

Quick Start Guide

Reframing Communications about Senior Community Centers in Pennsylvania

It's not just *what* you say, but *how* you say it.

Senior community centers (SCCs) play a vital role in communities, yet public understanding of what they are and why they matter often lags. This Quick Start Guide provides examples of research-based messaging strategies to communicate effectively about SCCs to various audiences.

SAY THIS

TO DO THIS

Framing Strategy 1: Move from assuming to creating understanding

"Senior centers are local, non-residential community hubs where older people gather for meals, wellness programs, and connection while continuing to live independently."

Define senior community centers clearly so people understand what they are and do not confuse them with nursing homes or assisted living facilities.

"Senior community centers are community spaces—similar to libraries or parks—that help people stay active, engaged, and connected as they age."

Position senior community centers as everyday community infrastructure that supports wellbeing over time.

Framing Strategy 2: Move from who uses SCCs to why communities need them

"Real connection depends on whether communities create spaces, activities, and transportation that make participation possible."

Show that loneliness is shaped by community conditions and access—not by individual shortcomings.

"Senior community centers build regular opportunities for connection through shared meals, activities, and welcoming spaces."

Highlight the systems and structures that prevent loneliness and support social connection over time.

"Communities can ensure people stay healthy, connected, and able to make choices about their lives as they age."

Keep future-focused, positive outcomes front and center rather than emphasizing decline or crisis.

SAY THIS

TO DO THIS

Framing Strategy 3: Move from personal characteristics to community prevention

“To stay well over time, people need regular opportunities for connection, movement, learning, and access to resources.”

Shift attention from who attends senior centers to what helps people stay well over time.

“Senior community centers create opportunities for activity, participation, and routine that help people remain engaged in community life.”

Frame senior centers as proactive supports that promote ongoing participation and wellbeing.

“Senior community centers help people remain active, engaged, and connected over time.”

Position senior centers as part of a positive vision of aging rooted in contribution and participation.

Learn More

Pennsylvania Department of Aging

Learn more about *Aging Our Way, PA* – Pennsylvania’s 10-year multisector plan on aging that is designed to meet the needs and preferences of older adults across the Commonwealth, in which the project to reframe communications about senior centers is a key tactic.



National Center to Reframe Aging

Access resources and learn more about how to partner with the National Center to Reframe Aging – leads the movement to transform how we understand and communicate about aging – on our website reframingaging.org.

