

Priority: Access to Community Services and Support

Goal: Improve awareness, affordability, accessibility, and acceptability of community services and supports.

What is Access to Community Services and Support and Why is it Important?

Responding to the impacts of climate change is an important priority for NYS. Climate change is causing NYS weather to become hotter and wetter. From 1901 to 2022, average temperatures in NYS increased by almost 2.6°F, and the warmest 10-year periods in recorded history have occurred since 2000.³⁰⁶ Climate projections indicate temperatures will continue to rise and extreme heat events will be more frequent and intense. Current research suggests that increases of a few degrees in temperature can substantially increase the risk of heat-related illnesses.

In January 2020, the NYS Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Climate Act) went into effect. The Climate Act's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions targets are among the most rigorous of any major economy in the world. The Climate Smart Communities program (supported by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation) is one program that supports efforts towards Climate Act goals by helping local governments reduce their GHG emissions and adapt to a changing climate. Local governments can receive credit towards Climate Smart Communities certification by making community improvements and offering services that help individuals throughout New York.³⁰⁷

While many people have access to a cool spot in their home, BRFSS data from 2018 suggests that 16.5% of people in New York do not have air conditioning in their homes. This proportion is higher among households reporting less than \$35,000 in income and among Black, non-Hispanics.³⁰⁸ NYS has prioritized climate adaptation by developing a statewide extreme heat action plan to address the effects of extreme heat on residents' health.

The Heat Vulnerability Index maps identify areas of the state with larger proportions of people who may be vulnerable to heat. The Climate Act requires the identification and consideration of Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) in implementing the Climate Act and other State-led actions. By leveraging and promoting existing policies, programs, and resources, NYS can adapt to increasing temperatures and reduce the risk of heat-related illnesses.





SMART(IE) Objective:

22.0 Increase the number of completed Climate Smart Community Actions related to community resilience from 363 to 382.






22.1 Increase the percentage of higher vulnerability areas that have a cooling center from 24.5% to 27.0%.







Desired Outcome	Indicator	Data Source	Population	Baseline	Target
Ensure the availability and accessibility of cooling centers or other places where people can cool off during extreme heat	Count of Climate Smart Community Actions related to community resilience	Climate Smart Community Application Data	Everyone	363 (2024)	382 (2030)
	Subpopulation Indicator	Data Source	Subpopulation of Focus	Baseline	Target




events in high heat vulnerable areas and disadvantaged communities.	Percentage of higher vulnerability areas that have a cooling center	NYSDOH Cooling Center Finder Data	Individuals in high heat vulnerable areas and disadvantaged communities	24.5% (2024)	27.0% (2030)
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Interventions	Population of Focus	Age Range	Intermediate Measures
 <p>Featured Intervention: Identify and promote the availability and use of cooling centers and other extreme heat resources; improve access to cooling centers, especially in areas designated as disadvantaged communities and/or have a high heat vulnerability index score.³⁰⁹</p> 	<p>People who live in disadvantaged communities and/or high-heat vulnerable areas; people who are more vulnerable to heat (older adults, children, low-income, people who are pregnant, people with certain chronic diseases)</p>	<p>All ages</p>	<p>Increase in cooling centers in disadvantaged communities and/or with high heat vulnerability index scores</p>
 <p>Featured Intervention: Increase health and wellness among older adults by promoting age-friendly environments that support active lifestyles and enhance access to supportive services. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing accessible parks, walking paths, and recreational programs that encourage regular physical activity • Creating integrated age-friendly ecosystems that provide access to health care services, social services, and assistance programs tailored to older adults' needs which should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partnerships across universities, health care, public health, workplaces, and community services to ensure comprehensive care ○ Implementation of features like ramps, elevators, and benches in public areas enable older adults to navigate their environments more easily ○ Tailoring to both urban and rural settings, ensuring broad access and engagement³¹⁰ 	<p>Older adults</p>	<p>Ages 50+</p>	<p>AARP Annual Survey, Public Health Local and State Data, State Community Assessment measures and plans</p>

Interventions	Population of Focus	Age Range	Intermediate Measures
<p>\$</p> <p>Promote programs that help low-income residents adapt to a changing climate, reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, and become more energy efficient. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP): Offered by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, this program helps eligible low-income residents efficiently heat and cool their homes, providing resources such as free air conditioners or fans • NYSERDA Programs: The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) offers various incentives and programs to help consumers reduce emissions and enhance energy efficiency • Low-income residents may qualify for programs such as: Appliance Upgrade Program, EmPower+, Residential Financing Programs³¹¹ <p>LHD O</p>	<p>Adults in low-income households</p>	<p>Ages 18+</p>	<p>Increase in applications to programs</p>
<p>👥</p> <p>Become a certified Climate Smart Community (CSC). CSC is a NYS program that helps local governments take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate, which also has co-benefits to public health. To become a Client Smart Community (CSC):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register by taking the CSC pledge • Complete and document a suite of actions that mitigate and adapt to climate change at the local level <p>Besides the environmental and public health benefits, certification also facilitates better scores for some state funding programs, including NYSDEC's CSC grant program.^{312,313}</p> <p>LHD O</p>	<p>People vulnerable to climate change (older adults, children, low-income, etc.)</p>	<p>All ages</p>	<p>Completes certification; Completes Climate Smart Certified actions</p>
<p>Adopt decarbonization efforts by utilizing the New York Healthcare Decarbonization Guide and utilize NYSERDA's Clean Green Hospitals Programs and Opportunities.³¹⁴</p> <p>H</p>	<p>People vulnerable to climate change (older adults, children, low-income, etc.)</p>	<p>All ages</p>	<p>Number of actions taken to reduce greenhouse gases</p>

Interventions	Population of Focus	Age Range	Intermediate Measures
 <p>Increase health and wellness through age-friendly environments that promote active lifestyles through parks, walking paths, and recreational programs.^{315,316}</p> 	Older adults	Ages 50+	Number of available age-friendly wellness programs, utilization of age-friendly wellness programs (how many people participation, participation trends)
 <p>Promote and prioritize age-friendly initiatives by educating primary care providers during annual wellness visits, ensuring they are equipped to discuss and implement these practices. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness through public information at health fairs, TV, and radio advertisements, and in retail clinics, highlighting the benefits of age-friendly care • Increasing participation in public health campaigns that emphasize healthy aging, preventative care, and access to health resources by hosting senior center events • Distributing targeted public health materials in both urban and rural settings, ensuring that older adults are aware of available resources and services³¹⁷ 	Older adults	Ages 50+	Number of older adults who participate in screenings, assess knowledge/awareness in preventive care options, assess engagement with health resources
 <p>Facilitate social interaction and community engagement to combat isolation and loneliness by offering structured programs and creating inclusive spaces for participation. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community centers hosting regular social activities, such as group exercise classes, hobby clubs, and support groups, as well as organizing local events like cultural festivals, intergenerational programs, or volunteer opportunities • Annual wellness visits including assessments of social interactions and community involvement, helping identify individuals at risk of isolation • TV and radio advertisements to promote local programs, health fairs, immunization clinics, and other events that encourage social engagement³¹⁸⁻³²¹ 	Older adults	Ages 50+	Surveys tracking participation in social and community programs for older adults. Decreased rates of loneliness/isolation among older adults, improved mental well-being, reports for Adult Protective Services

Interventions	Population of Focus	Age Range	Intermediate Measures
 <p>Educate policymakers and health care leaders on promoting age-friendly practices in health care and community infrastructures, focusing on integrating aging into core health care practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For hospitals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implement continuous education programs for staff on age-friendly care and adopting the Age-Friendly Health Systems status • For local health departments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Incorporate aging into health assessments and planning, and prioritizing aging as a core competency ○ Collaborate with public health institutes (PHI) to develop age-friendly policies and community programs that address senior wellness, accessible housing, and transportation and more³²² 	Older adults	Ages 50+	Changes in policy, the addition of aging-related initiatives on the political agenda, partner engagement
 <p>Promote evidence-based initiatives such as Age-Friendly Health Systems to improve the quality of care delivered to older adults.^{323,324}</p> 	Older adults	Ages 50+	Increased research output (can be tracked by looking at the number of papers published focusing on this topic, tracking publications), increased funding for research, policy shifts
 <p>Support quality improvement initiatives that focus on enhancing comprehensive, age-friendly, coordinated care provided to older adults within health care settings through the Age Friendly Health Systems (AFHS) movement. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving outcomes in chronic disease management • Enhancing medication management • Optimizing transitions of care to prevent hospital readmissions^{325,326} 	Older adults	Ages 50+	Number of health care sites that are AFHS, number of ED that are age-friendly, outcomes of various age-friendly locations in terms of quality, satisfaction and cost

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 <p>Provide education and training programs for health care providers on best practices for caring for older adults. These programs emphasize age-friendly practices, enabling health care professionals to better understand and address the specific health challenges faced by the aging population.³²⁷</p> <p>LHD H</p>	Older adults	Ages 50+	Participation among health care organizations, number of trainings delivered, number of providers and staff trained, capacity of health care staff to implement best practices
 <p>Hold a Poverty Simulation (evidence-based activity) for community-based organization (CBO) leaders, Medicaid directors, discharge planners, social workers, care managers and others who work to connect individuals to needed resources. A local legislative body would also benefit from this exercise.³²⁸</p> <p>LHD H O</p>	Everyone	All ages	Number attending, quality analysis of debriefing session
 <p>Implement and promote Healthy Neighborhoods Programs in communities with high rates of asthma to provide home environmental assessments and low-cost interventions to address asthma-triggering conditions and asthma self-management.³²⁹</p> <p>LHD</p>	Lower-income neighborhoods facing high presence of substandard housing conditions	All ages	Percentage of home visits for individuals with poorly controlled asthma under the Healthy Neighborhoods Program

Lead Partner Agencies and Organizations

[U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)

[NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance](#)

[NYS Energy Research and Development Authority](#)

[NYS Office for the Aging](#)

[NYS Department of Health](#)

Cooling Centers Team

Building Resilience Against Climate Effects (BRACE) Program

[NYS Department of Environmental Conservation](#)

Climate Smart Communities Program

Local Emergency Management Offices

National Institute on Aging

Local Social Services Departments

NYC Department for the Aging

Local offices for the aging

Local sustainability agencies

Local planning agencies

Local certified Climate Smart Communities

Administration for Community Living (Region 1)

Economic Development Collaborative

AARP Age-Friendly Communities

AARP Public Policy Institute, senior centers

NY Foundation for Elder Care

National Council on Aging

Gerontological Society of America

John A. Hartford Foundation

Trust for America's Health Age-Friendly Ecosystem Initiative

Local health care organizations, primary care providers, hospitals, federally qualified health centers (FQHCs)

Healthcare Association of NYS (HANYS)

Institute for Healthcare Improvements

Health Foundation of Western and Central NY

Academic institutions

Implementation Resources

[NYSERDA - Residential and Property Owner Income Eligible Programs](#)

[NYSERDA - Clean Green Hospitals](#)

[OTDA - Home Energy Assistance Program \(HEAP\)](#)

[NYSDOH - Cooling Center Finder](#)

[Climate Smart Communities](#)

[NYSDEC - Climate Smart Communities Funding](#)

[New York Healthcare Decarbonization Guide](#)

[NYSDEC - Grants for Climate Action](#)

[U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit - Funding Opportunities](#)

[Institute for Healthcare Improvement - Age-Friendly Health Systems](#)

Access to Community Services and Support Citations

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