



NH Alliance for Healthy Aging – June Quarterly Meeting Notes

Date: June 18, 2026

Location: Northeast Delta Dental, 2 Delta Drive, Concord, NH 03302

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

Opening and Meeting Overview

Jennifer Rabalais, Co-Director of the UNH Center on Aging and Community Living, opened the meeting by welcoming participants and acknowledging the strong energy and engagement in the room. She emphasized the importance of networking, inclusivity, and shared purpose. Attendees were encouraged to actively connect, use accessible meeting practices such as microphones, and contribute to creating a collaborative environment. Leadership from the Alliance's Steering Committee was recognized for guiding ongoing work.

Leadership Reflections

Steering Committee Chair Dick Chevrefils highlighted three key themes: hope, community, and survey. He underscored that hope is essential to supporting older adults, and that community collaboration strengthens outcomes. He emphasized the importance of participation in an upcoming strategic planning survey. He also raised concerns about the growing workforce shortage in direct care, noting projections of tens of thousands of vacancies in the coming years. His remarks reinforced values of respect, kindness, and collective responsibility.

Presentation: Listening to Participant Voices: Insights from the First Year of NH's NCI-AD Survey Results

Lisa Dunham and Laura Davie presented findings from the National Core Indicator Aging and Disability Survey conducted with over 400 participants in the Choices for Independence program. Partners included the UNH Center on Aging and Community Living, Department for Health and Human Services, Bureau of Adult and Aging services and was funded under the “Money Follows the Person” initiative.

Information was sourced from individuals, facilitated through case management agencies, and assistive living facilities. Surveys were conducted in person, but also through video conferencing tools and phone interviews.

Results showed that approximately two-thirds of participants reported that their needs and goals are fully met, while others reported partial or unmet needs.

Transportation emerged as a major challenge, with nearly half of respondents lacking access for non-medical activities. Social participation also presented a concern, with only about half of participants reporting that they can engage in activities outside the home as often as they would like. Top unmet needs include transportation, dental care, and additional personal support.

The presenters emphasized that the data represent a single point in time and are self-reported, meaning they should inform but not solely determine policy decisions. The findings provide a valuable baseline for future analysis and quality improvement efforts.

Q: Were you able to see any distinction between ages and differences between rural versus non-rural settings?

A: By looking at the demographic slide, age has not been separated out: 18 –64 constitutes almost 1/3 of the population. Separating different age brackets is considered a future effort as the database gets built out.

Zip codes make the differentiation between rural versus urban/ non-rural challenging. Sorting data by age groups and other demographics will be a future effort for stratifying the data.

Q: Did the survey reflect who is living with the person (for example: caregiver, care partner, etc.) as someone who may fill in gaps if services are not available?

A: It was clarified that the survey does not currently capture information about informal or family caregivers.

Q: Surprising how many people were willing to take the survey. Was there a difference in answers depending on the survey method (in-person versus video conferencing)?

A: Presenters reported no meaningful difference between in-person and phone/virtual responses. The survey itself represents a random sample. A lot of outreach was done: Over 2,000 phone calls were made to receive 400 surveys. There was no difference in the quality of answers observed when using direct (in person) or indirect (phone, video) interviewing methods.

Presentation: Services and Supports for Veterans by Heather Smith

Heather Smith provided an overview of the New Hampshire Department of Military Affairs and Veteran Services. She highlighted that the state is home to over 81,000 veterans, more than half of them are age 65 or older. While many veterans are doing well economically and socially, several key challenges persist.

Areas of concern include mental health and suicide prevention, with the state of NH losing approximately one veteran every two weeks to suicide. Housing stability, transportation access, and social isolation are also ongoing challenges, especially in rural areas. A large portion of the veterans' population is concentrated in southern/central NH.

The department offers a wide range of services, including benefits of counseling, employment support, housing initiatives, and wellness programs, and works in partnership with many organizations to improve outcomes for veterans.

Collaborations exist for improving dental care for veterans, since NH's veterans do not receive routine dental care, except for one free cleaning when leaving active military service.

Q: What are the top challenges for veterans and what services are needed the most and what are existing barriers to get access to them?

A: A lot of the veterans are doing extremely well, but persisting challenges are suicide prevention and mental health challenges overall. Suicide rates amongst veterans are significantly higher than the general population.

Ending homelessness amongst veterans: About 150 individuals are reported as homeless veterans, although the actual number may be higher. Finding affordable and available housing poses a challenge.

The transition between uniform and civilian can be challenging, and veterans are also facing statewide challenges like substance use disorder and job security.

Federal Policy Update by Congressman Chris Pappas

Representative Chris Pappas pointed out New Hampshire's unique advantage: organizations collaborating effectively, sharing overlapping missions and working together to maximize limited state and federal resources. This collaborative approach—combined with ongoing dialogue and coordination—is essential, especially during challenging economic conditions.

Congressman Chris Pappas mentioned that many residents are struggling due to rising costs, particularly in energy, healthcare, and housing. Housing stands out as the most pressing issue, with median home prices increasing by about 170% over the past 15 years. This surge threatens the ability of people to afford to live in New Hampshire and maintain a high quality of life.

In response, a bipartisan housing bill is moving forward and is expected to pass soon. While it won't solve every problem, it includes meaningful steps: support for public housing programs, expanded access to VA home loans by excluding disability benefits from income calculations, and pilot grants to help homeowners update aging homes and "age in place" safely. Chris Pappas stresses that this legislation is only one step and that continued innovation and planning are needed, especially to address predatory housing practices—such as out-of-state investors buying properties, raising rents sharply, and reducing residents' stability and home values. Manufactured housing is highlighted as a potentially affordable option, but also vulnerable to these pressures.

Transportation is another focus area. A new federal bill building on a previous bipartisan infrastructure law is in development. It would continue funding for roads, bridges (with a notable increase), and senior mobility programs, though transit funding could be stronger. Transportation is identified as a major barrier for seniors, especially for accessing healthcare, and Congressman Pappas urges better use of available federal funding through state matching efforts.

Chris Pappas highlights advocacy priorities, including protecting funding for programs like Meals on Wheels, and addresses Social Security concerns. He described Social Security as a fundamental, earned benefit that must be preserved and potentially expanded, especially for low-income seniors.

Q: Is there any plan to increase federal funding for transportation programs like 5310 (for seniors and people with disabilities)?

A: The bill has just passed a House committee and is still early in the process. Funding for the 5310 program is expected to remain roughly level for now. There may be opportunities to push for increases as the bill develops.

The issue is especially important for rural states like New Hampshire, where the program plays a key role.

Q: Are there any upcoming incentives or grants to address the shortage in the direct care workforce (home care, aging in place)?

A: No specific new federal programs or funding initiatives are currently ready or moving through Congress. Workforce shortages remain a major priority concern. Immigration policy is closely tied to the issue, as legal pathways for workers are critical to sustaining the healthcare workforce.

Q: What can NHAHA community members do to support efforts to improve programs for aging Americans?

A:

- Share real-life stories and lived experiences with policymakers.
- Help create stronger connections between communities and decision-makers.
- Organize small group discussions and conversations.
- Highlight how programs affect people's dignity and daily lives, not just funding numbers.
- Personal stories are especially effective in protecting and advancing programs.

Q: How should the government address inequality and support older adults struggling financially?

A:

- The fundamental role of government is to expand opportunities and improve people's lives.
- There is a clear need to address income inequality and disparities in living conditions.
- Community support and looking out for neighbors is essential.
- Policymakers aim to continue supporting programs that help vulnerable populations, but broader systemic challenges remain.

Presentation: Assistive Technology in NH (ATinNH) by Sara Valli

Sara Valli introduced the wide range of assistive technology services available in New Hampshire. She explained that assistive technology includes both low-tech solutions, such as adaptive tools and home modifications, and high-tech innovations like smart home devices and communication systems.

She highlighted the importance of increasing awareness and utilization of these tools, which can significantly enhance independence and quality of life. Services include a lending library with thousands of items, training programs, and custom demonstrations. A new initiative also uses 3D printing to provide free adaptive devices. The presenter recommended starting with simple, practical solutions before moving to more complex technologies.

Sara Valli adds that if someone needs to borrow a beach wheelchair, Northeast Passage has them for loan: <https://www.nepassage.org/>

Alliance for Healthy Aging Updates

The Alliance for Healthy Aging has been engaged in a strategic planning process and has been gathering input in a multitude of ways including through surveys to all partners. The planning process is in its final stages, and a survey will be going out to identify key strategies for the upcoming years. Strong participation rates have been observed in the previous surveys, and members are encouraged to continue

contributing feedback.

The Caregiving Workgroup has launched a statewide outreach effort using a 'Do You Care?' flyer to help individuals identify as caregivers and connect to resources. The flyer has been mailed to 234 libraries across the state with the request to share.

Additionally, the Direct Care Workforce Workgroup recently hosted a webinar addressing workforce challenges. The recording is available for viewing on the AHA website: <https://nhaha.info/calendar/events-webinars/>.

Recognition: Celebrating Cheryl Steinberg

Jennifer Rabalais acknowledged that Judith Jones and Martha McLeod from New Futures were not able to attend the meeting today. Cheryl Steinberg was honored for her significant contributions to aging services and advocacy in New Hampshire as she prepares for retirement. Jennifer thanked Cheryl for her longstanding partnership with AHA and for her significant advocacy achievements, including the following legislative highlights:

- Key in passing legislation that established the State Commission on Aging.
- Essential in securing NH Fiscal Policy Institute report on how New Hampshire finances long-term care. This report played a vital role in advocating for funding for the Medicaid Choices for Independence program.
- Developed the language for and advanced the advocacy for the System of Care for Healthy Aging, which is landmark legislation rebalancing NH Long Term Services and Supports system.

Many of our recent successes for older adults are because of Cheryl. Her leadership and advocacy have had a lasting impact on the state's aging network.

Next Quarterly Meeting Dates – Please save these dates!

Thursday, September 24, 2026

Thursday, December 17, 2026