Section 1: STATE DETAILS

APPLICATION SUBMISSION DATE: Click here to enter a date.

NAME OF THE STATE: State of New Jersey

POPULATION SIZE: 8.9 million, 11th in the United States.

PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS ABOVE THE AGE OF 60: 23.4% are age 65+ (U.S. Census Bureau)

NAME AND TITLE OF THE ELECTED OFFICIAL SIGNING THE OFFICIAL COMMITMENT: Governor Philip D. Murphy

OFFICE ADDRESS OF THE SIGNER: Office of Governor PO Box 001, Trenton, NJ 08625

Section 2: STATE CONTACT FOR THE AARP NETWORK OF AGE-FRIENDLY STATES

(The State contact is the staff member who is primarily responsible for carrying out the state-level work).

NAME: Louise Rush

POSITION: Director

DEPARTMENT: Division of Aging Services

EMAIL ADDRESS: [Redacted]

TELEPHONE NUMBER: [Redacted]

Please describe the named person’s role and department in the state’s age-friendly initiative (minimum 100 words):

Louise Rush is the Director of the Division of Aging Services, one of several Divisions within the Department of Human Services. In partnership with twenty-one county Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), Aging Services administers a number of federal and state-funded programs that make it easier for older adults to live in the community as long as possible with independence, dignity and choice. These programs include services such as prescription drug assistance, utility assistance, home-delivered meals, transportation and adult protective services. In addition, Aging Services works closely with the Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services, which provides Medicaid-covered long-term care services and supports in both community and nursing home settings.
Section 3: STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES, ENGAGEMENTS and COLLABORATIONS

1) Please provide a brief summary of policies, programs, funding and services that are targeted toward older people and how the state plans to become more age-friendly. (minimum 250 words)

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is designated by the U.S. Administration for Community Living as New Jersey’s State Unit Aging (SUA), with the Division of Aging Services serving as the administrative agency. Aging Services receives federal funding through the Older Americans Act and serves as the focal point for planning services for older adults, developing comprehensive information about New Jersey’s older adult population and its needs, and maintaining information about services available throughout the state. The Division also provides oversight of the home and community-based programs provided by or through New Jersey’s twenty-one county offices on aging – the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA)/Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC). And, in order to safeguard vulnerable older adults, the Division operates adult protective service programs in each county to address abuse or exploitation.

State funding, both from the general fund and the Casino Revenue Fund, supports programs and services specific to New Jersey or expands service availability beyond federal funding limits. These programs include Jersey Assistance for Community Caregiving, Congregate Housing Services Program, Statewide Respite Care Program, Alzheimer’s Adult Day Services Program, weekend home delivered meals, the Lifeline Utility Assistance program, Hearing Aid Assistance to the Aged and Disabled, and two state prescription assistance programs.

The Division recently launched, and continues to expand, NJSave, a single online portal in English and Spanish that streamlines the benefit application process for aging and disabled residents. NJSave allows older residents to apply for Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled, the Senior Gold Prescription Discount Program, Medicare Savings Programs, Lifeline Utility and Tenants Assistance, Hearing Aid Assistance to the Aged and Disabled, and to be screened for numerous other programs. Together, these benefits can save seniors around $3,000 every year. In addition, the Department of the Treasury operates several property tax relief programs for seniors.

The attached Executive Order outlines several steps that New Jersey will take to become more age-friendly, including the establishment of an Advisory Council to inform work on the Department’s blueprint that will focus on: identifying opportunities for, and barriers to, creating livable communities for people of all ages across the State of New Jersey; recommending best practices for age-friendly work among partners such as health and community services, business leaders, local and elected officials, advocacy organizations and volunteer groups, and innovative public-private partnerships; and promoting age-friendly community inclusion and equitable outcomes by examining programs and practices to ensure that they address disparities experienced by older adults of every race, color, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, or ethnicity.
2) How will the state engage and involve older people in the process of becoming a more age-friendly? *(minimum 150 words)*

The Division of Aging Services is very proud of our vast and vibrant network, which includes the twenty-one county offices on aging, community programs, and local providers and grantees who interact everyday with the seniors we are here to serve. The timing of this application coincides with the several information-gathering processes already underway. This is also an ideal opportunity to begin soliciting feedback on how the state can be more age-friendly and feedback from these sessions will serve to inform and extend the state’s age-friendly work.

For example, development of New Jersey’s State Plan on Aging for 2021-2025 is in its final stages. As part of this process, the Division of Aging Services will be conducting a number of public listening sessions and stakeholder engagement meetings, as well as surveys. Among the listening sessions and surveys, the Division is also soliciting feedback from caregivers. Hearing from older adults and their caregivers is an essential component of inclusive planning for livable communities. Moreover, these meetings will help the Division identify the best forums and forms of communication for reaching older people. The Division anticipates extending these sessions for targeted age-friendly topics.

Additionally, the state’s lead Medicaid agency, the Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services, is conducting similar sessions to identify innovative proposals for renewal of its federal Section 1115 waiver programs, including proposals on enhancing in-home long term care services. We believe that it is of the utmost importance to engage older adults where they are, such as including senior advisory councils and clubs, in order to gather feedback on policies and programs that make New Jersey Age-Friendly. This will ensure that the needs of New Jersey’s large diverse population are met.

3) Briefly describe the mechanisms the state has or is planning to put in place to facilitate collaborative planning and implementation between different agencies and departments. *(minimum 150 words)*

The Governor has issued an Executive Order establishing an Age-Friendly State Advisory Council to support the work of the Department of Human Services and its lead agency, the Division of Aging Services, in developing the age-friendly initiative. The Advisory Council established by the Governor’s Executive Order will include input from the following stakeholders: The Commissioners of the Departments of Human Services, Community Affairs, and Transportation, county and municipal governments or local authorities, community aging and inclusion stakeholders, the business community, and experts from the higher education community. The Department anticipates calling on the expertise of various state agencies to inform its work. Throughout the process, the Department of Human Services will both call on these agencies to provide feedback on larger planning efforts, as well as serving as conduit for recommendations coming directly from individuals, advocates and community groups.
4) Briefly describe the mechanisms the state has or is planning to put in place to facilitate engagement with communities to identify unique and disparate needs throughout the state.

*(minimum 150 words)*

New Jersey is fortunate to have a number of organizations and communities already committed to the work of making the state age-friendly. For instance, the following organizations are already deeply engaged with this work: The Grotta Fund for Senior Care, New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well, Community Foundation of South Jersey, Rutgers University School of Social Work, AARP, New Jersey Future, and The Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation.

New Jersey is also fortunate to have many cities and towns designated as age-friendly or livable communities by AARP, including: Princeton, Montclair, Garfield, Teaneck, Englewood, Westwood and Ridgewood. Community feedback will be solicited through various municipal partners, as well as The Mayors Wellness Campaign (MWC). The MWC is a statewide community health initiative that provides evidence-based tools and strategies for mayors and community leaders to help their residents achieve healthier lifestyles and to improve overall health and wellness in their communities. The New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute has been leading the Mayors Wellness Campaign in partnership with the New Jersey State League of Municipalities since 2006 (now includes 400 participating communities).

And, as part of the state’s experience with the public listening sessions and stakeholder engagement meetings described above, we will use the information obtained about participants to help identify the communities that are not present for these discussions and who need specific outreach aligned with local needs (e.g., language, transportation, accessibility).
Section 4: NETWORK MEMBERSHIP

Your answers to the following questions will help us complete your membership in the global age-friendly network and better enable us to understand how to support the network.

5) How do you hope to contribute to the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities/States and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities? (minimum 150 words)

New Jersey has a wealth of experience to offer. This includes our statewide experience administering large programs, such as the $1.2 billion Medicaid-funded community-based long term care program (36,000 beneficiaries) and the Division of Aging Services’ $60 million pharmaceutical assistance programs (105,000 beneficiaries). At the same time, there is intense local engagement, with a wide array of services provided by county Area Agencies on Aging that are in contact with older people needing assistance almost daily.

Beginning in 2003 with New Jersey’s first ADRC grant, we have continuously built on the No Wrong Door initiative to make sure that older adults have access to programs, services and wellness information. We hope to expand upon this concept of No Wrong Door to include access to even more assistance for older adults. With a goal of giving more seniors the opportunity to age at home, we plan to continue our successful efforts in both MTLSS, Money Follows the Person and other person centered initiatives that focus on consumer driven choices.

In a geographically diverse and densely populated state like New Jersey, the best practices and policy recommendations our blueprint produces will have broad applicability and use for other communities participating in the age-friendly network.

6) What motivated your State to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities/States and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities?

New Jersey has always been regarded as one of the best states to raise a family but is sometimes thought of as an expensive state in which to retire and age-in-place. In recent years, the state has focused significant investments in home and community based services and supports to enable individuals to continue living independently in their homes and communities.

Governor Murphy’s administration is committed to catalyzing age-friendly principles such as safe and walkable streets, affordable housing, public transportation, access to healthcare, and opportunities for residents to participate in community activities. The Department of Human Services is committed to its role of creating policy and supporting the structure of age-friendly services across all programs. In addition, this initiative is especially timely given the exacerbating impact that COVID-19 has had on seniors and others facing social isolation, housing insecurity, and transportation challenges. Our ultimate goal is to work with a variety of partners to make New Jersey a place where people can age well, and people of all ages can fully participate in all that our state has to offer.
7) Please provide a digital (JPG, PNG or PDF) file or link of a logo or other image that represents your state.


I have read and understand the requirements for becoming a member of the Age-Friendly Network of States and Communities, including community assessment; development and approval of an action plan; implementation of the plan; and providing a five-year progress update.

Sarah Adelman, Acting Commissioner

Print Name

Sarah Adelman

Signature