

2016 FACTS ABOUT WASHOE COUNTY SENIORS*

- People aged 50 and over make up about 35% of the Washoe County population. In 2016, there are over 152,000 people in Washoe County aged 50 or more. By 2034, this group will grow steadily to over 183,000, and will still represent about 35% of the total Washoe County population.
- The fastest growth among Washoe seniors are those aged 65-plus who currently number over 65,000 and will grow to almost 91,000 by 2034, a 60% growth rate.
- Our rapidly aging population will need more services as it ages, and community leaders must prioritize those needs and plan and budget to meet them.
- At age 65 and above, many elders experience increased ambulatory difficulty, hearing and vision loss and increased need for caregiving assistance. Finding information about those needed resources is a pervasive problem.
- Poverty is up for our elders. The estimated number of people aged 55 and over living below poverty in Washoe County more than doubled from 2005-2014 (from about 6,000 to almost 13,000). Income is slipping for those still working and for those aged 65-75 and retired.
- Housing is becoming more expensive, and there is a lack of affordable housing for lower and middle income people in Washoe County.
- About 25% of seniors in Washoe County are moderately to highly isolated. Isolation is as much a predictor of early death as is living in poverty.
- Suicide rates for Washoe County seniors are among the highest nationwide.
- By April 2017, Washoe County Senior Services will reach its capacity (400,000 annual meals) for serving meals to seniors. About 20% of those eating lunch at Washoe County Senior Center report that it is the only meal they have that day.
- Washoe County seniors over age 65 have higher education levels than younger groups. This is a benefit to employers seeking qualified employees and for groups seeking to involve seniors as skilled volunteers.

*Sources: 2016, Washoe County Senior Services, Nevada State Demographer

TIPS FOR SENIOR ADVOCATES

– How to Be Effective on Your Visit

- Plan the meeting in advance – create an agenda with a few talking points, decide who will speak, tell your story, listen to the legislator’s response, make a clear and simple ask, provide a short (1 page) handout.
- Know the issue and the legislator’s background and priorities. Always remember, your main strength is as a constituent with an important concern. Moving, personal stories are powerful.
- Be respectful, but direct. Listen to questions and concerns, but keep the meeting on track and ask the legislator for a specific action that supports your cause.
- Follow up with a thank you note; stay in touch with their assistant; build a relationship.

– How to Make an Effective Public Comment

Nevada law requires allowing public comment during all public meetings under the Open Meeting Law. You can make a public comment on any topic at the beginning or end of the agenda or on a specific item on the agenda during the discussion of that item. You may be restricted to two or three minutes, depending on the group you are addressing. Generally, the members of the body do not respond to or ask questions of the person making public comment. You can also make your public comment in writing in person or online.

- Fill out a request to speak form and give to the clerk. You can write your comments on the card and whether you support or oppose an agenda item. At the Legislature, at committee hearings, you should always sign in with the clerk, and register whether you support or oppose items on the agenda. These comments are tallied along with live testimony in the record.
- Greet the chairperson, the members and the manager.
- Plan your talking points – one or two points is all you need for a short statement.
- Make an impact by telling a story or giving a personal example.
- Be as brief as possible and stay within the time allotted.
- Be civil, but direct in your remarks.
- Thank them for their time.

The following actions are in approximate order of effectiveness.

1. Visit personally, making an appointment to discuss your issues; bring others who feel the same and include constituents. Be prepared by setting meeting goals and priorities, having all the needed facts at hand, and bringing some information to leave with them. If you don’t have an answer, say that you will find out and get back to them. Your meeting can be at their legislative office or you can arrange a visit when they come home.
2. Discuss your issue in social settings or other contacts with your policy maker.
3. Send an e-mail or text message.
4. Telephone and discuss your issue.
5. Question policy makers about your issue at town meetings and other forums.
6. Write or fax a letter personalized to a single policy maker.
7. Send or fax a form letter.
8. Send a pre-printed postcard, or sign a petition.
9. Leave a phone message.