

Talking Points on Social Engagement for the Aging Network

Research has shed light on the impact social isolation and loneliness have on communities and individuals—and particularly on older adults.

Individuals experiencing loneliness and/or social isolation:

- Experience an increased risk of cardiovascular disease.
- Disproportionately report lower incomes and having a debilitating health and/or mental health condition.
- Cost Medicare an estimated \$134 more per person monthly (\$1,608 annually), compared to individuals who were not socially isolated. In total, the study estimated that a lack of social contact among older adults is associated with an estimated \$6.7 billion in additional Medicare spending annually.

Social engagement improves the quality of life for older adults, resulting in dramatic health benefits, including:

- Longer life spans
- Decreased risk of disability and functional mobility decline
- Decreased likelihood of depression
- Decrease in cognitive decline

The UCLA Three-Item Loneliness Scale (found online at www.engagingolderadults.org) can be used to assess the levels of social engagement among older adults.

Opportunities for engagement include:

- **Volunteering** for a variety of organizations and institutions
- Exploring and participating in **creative arts**
- Looking for intergenerational opportunities to support youth
- Taking **lifelong learning course** or **technology training** at local colleges and universities
- Seeking **employment** opportunities or developing **entrepreneurial** skills

While many aging programs and services provide opportunities for social engagement, **engAGED: The National Resource Center for Engaging Older Adults** is leading a national effort to increase the rates of older adults who are actively engaged in their communities. Our goal is to increase awareness and build partnerships with a variety of organizations to help promote understanding of the issues, reflect appropriate cultural perspectives, and increase available resources to support programs and services that address social engagement in older adults. Learn more at www.engagingolderadults.org.