



## **NH Alliance for Healthy Aging – March Quarterly Meeting Notes**

Date: March 24, 2026

Location: In-person meeting at Northeast Delta Dental, 2 Delta Drive, Concord, NH 03302

Facilitator: Jennifer Rabalais, Co-Director Center on Aging and Community Living, NH Alliance for Healthy Aging (AHA)

### **Welcome & Introductions**

Jennifer welcomed attendees and acknowledged the Center on Aging and Community Living backbone support team: Alison Rataj, Kathryn Selinga, and new team member Bettina Sietz.

First-time attendees (six) and Steering Committee members were invited to identify themselves.

### **Meeting Norms & Accessibility Values**

1. Networking & Connection: Built-in breaks to support relationship-building.
2. Accessibility: CART captioning, required microphone use, inclusive environment.
3. “Stronger Together”: Shared learning and collaboration emphasized.

Additional reminders: restrooms located across the hall, Wi-Fi password provided, resource table available, and phones and laptop notifications should be silenced.

### **Presentation 1: Services & Supports for Older Adults with Hearing Loss**

Presenters: Michelle McConaghy ([NDHHS – Northeast Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services](#)) and Amy Evans ([NHhears](#))

NDHHS is a 25-year nonprofit serving individuals with all levels of hearing loss.

NHhears focuses on age-related hearing loss, aiming to improve awareness and resource access.

Hearing loss is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most common chronic health condition among older adults and often goes untreated.

Key impacts include communication challenges, listening fatigue, social withdrawal, mental health risks, and cognitive strain.

Communication tips provided: good lighting, lower background noise, rephrasing rather than repeating, writing information down, and using assistive tools.

Community actions include normalizing conversations about hearing loss, sharing resources, and improving environmental accessibility (for example: asking for a quieter area in a restaurant).

Early action on hearing loss helps the brain to adapt better, to support independence, and improve quality of life.

## **Q & A**

**Q:** When should someone get their hearing checked?

**A:** The best time is now. Check hearing as you would check for blood pressure and arthritis concerns. Early evaluation is useful even if person believes their hearing is still “fine”.

**Q:** How do you tell the difference between normal (restaurant) background noise and actual hearing loss?

**A:** Difficulty hearing in spaces with background noise is often one of the earliest signs of age-related hearing loss and can be frustrating.

**Q:** Do you offer home visits, especially for older adults who are isolated or homebound?

**A:** Home visits are not broadly offered, but individuals with combined hearing and vision loss may qualify for the “[ICanConnect](#)” program

Announcement: [NDHHS 25th Anniversary: Celebration with Expo on April 11](#) at the Boys & Girls Club in Concord.

## **Presentation 2: AgeWellNH - New Hampshire's Multisector Plan on Aging (MPA)**

Presenter: Margaret Franckhauser, Vice Chair, [NH Commission on Aging](#)

NH State Commission on Aging was established in 2019 to advise the Legislature on aging issues.

NH's MPA, known as AgeWellNH, is a 10-year statewide blueprint engaging multiple sectors including housing, transportation, workforce, and healthcare.

California was the first state to have a plan on aging; Vermont has now completed its planning process and implementation.

Research and community engagement included input from 1,400+ residents and found the following:

- Key strengths in New Hampshire: community connection, access to some resources, outdoor recreation.
- Key challenges in New Hampshire for the aging population: transportation, housing, cognitive wellness, inequitable services, workforce shortages, cost of living.

A report summarizing the research and engagement process has been presented to the Governor's Office with a request for an executive order to establish an MPA in NH..

For those interested in learning more: Join monthly Commission on Aging meetings, subscribe to newsletters and follow annual reports and white papers.

Primary Contact: Lily Wellington, [Lily.A.Wellington@nhcoa.nh.gov](mailto:Lily.A.Wellington@nhcoa.nh.gov)

### **Q & A**

**Q:** Time frame of the plan and possible next steps?

**A:** Difficult to say. Governor Ayotte's office will review and is expected to issue an executive order, which will formalize multi-agency alignment and authorize the plan.

**Q:** Has there been a plan or thought to look at the New England states as a whole when talking about aging populations? We share similar demographics and challenges.

**A:** There is no collective effort for a “unified” plan on aging amongst the New England states, but NH has reviewed Massachusetts’ and Vermont’s multisector plans on aging, as well as plans for Colorado and California. There is a [Tri-state Learning Collaborative on Aging](#) to create conversations about issues impacting older adults across New England states.

### AHA Updates

[Website](#) refreshed with improved accessibility and navigation.

Caregiving Workgroup updated their caregiver self-identification flyer (“Do you care?”) with new design and added resources (211).

2025 Highlights & Accomplishments infographic shared and previous years to be added online.

New Futures provided a slide outlining legislative updates on Senate Bill 608 related to caregiver support systems.

### Strategic Planning Activities

Activity 1: Participants used dot voting to prioritize their top 3 key factors or barriers that need to be solved. Eight options were provided based on an in-person planning session and survey:

- **Ageism:** the lack of value of older adults, lack of acknowledgment that we are all aging, and lack of leadership on issues related to longevity (2 votes)
- **Silos:** The **lack of coordination** among services and providers and **lack of integration** among systems (e.g., different eligibility criteria, etc.) (16 votes)
- **Lack of social connections** and **isolation** among older adults (10 votes)
- **Lack of technology supports and resources** so older adults can better access information and utilize supports (5 votes)
- **Need for a larger and more supported care workforce, and more support for family care givers (24 votes)**
- **Lack of resources to address cultural differences** and meet differing needs among older adults (1 vote)
- **Lack of affordable and diverse housing options (26 votes)**
- **Lack of transportation access (25 votes)**

Activity 2: Group discussions identified organizations currently addressing priority areas and existing assets. Participants formed in groups of 2-3 to discuss and

added names and organizations to sticky notes that were placed next to the appropriate factor.

Activity 3: Table discussions focused on coordination challenges and how siloing affects older adults. Participants also explored coordination barriers and focused on issues such as duplicated intake processes, inconsistent eligibility criteria, and the difficulty older adults experience navigating fragmented systems. Participants shared table notes with specific examples of coordination and/or silo challenges.

### **Closing**

Participants were thanked for their input and collaboration.

Evaluation forms distributed (paper + electronic).

Boxed lunches provided; room available for networking after the meeting.

### **2026 NH Alliance for Healthy Aging Quarterly Meeting Schedule**

Thursday, June 18, 8:45 am – 12:00 pm

Thursday, September 24, 8:45 am – 12:00 pm

Thursday, December 17, 8:45 am – 12:00 pm

All meetings are located at Northeast Delta Dental Conference Center, 2 Delta Drive, Concord, NH 03302