concerns for you/older adults? 3) What programs, services, and supports for older adults and their families could be added or changed in Whatcom County?

Member of the Aging Well Initiative members conducted listening sessions, using a “health and wellness neighborhood map” activity as well as discussion questions. Surveys were distributed via Survey Monkey; some in-person and paper and pencil surveys were also conducted and entered into Survey Monkey.

### **LISTENING SESSIONS**

Thirteen Listening Sessions were conducted with older adults, people who work closely with older adults, and family members of older adults. Sessions were held in eight Bellingham locations and five county locations. A total of 112 people participated in Listening Sessions.

**Methodological note:** Each session had two “listeners,” one of whom also took notes. Each session had a different combination of listeners and note-takers, introducing bias and error. In some cases, notes were taken by more than one person; in these cases, the notes were combined into a single transcription.

### **Listening Session Analysis:**

1. Notes from Listening Sessions were transcribed into a Word document by a WWU Master’s in Education student.
2. For each type of session, responses from each question were aggregated (i.e., all Older Adult responses to question #1, all Older Adult responses to question #2, etc.)
  1. If responses included multiple items, they were separated in order to be themed. Thus, one response, once separated out, produced more than one item.
  3. Each item was assigned a theme, leaving the original wording intact.

### **SURVEYS**

Three different surveys were administered, one for older adults, another for people who work closely with older adults, and a third for family members of older adults. All three links were emailed to members of the Bellingham Senior Activity Center, Bellingham at Home, the Palliative Care Institute; they were undoubtedly forwarded others as well. Surveys were completed by 189 people.

**Methodological note:** Because the surveys had exclusively open-ended questions, some responses could be interpreted in more than one way, introducing bias and error. For example, “more activity” could refer to physical activity or social activity. Similarly, “taking the bus to my doctor’s appointment” could be interpreted as transportation or health care. These items were interpreted as precisely and consistently as possible, given the context of the full response.

### **A NOTE ON THEMES**

Some themes are broader than others, making it more likely that a greater number of items will be assigned this theme. For example, “programs and services” is a broader theme than “Adult Day Health” (a specific program/service). Generally, if an item was mentioned 3 or more times, it was assigned a separate theme.

**Family, friends, social activities, and education and support** were mentioned frequently enough to be established as separate themes from **interaction, relationships, and connection**.

### **Survey Analysis:**

2. For each of the three surveys, all responses for each question were downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet; duplicates or those with all empty fields were removed.
3. Most responses included multiple items, which were separated in order to be themed. Thus, one response, once separated out, produced more than one item.
4. Each item was assigned a theme, leaving the original wording intact.

### **LISTENING SESSIONS + SURVEYS**

Listening session and survey items were then combined for each group, i.e., for older adults, for people who work closely with older adults, and for family members of older adults. Items with a specific theme were counted, and the counts were ranked in order to see the relative frequency, or “weight” of each theme.

#### **A NOTE ON “ITEMS”**

A response could be “My apartment, the bus, my grandkids.” This response would be separated out into three items -- apartment, bus, grandkids. Each item was then themed, in this case “housing,” “transportation” and “family,” respectively. Therefore, one **response** (answer to the question) could yield multiple **items** (distinct themes within the answer).

## Listening Sessions and Surveys – Participants

Listening Sessions – Older Adults	# of Participants		
	Female	Male	Total
1. Lynden YMCA Exercise class participants	2	2	4
2. Ferndale YMCA Exercise class participants	10	2	12
3. Bellingham Senior Activity Center group	11	4	15
4. Blaine Senior Center group	4	1	5
5. Rosewood Villa Assisted Living residents	4	2	6
6. Carol Nicolay's group	4	2	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>48</b>

Survey – Older Adults	#/% of Participants		
	Female	Male	Total
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>69 on-line responses</li> <li>54 paper-and-pencil surveys completed by Meals on Wheels recipients (later entered into Survey Monkey)</li> <li>25 in-person interviews conducted at Hovander Senior Day in the Park (later entered into Survey Monkey)</li> </ul>	109/94%	32/22%	<b>148</b>  6 decline/ blank/other

Listening Sessions – People Working Closely with Older Adults	# of Participants		
	Female	Male	Total
1. Assisted Living Facilities Executive Directors	2	0	2
2. PeaceHealth Center for Sr Health providers	3	1	4
3. Ferndale Fire/Emergency Medical Services	0	2	2
4. Faith Community Nurses and Health Ministers, Health Ministries	26	2	28
5. Northwest Regional Council staff	3	0	3
6. Lynden/Emergency Medical Services	1	3	4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>43</b>

Survey – People Working Closely with Older Adults	#/% of Participants		
	Female	Male	Total
All on-line responses	7/19%	9/25%	<b>36</b> 17 decline/ blank/other

Listening Sessions – Family Members of Older Adults	#/% of Participants		
	Female	Male	Total
1. Alzheimer's Family Support Group	14/66%	7/33%	<b>21</b>

Survey – Family Members of Older Adults	#/% of Participants		
	Female	Male	Total
All on-line responses	4/80%	0	<b>5</b> 1 decline/ blank/other

# FINDINGS

The findings are presented in different levels of aggregation.

**Top 10 Themes (Aggregated)** – Top 10 themes of the responses of **all respondents and participants** (n=301). These aggregated data give the broadest overview picture, and the least amount of detail.

**Top Themes by Group** – Top themes of responses from each of the three groups side-by-side. This allows comparison of the similarities and differences in how each group “weights” the top themes.

**Top Themes with Sample Responses** – A sample of responses for top themes theme in respondents’ own words, providing a greater level of detail and giving a flavor of some of the comments.

<b>What is Important?</b>		
<b>THEME</b>	<b>Number of times mentioned</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Interaction, relationships, connection	76	1
Family	52	2
Health	51	3
Health care	40	4
Housing	38	5
Independence, autonomy	33	6
Finances	32	7
Physical activity	32	7
Friends	29	8
Transportation	25	9
Food and nutrition	24	10

<b>Questions Regarding Importance</b>		
<b>OLDER ADULTS</b>	<b>PEOPLE WHO WORK CLOSELY WITH OLDER ADULTS</b>	<b>FAMILY MEMBERS OF OLDER ADULTS</b>
N=196	N=79	N=26
Q1 - What things do you feel are the most important to your quality of life?	Q1 - What things do you feel are the most important to older adults' quality of life?	Q2 - For the adults you support or care for, what are the things that are most important to their quality of life?
Total items = 521	Total items = 77	Total items = 17

## TOP 10 THEMES (AGGREGATED)

**COMBINED RESPONSES OF OLDER ADULTS, PEOPLE WHO WORK CLOSELY WITH OLDER ADULTS, and  
FAMILY MEMBERS OF OLDER ADULTS**  
Number of Respondents=301

Total number of Items for this question=364

### What are Challenges and Concerns?

THEME	Number of times mentioned	Rank
Health care	31	1
Medical condition(s)	28	2
Physical decline	26	3
Transportation	24	4
Finances	23	5
Housing	22	6
Caregiving, caregivers	14	7
Interaction, relationships, connection	14	7
Health maintenance	12	8
Dementia, memory loss	11	9
Mobility	11	9
Programs and services	11	9
Mental health	10	10

### Questions Regarding Challenges and Concerns

OLDER ADULTS	PEOPLE WHO WORK CLOSELY WITH OLDER ADULTS	FAMILY MEMBERS OF OLDER ADULTS
N=196	N=79	N=26
Q2 - What challenges or concerns do you have in regards to your health and well-being?  Total items = 248	Q3 - What are the challenges or concerns for older adults?  Total items = 99	Q2 - For the adults you support or care for, what are the things that are most important to their quality of life?  Total items = 17

## TOP 10 THEMES (AGGREGATED)

**COMBINED RESPONSES OF OLDER ADULTS, PEOPLE WHO WORK CLOSELY WITH OLDER ADULTS, and  
FAMILY MEMBERS OF OLDER ADULTS  
Number of Respondents=301**

Total number of Items for this question=323

### What Would You Add or Change?

THEME N=323	Number of times mentioned	Rank
Programs and services	48	1
Health care	38	2
Interaction, relationships, connection	27	3
Transportation	26	4
Housing	25	5
Caregiving, caregivers	18	6
Meals on Wheels - Program Feedback <sup>1</sup>	14	7
Finances	12	8
Senior Center	12	8
Adult Day Health	11	9
Changing roles and relationships	6	10
Education and support	6	10
Safety, security	6	10
Social activities	6	10
Changing roles and relationships	6	10

### Questions Regarding What to Add or Change

OLDER ADULTS	PEOPLE WHO WORK CLOSELY WITH OLDER ADULTS	FAMILY MEMBERS OF OLDER ADULTS
N=196	N=79	N=26
Q3 - If you could add or change one thing about the programs, services, and supports for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?  Total items = 219	Q5 If you could add or change one thing about the programs, services, and supports for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?  Total items = 77	Q3 - What resources or supports for families of older adults would you like to see more of? + Q4 - If you could add or change one thing about the programs, services, and supports for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?  Total items = 27

<sup>1</sup> About a third of the surveys were completed by people receiving Meals on Wheels, and responses suggest that some respondents interpreted this question to be in reference to the Meals on Wheels Program.



## TOP THEMES by GROUP<sup>2</sup>

### What Is Important?

OLDER ADULTS			PEOPLE WHO WORK CLOSELY WITH OLDER ADULTS			FAMILY MEMBERS OF OLDER ADULTS		
N=196			N=79			N=26		
Q1 - What things do you feel are the most important to your quality of life?  Total items = 521			Q1 - What things do you feel are the most important to older adults' quality of life?  Total items = 77			Q2 - For the adults you support or care for, what are the things that are most important to their quality of life?  Total items = 17		
THEME	N	Rank	THEME	N	Rank	THEME	N	Rank
Interaction, relationships, connection	52	1	Interaction, relationships, connection	21	1	Interaction, relationships, connection	4	1
Family	48	2	Independence	12	2	Adult Day Health	3	2
Health	43	3	Housing	10	3	Education and support	2	3
Health care	30	4	Health care	9	4	Finances	2	3
Friends	29	5	Purpose, value	7	5			
Housing	26	6	Health	6	6			
Physical activity	26	6	Transportation	6	6			
Finances	25	7	Finances	5	7			
Independence, autonomy	25	7						
Food and nutrition	24	8						
Transportation	19	9						
Nature, outdoors	18	10						
Intellectual engagement, learning	17	11						
Faith, religion, spirituality	15	12						
Attitude, outlook	13	13						
Purpose, value	13	13						
Social activities	12	14						
Pets	11	15						

<sup>2</sup> There are different numbers of top themes because of the variation in the number of respondents and items for each question. Questions with more responses produced more items, which resulted in greater range of top themes.

## TOP THEMES by GROUP

### What are Challenges and Concerns?

OLDER ADULTS			PEOPLE WHO WORK CLOSELY WITH OLDER ADULTS			FAMILY MEMBERS OF OLDER ADULTS		
N=196			N=79			N=26		
Q2 - What challenges or concerns do you have in regards to your health and well-being?  Total items = 248			Q3 - What are the challenges or concerns for older adults?  Total items = 99			Q2 - For the adults you support or care for, what are the things that are most important to their quality of life?  Total items = 17		
THEME	N	Rank	THEME	N	Rank	THEME	N	Rank
Medical condition(s)	28	1	Health care	10	1	Interaction, relationships, connection	3	1
Physical decline	22	2	Finances	9	2	Activities	2	2
Health care	21	3	Programs and services	9	2	Food and nutrition	2	2
Transportation	16	4	Transportation	8	3	Purpose, value	2	2
Housing	15	5	Housing	7	4			
Finances	14	6	Adapting to changes	5	5			
Health maintenance	12	7	Advocacy	4	6			
Dementia, memory loss	11	8	Caregiving, caregivers	4	6			
Caregiving, caretakers	10	9	Household help	4	6			
Interaction, relationships, connection	10	10	Interaction, relationships, connection	4	6			
Mental health	9	11	Mobility	4	6			
Food and nutrition	8	12	Physical decline	4	7			
Being alone	7	13	Safety	4	7			
Mobility	7	13						
Independence, autonomy	6	14						
Physical activity	6	14						
Household help	5	15						

## TOP THEMES by GROUP

### What Would You Add or Change?

OLDER ADULTS			PEOPLE WHO WORK CLOSELY WITH OLDER ADULTS			FAMILY MEMBERS OF OLDER ADULTS		
N=196			N=79			N=26		
<p><b>Q3 - If you could add or change one thing about the programs, services, and supports for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?</b></p> <p><b>Total items = 219</b></p>			<p><b>Q5 If you could add or change one thing about the programs, services, and supports for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?</b></p> <p><b>Total items = 77</b></p>			<p><b>Q3 - What resources or supports for families of older adults would you like to see more of?</b></p> <p><b>+</b></p> <p><b>Q4 - If you could add or change one thing about the programs, services, and supports for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?</b></p> <p><b>Total items = 27</b></p>		
THEME	N	Rank	THEME	N	Rank	THEME	N	Rank
Programs and services	28	1	Programs and services	13	1	Programs and services	7	1
Health care	25	2	Health care	11	2	Education and support	5	2
Transportation	25	2	Caregiving, caregivers	10	3	Adult Day Health	3	3
Interaction, relationships and connection	20	3	Housing	10	3	Finances	2	3
Housing	14	4	Changing roles and relationships	6	4	Health care	2	3
Meals on Wheels - Program Feedback	13	5	Interaction, relationships, connection	6	4	Housing	2	3
Senior Center	12	6	Adult Day Health	4	5			
Finances	9	7	Information and education	4	5			
<i>None/Unsure/don't know</i>	8	8	Safety	3	6			
Caregiving, caretakers	7	9	<i>Unsure/don't know/ None</i>	2	7			
Social activities	6	10						
Household help	5	11						
Adult Day Health	4	12						
Food and nutrition	4	12						
Social activities	6	13						
Household help	5	14						
Emergency services	3	15						
Employment	3	15						

## THEMES WITH SAMPLE RESPONSES – OLDER ADULTS

N=196

For the 15 most frequently mentioned themes.

### OLDER ADULTS Q1 - What things do you feel are the most important to your quality of life?

Total items = 521

THEME	# of times mentioned	Rank	Response samples
Interaction, relationships, connection	52	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community connections (church, community college classes, senior center).</li> <li>• Social support, interacting with people on a consistent basis.</li> <li>• Ability to alleviate loneliness.</li> </ul>
Family	48	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family, grandchildren.</li> <li>• I am blessed to be surrounded by a loving family and suspect that's what keeps me healthy.</li> <li>• My partner.</li> </ul>
Health	43	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good health.</li> <li>• Feeling good, energetic.</li> <li>• My physical and mental health.</li> </ul>
Health care	30	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to access and afford health/dental care and prescriptions.</li> <li>• Care providers who are tuned into alternative approaches.</li> <li>• Excellent, respectful medical treatment/care. Not being talked down to by medical personnel.</li> </ul>
Friends	29	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gotta have friends.</li> <li>• Regular contact with friends...doing things with them, spending time with them, email and talking with them.</li> </ul>
Housing	26	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A comfortable home, including adequate heat and hot and cold water.</li> <li>• Knowing that I have a place to live.</li> <li>• Satisfactory housing, affordably priced.</li> </ul>
Physical activity	26	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking, not much else. Walking takes care of everything.</li> <li>• YMCA especially the classes, weight management, Silver Sneakers.</li> </ul>
Finances	25	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowing that I have enough money to pay for necessities.</li> <li>• Enough money to remain independent.</li> <li>• Adjusting to increase in cost of living without receiving reasonable social security or health coverage.</li> </ul>
Independence, autonomy	25	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autonomy--the ability to be self-directed.</li> <li>• Able to do what I want when I want.</li> <li>• Remaining independent in my own home, driving and being out and about as I please.</li> </ul>
Food and nutrition	24	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A balanced and well-rounded meal. I am single on a very limited budget, so to have a meal is important.</li> <li>• Food, eating a balanced diet.</li> <li>• Plentiful and delicious food.</li> </ul>

Transportation	19	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation--being able to get around.</li> <li>• The WTA para-transit system is one of the greatest gifts the community has to offer to the aging and disabled. It enables people to enjoy independence they would otherwise lose.</li> <li>• Access to transportation and walkability.</li> </ul>
Nature, outdoors	18	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to nature, trails through the woods or by the water.</li> <li>• Opportunity to be outside in nature with no particular agenda.</li> <li>• Deer in my yard!</li> </ul>
Intellectual engagement, learning	17	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doing something new, variety.</li> <li>• I continue to learn new things.</li> <li>• Thinking, and mental and emotional challenges.</li> </ul>
Faith, religion, spirituality	15	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church that's welcoming and inclusive.</li> <li>• Spiritual life/church.</li> <li>• My faith in God and his will.</li> </ul>
Attitude, outlook	13	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of humor.</li> <li>• Being grateful.</li> </ul>
Purpose, value	13	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having purpose and feeling like I am contributing to society.</li> <li>• Feeling respected and valued is also really important to me.</li> </ul>
Social activities	12	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being able to go to the senior center to eat lunch, play cards and exercise.</li> <li>• Hobbies (cards, games, bocce ball).</li> </ul>
Pets	11	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a pet.</li> <li>• For many of us, a dog.</li> </ul>

## OLDER ADULTS Q2 - What challenges or concerns do you have in regards to your health and well-being?

Total items = 248

THEME	# of times mentioned	Rank	Response samples
Medical condition(s)	28	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some "issues"...high blood pressure, cancer (both manageable at this point).</li> <li>I've had one stroke and have a hard time getting around.</li> <li>My COPD, diabetes, arthritis are a few of my concerns that my primary doctor is helping me with.</li> </ul>
Physical decline	22	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Degenerative body changes and pain.</li> <li>Starting to get wear-and-tear problems like osteoarthritis and aging is pushing hearing and vision problems along.</li> <li>Fear of lack of control over body and mind.</li> </ul>
Health care	21	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hard to find specialists – appointment wait times are long.</li> <li>The concern of being "overmedicalized" as I age. The concern of multiple medical interventions that sweep you along in the algorithm of "if this, then that."</li> <li>Doctors ignoring me when I am in need and saying to go to the emergency room instead of making room for me.</li> </ul>
Transportation	16	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transport is an issue. "Sumas is the end of the world"</li> <li>Being able to get around. Since I can't drive any more, it is a real problem to go places that I need to.</li> <li>Riding the bus; afraid of getting lost, getting on the wrong bus, being alone; stereotype (only "losers" ride bus).</li> </ul>
Housing	15	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing is getting too expensive to afford.</li> <li>Where to live, like with extended family or other seniors.</li> <li>Lots of people living in boats or cars in Blaine.</li> </ul>
Finances	14	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I am constantly juggling bill paying. I have some expensive dental work that needs to be done with no money to cover it.</li> <li>Worried about money lasting for myself, even as a low-income home, bills are large, cost of living is hard.</li> <li>Future: finances: will there be enough social security money?</li> </ul>
Health maintenance	12	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having a good, balanced diet; controlling my diabetes</li> <li>I want to be able to care for myself and do things to stay healthy.</li> <li>Just to maintain. I don't want my health to fail.</li> </ul>
Dementia, memory loss	11	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Memory (Alzheimer's and dementia in family; not self/wandering off).</li> <li>My memory and mental flexibility.</li> <li>I fear my spouse may have dementia.</li> </ul>
Caregiving, caretakers	10	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Live at home assistance. I do not want to go to a retirement facility.</li> <li>Will there be funding and competent staffing available to care for our expanding aging population - either in care facilities or in-home.</li> </ul>

Interaction, relationships, connection	10	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not knowing my neighbors.</li> <li>• Current understandings of senior life often seem to assume that seniors are COUPLES. Not at all the case, as all the statistics will show you.</li> <li>• I have family in this area, but have not yet made any friends since moving here three years ago.</li> </ul>
Mental health	9	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There's not enough mental health support.</li> <li>• Depression and melancholy.</li> <li>• Mental disabilities.</li> </ul>
Food and nutrition	8	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to simple food.</li> <li>• Staying hydrated, nutrition.</li> <li>• I have a hard time getting around a great deal and it makes it nice to get meals at home.</li> </ul>
Being alone	7	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am by myself, who will take care of me?</li> <li>• Now that I am living alone, I wonder what it will be like if I find myself in a situation where I can't take care of myself on my own.</li> </ul>
Mobility	7	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobility – walking and stair climbing.</li> <li>• Transporting self through world-ADA compatibility--curb cuts, thresholds, doorways.</li> <li>• Staying mobile.</li> </ul>
Independence, autonomy	6	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting so old that I have to give up the house and car--not being able to do what is important to me.</li> <li>• That I will not stay healthy enough to live out my life in my home.</li> </ul>
Physical activity	6	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doing more physical activity.</li> <li>• Lack of exercise.</li> </ul>
Household help	5	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housecleaning! I applied for a chore program helper, but no luck so far.</li> <li>• Yard maintenance.</li> </ul>

**OLDER ADULTS Q3 - If you could add or change one thing about the programs, services, and supports for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?**

**Total items = 219**

THEME	# of times mentioned	Rank	Response samples
Programs and services	28	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I don't know about all the programs and services. Where can I find a list?</li> <li>How to get started. I have a lot of fear and am scared to talk with someone but really need to. There seem to be so many numbers to call about so many things. I find it confusing.</li> <li>Have [programs/services/supports] be more cohesive. Things are not streamlined. Seems like things are scattered with no true focus. Wish things were city-wide.</li> </ul>
Health care	25	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Palliative care out-patient services throughout the county for everyone. Medicare covered.</li> <li>Cheaper healthcare.</li> <li>More medical coordination--help navigating the medical system.</li> </ul>
Transportation	25	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More specialized transportation so it could continue to answer the needs of those who don't drive.</li> <li>If you don't drive and you live in the county you are housebound.</li> <li>Training on riding bikes and trikes safely.</li> </ul>
Interaction, relationships and connection	20	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being close to community to feel supported and not alone.</li> <li>Teach community the importance of helping each other.</li> <li>Opportunities for older adults to help with day care.</li> <li>Daily hugs.</li> </ul>
Housing	14	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being close to community to feel supported and not alone.</li> <li>How do you reach out?</li> <li>Give-and-take sharing within community.</li> <li>Teach community the importance of helping each other.</li> <li>Best friends or good friends.</li> <li>Opportunities for older adults to help with day care.</li> <li>Being together.</li> <li>More laughter.</li> <li>Daily hugs.</li> </ul>
Meals on Wheels - Program Feedback	13	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nothing--when [Meals on Wheels] comes, it's a delightful minute--now that I'm on the seniors list a cheerful minute is a real gift.</li> <li>It would be nice if the [Meals on Wheels] meals we could pick from changed every three months or so.</li> </ul>
Senior Center	12	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I like the attempts to foster an atmosphere of civility and acceptance [at Senior Ctr].</li> <li>Easy access and to be held in multiple locations within the city and county.</li> </ul>
Finances	9	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are numerous resources of all kinds for seniors who are either low income, or who have adequately-funded retirements. Seniors in between these groups frequently have no access to programs due to very limited funds; while</li> </ul>



			<p>they do not qualify as "low-income", they do not qualify for discounts that are available to others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need more programs, less constraints on who qualifies for assistance, etc. for homeless.</li> </ul>
None/Unsure/don't know	8	8	N/A
Caregiving, caretakers	7	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination for what's available [to find] caregivers.</li> <li>• More frequent overseeing, education, caregiver's feedback of home or residential facilities.</li> </ul>
Social activities	6	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up-to date-activities for seniors.</li> <li>• More accessible activities.</li> </ul>
Household help	5	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help with things like new light bulbs, wash window. Have a handyman that isn't too expensive.</li> <li>• I would add a 'trusted' database of professionals that can do work in and around my home.</li> </ul>
Adult Day Health	4	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A shame adult daycare is no longer available in Bellingham or Whatcom county. My mother enjoyed it and it was a great help for me.</li> <li>• Re-open Adult Day Health.</li> </ul>
Food and nutrition	4	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Older people need good nutritional information. Most MDs don't have this information.</li> <li>• A program promoting healthy food choices and healthy shopping on a low budget.</li> </ul>
Emergency services	3	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency preparation kit, connected to EMS options.</li> <li>• Ways for EMTs to get into house [if I can't get to the door].</li> </ul>
Employment	3	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part time senior jobs.</li> <li>• Job placement [for] part time work.</li> </ul>
End of life	3	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be sure everyone has his/her advanced directives completed</li> <li>• Expand Death with Dignity.</li> </ul>
Safety, security	3	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crossing guards.</li> <li>• Get the bikes and skateboards off the sidewalk.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Multiple themes were in rank order #14 and #15 with two or fewer responses each.</i></b>			

## THEMES WITH SAMPLE RESPONSES – PEOPLE WHO WORK CLOSELY WITH OLDER ADULTS

N=79

For the **7 most frequently mentioned** themes.

### PEOPLE WORKING CLOSELY WITH OLDER ADULTS Q1 - What things do you feel are the most important to older adults' quality of life?

Total items = 77

THEME	# of times mentioned	Rank	Response samples
<b>Interaction, relationships, connection</b>	21	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being able to spend quality time with others, sharing meals and teachings/stories.</li> <li>• Supportive relationships with church and neighborhood.</li> <li>• Community supports (family, friends, neighbors).</li> <li>• Remaining involved socially.</li> </ul>
<b>Independence</b>	12	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be able to do things for themselves, without help or minimal help.</li> <li>• Being able to maintain independence.</li> <li>• Freedom of choice; independence.</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	10	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure housing in our community- especially when people have care needs.</li> <li>• Shelter of quality and reasonable cost.</li> <li>• Staying at home; regardless of conditions, familiar atmosphere is preferred.</li> </ul>
<b>Health care</b>	9	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to consistent health care.</li> <li>• Healthcare coverage.</li> <li>• Medication management.</li> </ul>
<b>Purpose, value</b>	7	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of purpose.</li> <li>• Feeling valued through relationships.</li> <li>• A feeling of purpose, socially and emotionally.</li> </ul>
<b>Health</b>	6	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health, feeling pain free.</li> <li>• Good health, without it, everything else deteriorates.</li> </ul>
<b>Transportation</b>	6	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible transportation services.</li> <li>• Access to taxi services to fill unpredictable transportation.</li> </ul>
<b>Finances</b>	5	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having enough money to be financially stable.</li> <li>• Enough money for rent/mortgage, food, gas.</li> <li>• Financial security, choices and ability to have financial security.</li> </ul>
<b>Food and nutrition</b>	5	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable groceries.</li> <li>• Food, meals at their own time.</li> <li>• Healthy meals.</li> </ul>
<b>Physical activity</b>	5	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A meetup for folks in 50s and 60s for physical activity.</li> <li>• More wellness center stuff; exercise bike, treadmill.</li> </ul>

**PEOPLE WORKING CLOSELY WITH OLDER ADULTS Q2 - What do you hear older adults saying they'd like to have (or have more of)? What are the barriers to having this?**

**Total items = 79**

<b>THEME</b>	<b># of times mentioned</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Response samples</b>
<b>Interaction, relationships, connection</b>	11	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long term relationships and connections with others.</li> <li>• Peers to share experience with.</li> <li>• Intergenerational socialization.</li> </ul>
<b>Transportation</b>	9	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting to places and getting around.</li> <li>• Better access to transportation—waiting so long for WTA is frustrating.</li> <li>• Access to better public transportation for whole county-- and disability friendly.</li> </ul>
<b>Finances</b>	7	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Money - "I can't afford it."</li> <li>• More income, barrier is low wages.</li> </ul>
<b>Health care</b>	6	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better health care, barriers are our healthcare system.</li> <li>• Good dental care - not covered by Medicare/health insurance.</li> </ul>
<b>Purpose, value</b>	6	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being needed or having a purpose.</li> <li>• Feeling appreciated as a person and appreciation of past experiences.</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	5	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing security, options for housing.</li> <li>• Affordable housing - there is not near enough!</li> </ul>
<b>Physical decline</b>	4	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More youthful bodies that do not limit what they can do.</li> <li>• The physical level they used to have i.e. mobility—had more health and wellness when they are younger.</li> </ul>
<b>Social activities</b>	4	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outings and activities.</li> <li>• Bi weekly or monthly events would be good to get people together.</li> </ul>
<b>Family</b>	3	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family interaction. Family need to work or live far away.</li> <li>• More visits from families.</li> </ul>
<b>Fear, anxiety</b>	3	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing anxiety as the world gets more complicated.</li> <li>• Sense of security about the future. Barriers are the unknown, rising healthcare costs, longer lifespans.</li> </ul>
<b>Programs and services</b>	3	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home services.</li> <li>• Knowing what programs are available to them. The barrier to this is not having a compilation of assistance programs in a single publishing.</li> </ul>
<b>Mental health</b>	3	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health—clinicians, psych prescribers.</li> <li>• Anxiety, emotional health.</li> </ul>

**PEOPLE WORKING CLOSELY WITH OLDER ADULTS Q3 - What are the challenges or concerns for older adults?**

Total items = 99

THEME	# of times mentioned	Rank	Response samples
Health care	10	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to healthcare providers, access to durable medical equipment, navigating medical bureaucracy.</li> <li>• Hospital isn't big enough for Whatcom County.</li> </ul>
Finances	9	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's the next step? Insurance coverage so they will be financially stable.</li> <li>• Challenges with having enough money to pay for care or being eligible for Medicaid</li> <li>• Lack of financial preparation.</li> </ul>
Programs and services	9	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of resources.</li> <li>• Services don't exist or are time consuming for rural folks.</li> <li>• Resources are not well known, are scattered, or there aren't any resources.</li> <li>• Service navigation.</li> </ul>
Transportation	8	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation is an issue, even with WTA because they can't wait an hour on each end.</li> <li>• Inconsistent/untimely transportation.</li> <li>• Transportation for those who can no longer drive.</li> </ul>
Housing	7	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe affordable housing.</li> <li>• Lack of supportive housing.</li> </ul>
Adapting to changes	5	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to adapt—costs associated with change (including emotional and financial)</li> <li>• Transitioning to new spaces is hard</li> </ul>
Advocacy	4	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No one to advocate on behalf of elders to navigate the "system."</li> <li>• Navigating health care systems and decisions--difficult for patients without family/POA/primary care</li> </ul>
Caregiving, caregivers	4	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gap between "at home" and "care" when it comes to at home care—paying for too much care because there isn't a gradient of options for care needs. Higher daily rate for medical care.</li> <li>• Lack of skilled caregivers available.</li> </ul>
Household help	4	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home services (cleaning, shopping, repairs)</li> <li>• Having someone to help them, when family is unavailable</li> </ul>
Interaction, relationships, support [lack of]	4	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of support system</li> <li>• Living in rural areas is worse for isolation.</li> </ul>
Mobility	4	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decreased mobility.</li> <li>• Good mobility--not falling or breaking a bone.</li> </ul>
Physical decline	4	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges for Elders are mostly that eye sight and mobility are not what it once used to be. That they need assistance with canes or walkers, no longer able to drive to where they want to go do to poor eye sight.</li> <li>• Have to rely on others to help with Activities of Daily Living.</li> </ul>
Safety	4	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In home safety</li> <li>• The amount of time from when an incident happens until someone checks on them.</li> </ul>

**PEOPLE WORKING CLOSELY WITH OLDER ADULTS Q4 - What are the challenges or concerns for the family members of older adults?**

**Total items = 54**

<b>THEME</b>	<b># of times mentioned</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Response samples</b>
<b>Caregiving, caregivers</b>	14	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding care for their loved ones and feeling the stress and obligations of that and paying for it.</li> <li>• Taking care of their loved one and balancing their day to day life.</li> <li>• The time commitment it takes to be there for them and remind them you're there and looking for their best interest. With living your own life it's a big responsibility.</li> </ul>
<b>Mental health</b>	6	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of mental health care (physicians and facilities) equipped to handle aging issues.</li> <li>• Mental health evaluation process.</li> <li>• "Just here waiting to die."</li> </ul>
<b>Changing roles and relationships</b>	5	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship dynamics.</li> <li>• The willingness to accept the help that the family has to step in and do for the Elders because Elders will and may not accept the family having to pick up what they can no longer can do.</li> </ul>
<b>Finances</b>	4	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not enough funds to support their family members.</li> <li>• Having enough money to make it without pensions.</li> </ul>
<b>Health care</b>	4	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability and cost of health care.</li> <li>• Medical bureaucracy.</li> </ul>
<b>Physical decline</b>	3	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Denial of physical limitations and the need for help and/or assistive devices.</li> <li>• Decreased ability/mobility/health/vision/hearing/ability to walk.</li> </ul>
<b>Time</b>	3	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not enough time.</li> <li>• Time or making time.</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	2	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable housing</li> <li>• Finding appropriate accommodation nearby when their parents/family start to need more care.</li> </ul>

***Multiple themes were in rank order #7, with just one response each.***

**PEOPLE WORKING CLOSELY WITH OLDER ADULTS Q5 - If you could add or change one thing about the programs, services, and supports for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?**

**Total items = 77**

<b>THEME</b>	<b># of times mentioned</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Response samples</b>
<b>Programs and services</b>	13	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home visit service for welfare and wellness checks.</li> <li>• More visibility as to what programs and services are available. Most older adults don't or won't seek out services if they don't know what services are available.</li> <li>• Make programs easier to access, locations, costs</li> </ul>
<b>Health care</b>	11	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physician that will come to your home.</li> <li>• Clearer procedures for guiding family members through medical care options, evaluations and processes.</li> <li>• More advocates with more communication with hospitals to provide adequate resources on discharge.</li> </ul>
<b>Caregiving, caregivers</b>	10	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better access to and affordability of homecare.</li> <li>• To have a culturally based care facility for our Elders, one that allows a family member to be with them at any time and also be a part of the care process rather than having family to step out of the room, they would rather have family be part of the cleaning and dressing along with an aid.</li> <li>• Care for the elderly, i.e. long-term care homes, rehabilitation, and nursing care facilities, cost exorbitant amounts. More training and vetting of CNA personnel that are allowed around vulnerable elderly.</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	10	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More safe affordable senior housing communities with available services.</li> <li>• Add more Medicaid long term care housing so that people who have lived in the community their entire lives do not have to move out of county when they have long term care needs that cannot be met at home</li> </ul>
<b>Changing roles and relationships</b>	6	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing roles—child vs. adult. Having conversations around things like care and driving.</li> <li>• Recognizing when the aging can make their own decisions</li> </ul>
<b>Interaction, relationships, connection</b>	6	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not being isolated.</li> <li>• It needs to become normal to have elderly people in society again. If elderly people cannot drive they miss out on many opportunities to participate or be around.</li> </ul>
<b>Adult Day Health</b>	4	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring back and expand adult day care programs.</li> <li>• Adult day health/care.</li> </ul>
<b>Information and education</b>	4	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals in general need help navigating the truths and falsehoods of aging.</li> <li>• Pre-crisis transition tools and training</li> </ul>
<b>Safety</b>	3	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worries about physical safety.</li> <li>• Risk of abuse.</li> </ul>
<b>Unsure/don't know/None</b>	2	7	N/A

## THEMES WITH SAMPLE RESPONSES – FAMILY MEMBERS OF OLDER ADULTS

N=26

For the **3 most frequently mentioned** themes.

### FAMILY MEMBERS OF OLDER ADULTS Q1 - In your role as a support person, what things do you feel are the most important to your quality of life?

Total items = 13

THEME	# of times mentioned	Rank	Response samples
Interaction, relationships, connection	4	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not enough time for socializing equals zero focus on spouse.</li> <li>Having my own support: e.g., emotional support from family and friends.</li> </ul>
Adult Day Health	3	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gave me a breather while my wife was there.</li> <li>A reasonable price, would even pay more.</li> </ul>
Education and support	2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning the ins and outs of helping my senior.</li> <li>Meetings [support groups]—learn from others who are ahead, their experience and different ways of responding.</li> </ul>
Finances	2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not to worry about how to pay for wife's care.</li> <li>Financial security and flex schedule/paid leave from work.</li> </ul>

### FAMILY MEMBERS OF OLDER ADULTS Q2 - For the adults you support or care for, what are the things that are most important to their quality of life?

Total items = 17

THEME	# of times mentioned	Rank	Response samples
Interaction, relationships, connection	3	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having little moments of fun like hanging out with his grandkids.</li> <li>Be social.</li> </ul>
Activities	3	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be active, have doo dads to fiddle around with and rearrange.</li> <li>Projects, schedules.</li> </ul>
Food and nutrition	2	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food, supplements.</li> <li>eating well.</li> </ul>
Purpose, value	2	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having something to live for (hope for being pain-free, for cure; knowing his advice is used.)</li> <li>To be a social needed part of society and their community.</li> </ul>

**FAMILY MEMBERS OF OLDER ADULTS Q3 - What resources or supports for families of older adults would you like to see more of?**

+

**Q4 - If you could add or change one thing about the programs, services, and supports for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?**

Total items = 27<sup>3</sup>

THEME	# of times mentioned	Rank	Response samples
<b>Programs and services</b>	7	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elder / Kinder care programs.</li> <li>• It'd be good to have a blueprint to follow, where to go for what. Programs and services.</li> <li>• Help with financial coordination—confusing Social Security, pension etc. Programs and services.</li> </ul>
<b>Education and support</b>	5	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simulation activities for patient and caregiver.</li> <li>• Education and support for younger adults.</li> <li>• Dementia support group for family members.</li> <li>• Training/classes to get necessary info [about community resources].</li> </ul>
<b>Adult Day Health</b>	3	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring back Adult Day Health program.</li> <li>• Adult Day Health programs.</li> </ul>
<b>Finances</b>	2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Money.</li> <li>• For those of us in sandwiched between caring for our kids at home and for our parents whenever they are, we desperately need flexible work schedules, paid leave, adequate income to bridge the gaps.</li> </ul>
<b>Health care</b>	2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More geriatricians and social workers.</li> <li>• More social workers and/or therapists and/or other outlets for our older parents to process their lives and their futures so that family isn't their only outlet.</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing combined with driving .</li> <li>• Who will help me narrow down [housing options] when I need to move?</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Q3 and Q4 responses and themes were combined because the questions are somewhat redundant, the total number of responses was low, and each question had similar the response themes.



# WHAT TO ADD OR CHANGE

Comments, Suggestions, and Recommendations for Top Five Themes  
from All Respondents (Aggregated)

For Consideration in Developing an Aging Well Blueprint for Whatcom County,  
and other community action, health improvement initiatives, and/or city and county planning.

OLDER ADULTS	PEOPLE WHO WORK CLOSELY WITH OLDER ADULTS	FAMILY MEMBERS OF OLDER ADULTS
N=196	N=79	N=26
Q3 - If you could add or change one thing about the programs, services, and supports for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?	Q5 If you could add or change one thing about the programs, services, and supports for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?	Q3 - What resources or supports for families of older adults would you like to see more of? + Q4 - If you could add or change one thing about the programs, services, and supports for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?

## 1) Programs and Services (mentioned 48 times)

Awareness of existing programs and services
More information out to seniors, encouraging people to take part.
Not aware of what these programs are.
I don't know about all the programs and services. Where can I find a list?
Better dissemination of resources available. We are blessed with awesome services but many times an older person is unaware that they are available to them.
I have no idea what the services are. I am not aware of any services except the Willows. Wondering if there are any services and if they could make a difference. Feel like would have to access services through her doctor and that feels limiting.
I'm not familiar with the county programs.
Don't know because have not yet needed County services.
Information regarding services and how to get to them and access them.
Publicize them, collect in a central place.
I haven't needed any, or have a friend or family member who has, so I can't answer.
Whatcom Co. is doing a marvelous job. I would suggest more ways of contacting and informing seniors and their families of county offerings and how to start connecting.
I have no idea what there is.
Getting the information to people that need it.
More visibility as to what programs and services are available. Most older adults don't or won't seek out services if they don't know what services are available.
Finding resources.
Navigation and coordination of programs and services
How to get started. I have a lot of fear and am scared to talk with someone but really need to. There seem to be so many numbers to call about so many things. I find it confusing.

Better coordination and cooperation among agencies and programs. NW Regional Council does an outstanding job of helping to sort out the confusion, but there is still a complex web one must navigate!
Have [programs/services/supports] be more cohesive. Things are not streamlined. Seems like things are scattered with no true focus. Wish things were city-wide.
Bellingham At Home has developed a Health Advocacy program to assist our members through the medical note taking process and into surgery, hospital, rehabilitation, and forward. I would like our members to call on us, as we are trained Health Advocate Volunteers.
A resource to put people in contact with services.
Not knowing how to navigate the system.
Make programs easier to access, locations, costs.
Less confusion, less steps [to finding services].
Family don't know where to turn.
Finding resources.
Coordination—AS [?] to housing.
It'd be good to have a blueprint to follow, where to go for what.
Someone to advise with money.
Help with financial coordination—confusing Social Security, pension etc.
<b>Expanded services</b>
I hope the Bellingham at Home program continues to grow and thrive as a resource for elders who want to stay in our homes.
Get more than meals from wheels.
Programs, services and support.
Caring for family member without community or available medical support (chronic illness, dementia, end of life etc.)
Social programs, visits etc.
Not knowing how to update advance directive
Home visit service for welfare and wellness checks.
Provide practical clinics and workshops at Senior Centers to address common questions and needs (flu shot clinics, hearing aid cleaning, pedicures, haircuts, sign-ups for WTA etc).
We need more programs and services including expanding senior support.
County wide Community Paramedic program.
Elder / Kinder care programs.
More experienced facilitators [for support groups].
<b>Satisfaction with existing programs and services</b>
It is very good just the way it is
They all seem wonderful. It appears to be 'seek and you shall find' any program to fit your needs. Good job!
I'm very happy with the help I've received
Doesn't cross my mind. There seem to be a lot of resources.
They do pretty good
Found that Northwest regional Council support groups are very helpful and the social worker there especially.
<b>Other/general comments</b>
I don't use services.

## 2) Health Care (mentioned 38 times)

<b>Access to care</b>
More doctors and hospital services in Blaine.
Closer urgent care.
Quest diagnostic lab in Blaine.
Physician that will come to your home.
Waiting list for doctors--Medicaid and Medicare.
Would be nice to get a satellite hospital in east county (Lynden, Everson, Sumas).
Better access to health care.
<b>Navigation and coordination of health care</b>
More medical coordination--help navigating the medical system.
Advocacy in the Dr. offline—a companion to support through medical challenges.
Way to figure out Medicare - how it works, information and advice about plans.
More advocates with more communication with hospitals to provide adequate resources on discharge.
Clearer procedures for guiding family members through medical care options, evaluations and processes.
Care transitions.
<b>Cost of health insurance and care</b>
Cheaper healthcare.
Dental and vision coverage/affordable care
Also, reform is needed to curb the amount that people can sue providers. All of this makes insurance more expensive and Medicare costs more as well: Insurance is not affordable.
There should be something worked with programs, services, and the drug stores for low income people to be able to get generic aspirins, etc. at a lower reasonable price when the medical insurance won't pay for them.
No dental or vision for Medicare recipients
<b>More health care providers for older adults</b>
More doctors and medical specialists in Bellingham who specialize in senior services.
A huge infusion of competent health support personnel, caseworkers on up through specialists and the bureaucrats who support them.
More geriatricians and social workers.
More social workers and/or therapists and/or other outlets for our older parents to process their lives and their futures so that family isn't their only outlet.
<b>Complementary care</b>
Holistic health in the form of naturopaths.
I would lobby Medicare to cover naturopaths and supplements.
Problematic that...naturopathic care is not covered by Medicare.
<b>Other/general comments</b>
Better health care.
Better management of patient loads in the ER (wait times are often way too long).
Health care system is a disaster, a disgrace.
Sense that one's care is tied to your money.

Changing federal regulations in regards to care facilities (including psych facilities) --closing psych hospitals has added danger and financial burden to our communities.
Health care/medicine care.
PROVIDING <b>MEDICAL</b> FOR EVERYONE IN THE WORLD.
A focus on attaining optimal health rather than living with chronic disease or curative processes.
Palliative care out-patient services throughout the county for everyone. Medicare covered.
Nurses in all physician clinics and care centers.
Doctors should have more training in MS.
Goals of care.

### 3) Interaction, relationships, connection (mentioned 27 times)

<b>Involvement, engagement</b>
Interaction is so important psychologically. Encouraging volunteer work.
Need for volunteer opportunities, such as Stafholt where <b>staff and client have become like family.</b>
Activities, friends, involved and connected.
I'm interested in discussing how groups of people (a circle of friends, for example) can support each other in preparing for old age and end of life, and in going through illness and death in the group.
Creative ways of folding seniors in to all of the activities in Bellingham. Ex. small reading circles where everyone reads a short section of a book and those who want to talk about it can. Interaction of sharing our stories can happen in this kind of setting.
To engage more "nearly old" or "just barely old" individuals in activities.
Being together.
<b>Community</b>
Being close to community to feel supported and not alone.
Give-and-take sharing within community.
Teach community the importance of helping each other.
No elder left behind. Be sure everyone has checkpoints or safety nets, friends, family, volunteers, neighbors, community groups, agencies. Every single person has a connection.
<b>Intergenerational</b>
Opportunities for older adults to help with day care.
Believes that because he finds himself around younger people a lot that mutual contact is beneficial. Works with people one and two generations younger than himself. After further reflection thinks that intergenerational programming is missing. It doesn't matter what the generations do together but matters that they do it together. Feels there is a danger and trying to fit all people into boxes danger in the stereotyping and limitations, danger in doing just the typical old people activities. All his life he was taught a certain stereotype about all people and now he has to unlearn those stereotypes so they don't apply to himself.
It needs to become normal to have elderly people in society again. If elderly people cannot drive they miss out on many opportunities to participate or be around. We do not have many plazas or open spaces close to social centers.
It would be nice to have community centers where all ages can come together instead of just the seniors gathering together.
<b>Isolation/loneliness</b>
Loneliness.
Isolating as caregiver, need socializing.
Not being isolated.
Loneliness.

Other/general comments
How do you reach out?
Daily hugs.
More laughter.
Good supports.
More single fun men.

#### 4) Transportation (mentioned 26 times)

Expanded service
Transportation within Blaine area and also to Bellingham.
Transportation -- affordable, less time consuming. Have routes and services that aren't driven by where the money is.
More transportation options.
More specialized transportation so it could continue to answer the needs of those who don't drive.
Expand the paratransit range (include more county areas).
More frequent bus service.
Taxi service to airport, Bellair doesn't do it anymore.
WTA service
Better transportation—have to wait too long for <b>paratransit</b> .
Pretty good, WTA is good.
WTA busses running in neighborhoods.
Transportation is great--continue WTA.
Improved transportation times with WTA or other agencies.
Driving
I do not drive at night, or on the freeway and I miss many programs. It would be nice to have shared drivers.
If you don't drive and you live in the county you are housebound.
Bus safety/security
There is bullying on the bus. Elders feel vulnerable.
Buses need to be clean comfortable safe, and feel safe where they let you off and where you wait.
Traffic
I don't like the traffic, especially in Bellingham. More roundabouts.
Less traffic.
Other/General Comments
Transportation.
Transport assistance.
Training on riding bikes and trikes safely.
Would love regular bus service to Western [from Blaine].
Transportation to [Blaine] senior center.
Rapid transit Lynden to Bellingham.
Do some research into the question of whether or not transportation challenges are a real barrier to older adult's access to health care.
More express bus services to Seattle.
A comprehensive US transit plan.

## 5) Housing (mentioned 25 times)

<b>Cost of housing/affordable housing</b>
More affordable housing for elders.
More nice mobile home parks, properly maintained. More affordable and it's a postage stamp of land.
Since most rental property owners want to make a greater profit on their real estate investment that is equal or at least greater than other real estate owners, rental prices continue to go up with no price control legislation. I would like to see rent price control for the elder citizens nation-wide.
More affordable house is why my friends say.
More affordable housing for seniors.
Low income senior housing.
Affordable housing.
Access to low cost housing and health care.
Provide more affordable housing.
It is thousands and thousands of dollars for an elderly person to live in a small studio apartment with minimal supervision and assistance. There needs to be more integration and reduction in care costs for the elderly. Elderly people don't always want to live with their children or extended family. They value their Independence or they may not get along.
More safe affordable senior housing communities with available services.
Lower Rent.
<b>Increase amount of housing available</b>
Put St. Luke's into service for housing.
More housing for seniors.
Lack of housing stock for elders
Add more Medicaid long term care housing so that people who have lived in the community their entire lives do not have to move out of county when they have long term care needs that cannot be met at home (ex. 24x7 care such as dementia care).
More housing, not only in senior community.
<b>Other/general comments</b>
Live at the Leopold and it meets my needs.
Appropriate housing.
Place for homeless non-drug using older adults.
Housing combined with driving.
Who will help me narrow down [housing options] when I need to move?