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## MODELS FOR PRACTICE

### FOCUS AREA: EDUCATIONAL AND COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS

**Program Name:** The Living Well Longer Council of Cache Valley

**Location:** Logan, Utah

**Problem Addressed:** Community Development

**Healthy People 2010 Objective:** 7

**Web Address:** [www.sunshineterrace.com](http://www.sunshineterrace.com)

#### SNAPSHOT

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The program is designed to help older adults stay well longer by teaching them how to live healthier, develop healthier lifestyles, and participate in preventive action against illness and chronic disease.

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The goal of the Living Well Longer Council is to serve older adults of all racial and ethnic groups throughout Cache Valley. The total population of the valley is 91,391 and covers 1,165 square miles, with 78.1 persons per square mile. There are 8,630 individuals age 60 or older. Very few people, including some professionals, are aware of the array of community resources available to older adults needing assistance. The program is designed to help older adults stay well longer by teaching them how to live healthier, develop healthier lifestyles, and participate in preventive action against illness and chronic disease. The council wants people to not only live longer but to continue living as independently as possible.

#### THE MODEL

**Blueprint:** The Living Well Longer Council is a collaborative effort between numerous partners, with the Sunshine Terrace Foundation and the Logan Regional Hospital taking the lead. Various other partners include: Bear River (Public) Health Department, Cache Senior Citizen Center, College of Family Life, Utah State University (USU) Cooperative Extension (both the Cache County office and the University Extension administration), Bear River Area Agency on Aging, Hyrum City Senior Center, Utah State University's Department of Nutrition and Food Services, Utah State University Department of Family and Human Development, Lifespan Mental Health Services, Utah State University Department of Social Work, Williamsburg Retirement Center, Pioneer Valley Lodge (an independent senior apartment complex), a local physical therapist interested in fall prevention and the prevention of osteoporosis, and HealthInsight (the Utah Quality Improvement Organization sponsored in part by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services [CMS]). The Living Well Longer Council of Cache Valley is very proud of its diverse partners and the unusual networking between the involved Area Agency on Aging, services for the aged, and the public health department.

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The Living Well Longer Council has no paid staff, as it is an unfunded initiative. The members of the council are volunteers representing their individual organizations. Their interest is promoting wellness in older adults in the northern Utah mountain valley. There are over 16 active members, with 12 to 15 people at each group meeting. The Living Well Longer Council is a partnership or coalition of interested parties, with elected officers (the co-chairs) who meet every other month. The mission statement, “to assist local communities in promoting healthy aging through the development and facilitation of cooperative volunteer efforts,” is the council’s guiding light. To facilitate this mission, the council has specific time-limited goals, which are reviewed at least twice a year.

The Living Well Longer Council conducts needs assessment surveys in the small Cache Valley communities. These needs assessments identify the health-related concerns of the older adults (over 60) in that community. This is done after seeking the support of a “mover and shaker” group in the community. So far, the “mover and shaker” groups usually include people such as: library board members, the mayor, physicians, and the board of the senior center. This group assists in surveying the seniors, which consists of a questionnaire that is distributed in person at the seniors’ homes and then picked up within an hour. Once the health-care needs of the town’s older citizens are identified, the council helps the “mover and shaker” group to provide the needed service, refers them to resources to help provide the service, and/or addresses the expressed concern, as well as keeping the mayor informed of the outcome of the survey. Students from Utah State University, Boy and Girl Scout troops, and other youth groups distribute the surveys, and the data are tabulated and analyzed by volunteers from HealthInsight, the CMS-sponsored Quality Improvement Organization in Utah, located in Salt Lake City.

Services provided by the council include flu vaccines and pneumovax clinics, as well as prostate and breast cancer screenings, educational brochures, medication regime compliance education, improved street and yard lighting for vulnerable seniors, annual educational senior workshops or wellness conferences, and a radio spot aired twice daily on Utah Public Radio—KUSU and KUER (91.5 and 89.5 FM). The three-minute radio show is designed to promote wellness and healthy aging in older adults. The topics include basic pointers for self-care; wellness promotion; information on Medicare, Medicaid, and long-term care insurance; end-of-life decisions; information on some of the common health problems of older adults (high blood pressure, arthritis, diabetes, etc.); how to choose and communicate effectively with a physician; and general information on being a caregiver and resources available to caregivers.

Thanks to Bear River Health Department and a USU student intern, a brochure entitled “Taking Medications Safely” was produced for seniors and distributed through the local pharmacies, doctors’ offices, and the agencies

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involved on the council. An informational brochure was also created to describe the council's mission, which is displayed at clinics and conferences.

Annual senior conferences are held to address concerns of the elderly in their communities. The council identifies topics of special concern to seniors via the evaluation form, which is used at the workshop, and these topics are featured at the next conference. These conferences routinely have 65 to over 100 people attend. They invite seniors and providers of senior services from surrounding counties as well. The conferences are free of charge, and various council members provide and fund food, space, mailing, services, etc. The Sunshine Terrace Foundation Adult Day Center provides free care and a meal, if desired, for the person needing care while the caregiver attends the conference. The topics covered in the conferences include resources available in the Valley, communicating effectively with physicians, coping with confusion and memory loss, and financial security.

The Bear River Health Department and the Living Well Longer Council have developed a record card of immunizations for seniors to place in their wallet. The card has been made available to physicians' offices and the hospital, as well as being used at the department.

Currently, they are working to advocate for a better sidewalk system in the Valley, particularly in the Logan area (the biggest city and the center of the Valley).

A basic goal of the council is to educate seniors and caregivers as to the resources available in their county; promote wellness in older adults through education; and encourage the elderly to take preventive actions such as good nutrition, exercise, immunizations, compliance with their physician's recommendations, avoiding smoking, household safety, use of safety belts, etc.

**Making a Difference:** The Living Well Longer Council plans and sets goals as a group. They thoroughly follow up on the progress of their goals by improving or changing them if no progress has been made. New goals are set yearly. The entire council is alert to identifying new ways to promote healthy aging and to identify the new needs of older adults. The council conducts written surveys of the community groups with whom they work, following the actions taken as a result of the needs assessment. The council has now done this twice, and both surveys indicated satisfaction with the outcomes of their efforts and a desire to continue working with them. The council also measures success by comments received from community members on the radio program, conferences, and brochures. An evaluation form is distributed at each conference. They measure their success by regular self-assessment of the action and of progress on goals.

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**Beginnings:** Sara Sinclair brought the idea for the Living Well Longer Council to the Bear River Health Department, the Bear River Area Agency on Aging, and the Senior Services Director of Logan Regional Hospital in the spring of 1997. At that time, Sara was the Director of the Division of Health Systems Improvement at the Utah Department of Health. She attended a Centers for Disease Control/Agency on Aging (CDC/AOA) conference in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1996 that encouraged public health and aging services to work together. The Utah Department of Health supported this idea and Sara established a state-level council, which was the catalyst for the establishment of several local councils—Davis County and Tooele, Utah, in addition to Cache Valley. Cache Valley was a natural setting for a council. The idea was to put to good use the principles of primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention, which are the basis of public health initiatives.

The Living Well Longer Council idea was accepted with enthusiasm and implemented later that year when Sara Sinclair returned to the leadership of the Sunshine Terrace Foundation and teamed with Ginger Anderson, Senior Services Director at Logan Regional Hospital. The outcome is the result of great synergy, which results from the interaction of dedicated people who want the older adults of Cache Valley, Utah, to be healthy, happy, and active.

**Challenges and Solutions:** The Living Well Longer Council maintains close contact with the Cache Valley Mayors Association to keep them apprised of the needs identified by seniors in their communities and to keep them up to date on the services the Living Well Longer Council provides to their communities. Several members of the council have joined together to address the education and support of caregivers, who are often older adults themselves. To be successful, the council must focus on goals, achieve ongoing involvement of council members, seek additional involvement from others, continue to win the support of the local mayors and community groups, and maintain the high level of commitment from council members.

The Living Well Longer Council was shared at the Program/Idea Exchange session of the National Council on Aging/American Society on Aging Joint Conference in March 2003.

## **PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION**

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