

Promoting Economic Security
Poverty and Hunger

9.2 Expanding SSI eligibility and raising the level of cash payments

WHEREAS the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program was established in 1972 as a federal income support program for the aged, blind and disabled with the assurance recipients would be protected from poverty;

WHEREAS SSI asset limits established in 1972 would now be worth \$5,000 for individuals and \$7,500 for couples if adjusted for inflation, yet remain at \$2,000 and \$3,000 respectively;

WHEREAS, SSI maximum cash benefits represent 75% of the poverty level for individuals and 90% for couples;

WHEREAS elderly single women and minorities are most likely to have incomes below the poverty line;

WHEREAS nearly three quarters of older SSI recipients are women and one-third of older persons who qualify for SSI do not apply; and

WHEREAS SSI represents 3% of federal entitlement spending and only 1.6% of total federal spending,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, That the 1995 White House Conference on Aging support policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Recognize Supplemental Security Income as a cornerstone program in fighting poverty among older people;

Increase the asset limit test to more accurately reflect inflation adjusted dollars and adjust limits annually;

Raise cash benefits to a level at which SSI payments coupled with additional income would meet 120% of the poverty level;

Develop an aggressive outreach program for those who are eligible for SSI but have not applied, including **legal residents** and racial and cultural minorities;

Modify SSI regulations to allow recipients to receive gifts valued up to \$2,000 annually before decreasing benefits;

Strengthen efforts to curb fraud and misuse by a small number of recipients that endanger the program;

Strengthen management of the SSI disability program and require rehabilitation where appropriate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the 1995 White House Conference on Aging opposes policies that:

Arbitrarily eliminate coverage or reduce benefits for current beneficiaries whether they be children or older persons.

Continue the existing one-third reduction in benefits for recipients who are penalized for living with relatives or with others as part of a household.

Promoting Economic Security
IRDS 9 Poverty and Hunger

9.3 Expanding programs to assess and address malnutrition

WHEREAS malnutrition and hunger are two distinct problems;

WHEREAS malnutrition among the young and elderly, our most vulnerable populations, is a problem of increasing national concern;

WHEREAS older Americans and children living in or near poverty are at disproportionate risk for malnutrition and its corresponding effects on health, vitality, learning, and quality of life;

WHEREAS an estimated one million homebound elderly are malnourished and 85% of all elderly have nutrition-related conditions;

WHEREAS malnourished older persons are at greater risk for illness, take longer to recover, have 90% longer hospital stays, and increase hospital costs by \$5000 per medical patient and \$10,000 per surgical patient; and

WHEREAS a saving of \$3.25 is gained for every dollar spent on nutrition screening and intervention,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, That the 1995 White House Conference on Aging supports policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Assure school nutrition programs for all students K-12;

Encourage local communities to expand nutrition programs to all age groups through cooperatives composed of public and private agencies, enabling bulk purchases and economies of scale;

Facilitate public and private partnerships at the community level to develop nutrition screening and intervention programs;

Strengthen linkages between community nutrition programs and health care providers;

Encourage nutrition programs to recognize the special dietary foods of various ethnic groups;

Increase funds on the state and federal levels to support research and development projects that attack malnutrition;

Include nutritional evaluation as a standard component of geriatric assessments in health and aging services settings;

Relax federal and state regulations to increase flexibility of localities developing demonstration projects designed to address malnutrition.

Promoting Economic Security

IRDS 10 Tax Policy

10.1 Advocating property, sales and income tax relief for low-income persons

WHEREAS 12.4% of all elderly have incomes below the poverty level, and an additional 8% are classified as near poor (up to 125% of poverty level)s;

WHEREAS median incomes for black and Hispanic families with an elderly head of household are substantially less than their white counterparts;

WHEREAS 76% of elderly heads of households own their own homes and 83% identified property taxes as a primary concern;

WHEREAS the sales tax is regressive and hits hardest individuals and families with low and fixed incomes;

WHEREAS sales and property taxes are particularly burdensome to low income families;

WHEREAS low income older persons are at risk of losing their homes when property taxes are raised to compensate for reduced federal and state revenues;

WHEREAS households headed by an older person spend 25.6% of income on food; and

WHEREAS communities rely extensively on property taxes and sales taxes to fund education and other services,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, That the 1995 White House Conference on Aging support policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Encourage state and local governments to offer progressive and appropriate tax relief for families and individuals of all ages, with the most relief being afforded those living at 125% of poverty or below. All existing and relevant state and local taxes should be reviewed with particular emphasis on property taxes.

Explore the recovery of lost revenues by reevaluating tax policies on wealthy individuals **as** defined by each state and locality.

Tax Policy
IRDS 10 Tax Policy

10.2 Enacting retirement benefit credits for caregivers who do not work, work part time or intermittently,

WHEREAS more than 80% of long-term care for older persons occurs in the home and is provided by a family member;

WHEREAS the average cost of nursing home care is \$30,000 per year, while the provision of professional home care services average \$10,000-\$15,000 per year;

WHEREAS young children, the disabled, and frail elderly living in their homes or in the homes of family members require the frequent attention or constant presence of a responsible adult;

WHEREAS 89% of women will be caregivers of children and/or older persons and almost three quarters of the elderly poor are women;

WHEREAS 11%-20% of caregivers, because of their responsibilities to children or older persons, either never enter, reduce their hours of work or are forced to drop out of the paid labor force, thus disrupting the establishment of pension benefits or having insufficient years to earn a full Social Security benefit;

WHEREAS nearly one in three caregivers to older persons is poor and 57% have lower or middle incomes; and

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, That the 1995 White House Conference on Aging support policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Amend the Social Security law to credit a Social Security record for each year that the person was caring for a **disabled** child or a severely disabled spouse, parent or other close family member and that these credits be equivalent to those individuals who work full time at minimum wage;

Commission a nationwide study by the Social Security Administration or Department of Labor examining who caregivers are, how caregiving affects employment, retirement benefit protection, the opportunity costs to caregivers and the amount of tax dollars saved as a result of their efforts.

Amend the Social Security law so that caregivers of disabled spouses under age 62 may receive benefits similar to beneficiaries caring for an adult disabled child.

Promoting Economic Security

IRDS 11 Discrimination

11.1 Educating the public about ageism and discrimination

WHEREAS ours is an ageist society that fails to present older Americans accurately in language, books, movies, television and other media;

WHEREAS older Americans are a very diverse group;

WHEREAS public images and messages influence the ideas and views of the nonelderly towards older persons;

WHEREAS older minorities and women are placed in particular jeopardy;

WHEREAS a lack of understanding or appreciation of differences leads to discriminatory behavior;

WHEREAS ageism and discrimination often have negative psychological and financial consequences for individuals and their families; and

WHEREAS ageism and discrimination are practices that can be corrected,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the 1995 White House Conference on Aging support policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Promote educational activities in schools and the community that correct stereotypes of older persons and minorities;

Encourage the media to address issues facing elders and minorities in an objective fashion that avoids identifying persons by age, race or ethnicity when not essential to the story or otherwise perpetuates stereotypes.

Promoting Economic Security
IRDS 11 Discrimination

11.2 Enforcing laws against age discrimination

WHEREAS our society tends to hold negative perceptions of the value, worth and productivity of older workers, which often goes unrecognized;

WHEREAS discrimination against older women places them in double jeopardy and older women of color are confronted with triple jeopardy;

WHEREAS social and religious institutions are now beginning to see this as a cause for serious concern;

WHEREAS employment discrimination on any basis has an intergenerational impact because elders with reduced resources require greater support from family members;

WHEREAS current research confirms the existence of a "glass ceiling" that discriminates against women and minorities, especially older women and minorities, thereby preventing their advancement in the work place;

WHEREAS many workers over age 40 are not aware of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) passed in 1967 as amended, which prohibits mandatory retirement for most workers and other forms of age discrimination;

WHEREAS Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure permits unnamed persons to participate in a class action suit and ADEA does not permit same;

WHEREAS the 1991 Civil Rights Act provides protections not included in ADEA, and

WHEREAS the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is charged to enforce the ADEA and provide leadership to other federal agencies that oversee equal employment opportunity laws,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the 1995 White House Conference on Aging support policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Encourage civic, social and religious leaders to sensitize their communities and organizations to the subtlety of discrimination

based on race, sex, disability and age and to the social and financial costs of such practices;

Require that employers and labor unions inform employees of their rights under ADEA;

Amend the ADEA to conform to Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure to permit unnamed members of the class to participate in a law suit;

Amend the ADEA to adopt parallel provisions to those contained in the 1991 Civil Rights Act;

Encourage the EEOC's active prosecution of cases in which discrimination has been alleged and interpretation of ADEA regulations sufficient to protect its intended beneficiaries;

Amend the Civil Rights Act of 1991 to include the aged as a protected class.

Maximizing Housing and Support Service Options

12. Range of Options/Availability

12.1 Designing housing to maximize independence

Whereas most housing is designed to accommodate only the needs of nuclear families and not a variety of lifestyles and ages across the lifespan;

Whereas 90% of older people live in household settings and most strongly prefer to live independently;

Whereas older people account for approximately 7% of new homes bought as primary residences and those between 50 and 64 years of age constitute an additional 15% of all homebuyers;

Whereas health becomes an increasingly important part of housing needs and decisions as older people age with approximately 20% of them requiring at least some minimal degree of help with activities of daily living;

Whereas most older people with limitations live in the community and prefer to remain in their own homes and communities; and

Whereas millions of older people live in homes that should be modified to meet their needs.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the WHCoA supports policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Encourage the building of homes for persons of all ages that are designed to permit aging in place;

Create physical environments to meet the needs of older people--- spaces that are sensitive to their needs in the workplace and the community, residential spaces that extend and maximize independent living, and care facilities that are both efficient and responsive to their needs;

Facilitate greater activity by the private sector, including the financial community, American Institute of Architects and the National Association of Home Builders, American Society of Landscape Architects and American Society of Interior Designers, to design housing and facilitate modifying existing housing to meet the lifespan needs of older people;

Grant greater flexibility to Federal, State and local governments in approving and financing innovative, safe and affordable housing designed for older people;

Encourage senior organizations to inform older people about how to make changes in their homes or apartments and how to identify funding sources; and

Create innovative funding mechanisms to finance home improvements, maintenance, repairs and modifications.

Maximizing Housing and Support Service Options

12. Range of Options/Availability

12.2 Revising life safety codes, zoning codes and regulations to permit alternative housing and living arrangements

Whereas many laws, regulations, zoning practices and occupancy restrictions obstruct housing choices of older people and increase the cost of housing,;

Whereas outdated life safety codes, zoning restrictions and regulations (which do not affect health and safety) hinder the ability of older people to live independently in their own homes, force them to leave their communities and penalize older people financially;

Whereas many State and local regulations need to be revised to allow well-designed increased-density development, new technology in construction materials and innovative living arrangements; and

Therefore be it resolved that the WHCoA supports policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Encourage the revision of life safety codes, zoning restrictions and regulations at the Federal, State and local levels to permit the development of alternative housing and living arrangements for older people and to permit them to choose among alternative living options;

Encourage the use of governmental incentives at the Federal, State and local levels for public and private providers to develop appropriate housing opportunities for older people with their input and which ensure civil and tenancy rights of residents, are sensitive to cultural and ethnic needs and provide quality living environments;

Maintain the option of age-specific housing for older people;

Support housing opportunities for younger people with disabilities as an alternative to placement in subsidized elderly housing;

Establish dispute resolution mechanisms at the Federal, State and local government levels to facilitate solutions in disputes

involving planning, housing and service options for older persons; and

Encourage States and local governments to use creative mechanisms, including deregulation and waivers, to combine housing and care services effectively and humanely.

Maximizing Housing and Support Service Options

13. Affordability/financing/tax policies

13.1 Expanding Federal and State housing programs

Whereas the demand for senior housing is driven by the aging of America and the desire of most elderly people to live independently in the community;

Whereas the median income of older persons in 1993 was \$14,983 for males and \$8,499 for females, with approximately one in five older persons classified as poor or near poor;

Whereas the Federal government has played an important role in financing the construction of low-income senior housing and providing rent subsidizes to residents, such as the Section 202 and Section 8 programs;

Whereas over 100,000 older residents of federally-assisted housing are at risk of being institutionalized in the absence of support services;

Whereas some people aged 75 and older, women living alone, minorities and residents of rural areas have the greatest need for government assistance;

Whereas low-cost housing appropriate for older people is in short supply in many areas;

Whereas the Federal government and many State governments have recognized the need for assisted living programs;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the WHCoA supports policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Provide affordable mixed-income rental housing options for older persons which encourage freedom of choice;

Target, at the State and local levels, resources for senior housing to areas where there is a shortage of affordable housing for low-income, especially minority, older persons;

Encourage providers to maintain and expand the current supply of housing for low-income older persons;

Encourage policies that support housing choice for residents of Federal and State-assisted housing developments for older persons; and

Increase Federal, State and local government efforts to ensure that low-income people can obtain affordable housing in the private market.

Maximizing Housing and Support Service Options

13. Affordability/financing/tax policies

13.2 Increasing the availability of housing options through partnerships with the finance industry

Whereas the scarcity of private and public sector financing constrains housing choices for older people;

Whereas effective coordination between private and public programs may result in innovative housing alternatives for older persons;

Whereas while government programs may encourage innovations in housing, government financing cannot remove the element of financial risk that comes with innovation;

Whereas the decrease in funding for Federal housing programs has drastically diminished housing production over the past 15 years;

Whereas lenders apply more stringent underwriting standards to senior housing loans than to other multi-family housing loans and mortgage loans on senior housing are increasingly underwritten as business loans rather than residential real estate loans; and

Whereas mortgage backed securities for senior housing have rapidly increased in recent years.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the WHCoA supports policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Encourage effective partnerships among public, voluntary and private sectors (lenders and developers) to expand the pool of affordable housing;

Increase the availability of consumer-protected public and private sector choices for older homeowners by encouraging the Federal and State governments to work in cooperation with the finance industry;

Preserve and expand tax and financing incentives for lenders, developers and providers of housing for older people on the Federal and State levels;

Establish, on a permanent basis, the Federal Housing Administration's (FHA) Home Equity Conversion Mortgage insurance demonstration program; and

Replicate innovative approaches such as bank community development corporations, city-wide housing partnerships, community loan funds/revolving loan funds and housing trust funds/linkage programs which offer promise.

Maximizing Housing and Support Service Options

13. Affordability/financing/tax policies

13.3 Developing and maintaining efforts to reduce the impact of high energy costs on low-income older people

WHEREAS older people are more vulnerable to hyperthermia and heat stroke than younger adults, and heating and cooling are critical health concerns;

WHEREAS households headed by an elderly member spend approximately 50% more of their incomes on residential energy than other households;

WHEREAS elderly households are 28% more likely than other households to occupy homes built before 1940 which are typically less energy efficient and more expensive to heat and cool than newer homes;

WHEREAS escalating costs for water and sewage systems place an increasing burden on all households, especially those with low and fixed incomes; and

WHEREAS older persons on low- and fixed-incomes are particularly vulnerable to increases in energy and water/sewage prices,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the WHCoA supports policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Replicate programs for low-income or elderly households, such as credits and discounts on utility bills, that enable them to afford to continue living in their homes and apartments;

Continue Federal support to assist low-income households meet burdensome home energy costs; and

Increase the availability of low-interest renovation loans and assistance grants to weatherize houses, thereby reducing energy consumption.

Maximizing Housing and Support Service Options

14. Linking support services to housing

14.1 Encouraging policies that support and reward the development of suitable and safe communities

WHEREAS people strongly prefer to age in place with health care and other services available in the community;

WHEREAS conventional community planning and resource allocation principles often create problems for people as they age, and inappropriate social and physical environmental design may jeopardize the ability of older people to remain in their homes and neighborhoods;

WHEREAS the process of community planning can focus attention on the needs of older people, and the resulting policies and guidelines can shape the environment appropriately;

WHEREAS a community's land use plan has significant long-term implications for creating age-sensitive communities;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the WHCoA supports policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Promote local planning that is cognizant of the physical and social needs of older people, encourages citizen input, is sensitive to cultural and ethnic differences and creates housing choices that reflect people's preferences;

Encourage the co-location of housing and related community-based support facilities such as grocery stores, pharmacies, banks, senior centers, libraries, and health care facilities;

Link housing and supportive services, including service coordination, through statutory and regulatory reforms, including housing and services certificates, to create communities that work for all age groups;

Increase the capacity of State and local agencies on aging to provide leadership for community planning and coordinate service delivery and housing programs;

Support planning for communities attractive to all ages; and

Include older persons in community planning and create opportunities for them to work with others to develop an integrated approach to community planning.

Maximizing Housing and Support Service Options

14. Linking support services to housing

14.2 Promoting innovative strategies to encourage new models of supportive housing, particularly housing which facilitate long-term care services

WHEREAS people strongly prefer to age in place with services available as they are needed;

WHEREAS housing, health care and social services are interrelated and impact on individual rights, responsibilities and choices;

WHEREAS previous housing programs have effectively limited choices for older persons, making institutional care necessary even though it may be inappropriate, costly and contrary to the values of independence, dignity and high quality of life;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the WHCoA supports policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Promote the independence of older persons in their homes through the provision of services such as transportation, in-home care, home repair, homemaker assistance, delivered meals and adult day care;

Develop flexible, capitated, cost-sharing systems, including Medicare and Medicaid reform, to provide for in-home care;

Recognize the unique needs of minority older persons for support services in affordable housing;

Provide tax credits and other incentives to the private sector to assist low- and moderate-income older persons directly---and the not-for-profit entities serving them---to find attractive, affordable living environments; and

Encourage continued Federal and State efforts to increase the supply of assisted living options for older people of all income levels, and link housing and supportive services through statutory and regulatory reforms, including housing and service certificates necessary to create affordable housing for older persons and individuals with disabilities.

Maximizing Housing and Support Service Options

15. Consumer choice/decision-making/promoting independence

15.1 Ensuring that vital information for older persons to make decisions about housing choices is readily available

WHEREAS an increasing number of older people want to stay in their homes but may have problems with finances, home repair, maintenance and adaptations, transportation, safety, isolation, homemaking chores, shopping, in-home health care personal care and other services;

WHEREAS many older persons would move if they could find appropriate, affordable housing with services;

WHEREAS a popular housing alternative older persons are likely to consider is shared housing;

WHEREAS while older persons living in both urban and rural areas face problems with their housing, these problems are exacerbated in rural areas; and

WHEREAS older persons may lack information about what is available in their communities and what is possible in the future,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the WHCoA supports policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Promote educational campaigns on the need for planning ahead for housing choices that recognize possible disabilities, the link between isolation and decline in life satisfaction and physical health and the disadvantage of waiting to make choices until forced by frailty to do so;

Encourage national aging organizations to educate older persons about housing options, services (including repairs and modifications) and community planning to inform and empower them to take action;

Encourage interaction and coordination between Area Agencies on Aging and local housing and planning agencies to educate the public about housing opportunities for older persons and to develop outreach efforts for housing assistance and other benefits/service programs which may enable older persons to remain in their homes; and

Encourage local governments and organizations to train volunteers (including older people) to provide information about housing and housing options and to expand the local network of informed people.

Maximizing Housing and Support Service Options

15. Consumer choice/decision-making/promoting independence

15.2 Utilizing older persons on community planning and housing design/policy-making boards

WHEREAS decision-making about elder housing is usually not done by older persons and is often not done at the community level;

WHEREAS each community is unique and differs in the ever changing needs and preferences of its older persons; and

WHEREAS planning with consumers may result in housing that is adaptable to aging in place, has needed support services, responds to the needs of users, is affordable for those who need it most and is located in areas where older people want to live,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the WHCoA supports policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Encourage local governments and developers to include older persons in their planning efforts;

Provide incentives for public and private developers to work with older persons;

Ensure that older persons involved in these efforts have the necessary training and support; and

Provide technical assistance and consultation to groups responsible for planning and developing policies affecting residential communities and living environments.

Maximizing Housing and Support Service Options

15 Consumer choice/decision making/promoting independence

15.3 Maximizing transportation choices

WHEREAS transportation and personal mobility are vital for maintaining independence;

WHEREAS transportation provides access to social opportunities and home and community-based services;

WHEREAS availability of transportation affects an individual's choice of living environments;

WHEREAS over 50% of older persons live in suburbs where access to social, health and recreational services/activities may be difficult;

WHEREAS older persons living in rural areas with limited access to needed services are particularly at risk of loneliness and isolation; and

WHEREAS access to transportation enables older persons to contribute to the well being of others and their community;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, That the White House Conference on Aging support policies that

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Recognize the importance of older persons' access to transportation as a component of a quality life;

Encourage local governments with state and federal grants to establish transportation programs designed to meet the needs of older persons, especially those with disabilities;

Recognize older persons with expertise as to transportation needs be appointed to serve on boards making transportation decisions;

Encourage transportation options which are safe, affordable and accessible.

Encourage Area Agencies on Aging to fund transportation services in compliance with the Older Americans Act access services requirements and assist community religious and civic organizations to provide volunteer drivers; and

Require coordination of transportation services among school and service agencies to increase efficiency and availability.

Maximizing Options for a Quality Life

16. Resources for Elders (Community and Social Services/Activities)

16.1 Expanding, coordinating and targeting necessary services

WHEREAS older persons desire to maintain their independence as long as possible;

WHEREAS an available and accessible service network must be maintained to provide the elderly with a wide range of options;

WHEREAS older persons represent a heterogeneous group with a wide range of diverse needs and interests;

WHEREAS the racial and ethnic composition of the older population warrants attention to service delivery;

WHEREAS many older people are at risk of becoming isolated and alienated from society;

WHEREAS over 15,000 senior centers provide social and recreational services to seven million adults,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the WHCoA support policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Provide and coordinate community-based services that enable the elderly to age in place; dignity;

Address the nutritional and social needs of elders at risk of becoming isolated and alienated from society;

Develop community-based and social services that are culturally sensitive;

Expand nutritional programs to include education;

Allow greater regulatory flexibility in administering programs;

Revise and reauthorize Title III of the older Americans Act to create a more comprehensive service system;

Emphasize the importance of recreation and leisure in health promotion for all older persons.

Encourage research on the characteristics of individuals and environmental opportunities that maximize independence throughout adult life and successful methods for promoting community-based programs for a diverse elderly population.

Maximizing Options for a Quality Life

16. Resources for Elders (Community and Social Services/Activities)

16.2 *Using technology to facilitate access to service information and resources*

WHEREAS 30.2 million older persons provide direct care to families, neighbors and friends who are sick or disabled;

WHEREAS one out of five persons over 75 also provide direct care to others;

WHEREAS the misconception exists that further learning is not desired by older people;

WHEREAS 80% of older persons have at least one chronic condition and many suffer from multiple conditions;

WHEREAS the older population is becoming more computer literate as it approaches the 21st century;

WHEREAS television, newspapers and radio serve as links to the local community for the elderly,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED That the WHCoA support policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Make information regarding services available and accessible, e.g., large print for the visually impaired, etc.;

Develop bi-lingual and other culturally sensitive learning materials;

Mandate the U.S. Department of Education to initiate policies on life-long learning, including training in technology;

Provide elders equal access to educational programs;

Encourage the use of federal funds for telephone reassurance programs;

Familiarize elders with the Internet system, including Senior Net;

Use the AARP Online Meeting Place as a model for sharing information;

Implement translation services for ethnically diverse populations;

Use recent and existing technology to insure maximum exposure to service information and resources;

Encourage research on the most effective means and content of information provided to the elderly and their caretakers.

Maximizing Options for a Quality Life
IRDS 17

17.1 Preventing Crimes Against the Elderly

WHEREAS older people often feel vulnerable despite statistical evidence that they are less likely to become victims of crime than younger persons,

WHEREAS older adults experience higher incidences of impairments which affect their hearing, vision and mobility and thus are more likely to feel vulnerable,

WHEREAS an elderly crime victim often suffers far greater physical, emotional and financial harm than a younger person,

WHEREAS forty-three percent of older households were single persons living alone, three-fourths being women,

WHEREAS sixty-two percent of older households lived in metropolitan areas,

WHEREAS fear of crime tends to cause older persons to limit their activities and thus diminishes their quality of life;

WHEREAS police, social service representatives and district attorneys sometime lack sensitivity to the concerns and needs of older persons, especially women, minorities and those with disabilities;

WHEREAS older people are valuable members of their communities and many have expressed a desire to work for the betterment of their community;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the White House Conference on Aging supports policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

encourage private/public partnerships to initiate a national education campaign focused on empowering older persons and providing them with information to help them avoid becoming victims of crime;

facilitate the development and implementation of training programs to educate police, social service representatives and district attorneys to enhance their ability to work with elderly crime victims;

continue to develop community programs such as Triad and Neighborhood Watch, funded and implemented by a consortium of government and private entities, to allay fear of crime and enhance the quality of life of older persons as well as all other members of the community;

encourage and train older persons to work with younger members of their communities in mentoring programs, community clean up programs, fund raising and other activities that will improve the community and lessen the likelihood of crime.

promote the development and implementation of training programs to increase the sensitivity of police, district attorneys and social service workers to the special needs of elders, especially women, minorities and persons with disabilities

develop victim assistance programs, including increased training and use of Elderly Services Officers or Senior Service Officers to work with elderly crime victims.

encourage Attorneys General to implement consumer education programs for older persons.

encourage research that will provide current information about crime and victim age, gender and other characteristics and the basis of crime fear in older persons.

Maximizing Options for a Quality Life
IRDS 17

17.2 Preventing Elder Abuse, Exploitation and Neglect

WHEREAS Americans of all ages are entitled to be free from abuse, exploitation and neglect;

WHEREAS the reported incidence of elder abuse in America has increased by 94 percent between 1986 and 1991 and is expected to grow in the future;

WHEREAS no uniform definitions exist to precisely describe elder abuse, exploitation or neglect;

WHEREAS data collection efforts on elder abuse are presently insufficient and few crime related statistics identify the age, gender and race of victims;

WHEREAS because of geographic and cultural barriers Indian elders are often unable to participate in cooperative partnerships with state protective service programs;

WHEREAS Part B of Title VII of the Older Americans Act authorizes funding for Indian tribes and organizations for Indian tribes and organizations to conduct elder protective service activities

WHEREAS across the nation, more than a million women age 65 and over are victims of abuse each year;

WHEREAS for every reported case of elder abuse in America, 14 unreported cases are estimated to exist;

WHEREAS many older persons, particularly women and minorities, fail to report abuse either because of shame, fear of retaliation or previous unsatisfactory experiences with police, district attorneys or social services workers who lacked sensitivity to the concerns or needs of older people;

WHEREAS elder abuse is a continuum of family violence;

WHEREAS federal legislation such as Title VII of the Older Americans Act, the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act and the 1994 Violence Against Women Act do not provide for a single agency to coordinate a response for the needs of elderly victims;

THEREFOR BE IT RESOLVED THAT the White House Conference on Aging promotes policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

encourage public/private partnerships to develop research studies on elder abuse, to document the number of elder abuse cases and to collect demographic data that would identify the age, gender and race of abuse victims;

develop a uniform reporting system on the state level and designate a corresponding federal entity to coordinate this information;

develop uniform definitions for elder abuse, neglect and exploitation

rely on public/private partnerships to initiate a national education campaign to help the public recognize symptoms of elder abuse, to encourage them to report abuse and to empower individuals to advocate for freedom from abuse;

promote the development and implementation of training programs to increase the sensitivity of police, district attorneys and social service workers to the special needs of elders, especially women and minorities;

strengthen current federal legislation and designate a single agency to coordinate programs that respond to the needs of victims of elder abuse, exploitation and neglect;

increase the authority and resources for the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program;

encourage the development of counseling programs for crime victims and perpetrators, including the use of peer counselors

encourage research on the background factors resulting in elder abuse and the development of educational efforts that will lead to improved reporting and the reduction in the prevalence of abuse.

encourage Congress to fund those Older Americans Act programs for which funding has been authorized

Assuring comprehensive Health Care Including
Long-term Care

5. Research and Education

17.3 Educating Seniors about fraud

WHEREAS the elderly tend to be frequent targets for con artists, scams and other forms of deception;

WHEREAS senior citizens often feel barraged by confusing and conflicting information concerning their personal health and well-being;

WHEREAS many problems related to consumer fraud and exploitation can be avoided or eliminated through education,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the WHCoA support policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Direct the U.S Department of Justice and the States' Attorneys General to enforce legislation that prevents mail and telemarketing fraud as well as other scams to which the elderly are especially vulnerable;

Strengthen the role of senior centers in providing consumer education;

Establish a national consumer data bank of providers, products and information regarding con artists and scams;

Implement programs for assistance on insurance matters;

Preserve the Older Americans Act Section on Vulnerable Elder Rights Protection Activities (Title VII) to develop comprehensive advocacy systems;

Encourage programs aimed at promoting elder rights and empowerment.

Maximizing Options for a Quality Life

IRDS 18 Spiritual Well-being, Ethics and Values

18.1 Encouraging development and ensuring implementation of advanced directives;

WHEREAS population trends indicate that people in the United States are living longer;

WHEREAS the fastest growing segment of the population is those aged 85 years old and older;

WHEREAS increased disease and disability are associated with advancing age;

WHEREAS society decreases one's autonomy and decision-making authority as one ages;

WHEREAS individuals prefer to maintain as much control as possible over their lives;

WHEREAS patients in discussion with their physicians often indicate their preferences regarding medical treatment;

WHEREAS The Uniform Health Care Decisions Act has been approved by the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, That the 1995 White House Conference on Aging support policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Ensure the education of all age groups on the purpose, role and functions of advanced directives;

Encourage states to adopt The Uniform Health Care Decisions Act and include this document as a permanent part of a patient's health record;

Require physicians to include a patient's oral statements regarding advanced directives in his/her medical records;

In the absence of an advanced directive to guide the medical treatment of an incompetent patient, states should be urged to promulgate guidelines which designate a proxy or decision-maker

to act in accordance with the patient's wishes and best interests;

Protect a physician's obligation to honor patient or family directives without exposure to liability issues.

Encourage research on the characteristics of living will users and effective methods of disseminating related information and its use to the older population;

Provide information about living wills and advanced directives for illiterate and non-English speaking elders.

Maximizing Options for a Quality Life

IRDS 18: Spiritual Well Being, Ethics, Values and Roles

18.2 Meeting seniors spiritual needs

WHEREAS the older population is expected to double in size from its current level of 12 percent to 20 percent by the year 2025;

WHEREAS by the year 2000 the number of vulnerable and frail older people will have increased to almost 9 million;

WHEREAS numerous studies reveal that today's older persons are actively involved with religious belief and practice;

WHEREAS society has few structures or techniques that assist older persons in acquiring wisdom and deeper spirituality;

WHEREAS for many older persons the local congregation is a primary social and psychological support;

WHEREAS a person's dignity is not necessarily rooted in one's productivity;

WHEREAS society promotes age-segregated social and religious/spiritual activities;

WHEREAS federal agencies and non-Indian health care providers have not consistently acknowledged the legitimacy and preeminence of traditional cultural practices and beliefs of American Indian/Alaska Native elders and medicine practitioners;

WHEREAS culturally-specific traditional practices may vary according to tribal custom;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the 1995 White House Conference on Aging support policies that

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Recognize the inherent dignity and worth of every individual;

View spiritual needs as an essential component of health and well being;

Assist congregations in deepening the spirituality of older persons through educational and religious programs;

Encourage congregations to be places of intergenerational sharing and solidarity;

Challenge older members of congregations to serve others in their own and the broader community;

Develop initiatives such as the Interfaith Volunteer Care Givers Program to reach the invisible and frail elders in their homes;

Publicize services and resources that address the holistic needs of older individuals;

Support clergy and lay persons in providing opportunities for reflection, growth and development for congregants of all ages;

Assure through funding and policy full access and reimbursement for traditional Indian spiritual and medicine practitioners.

Maximizing Options for a Quality Life

19. Image and Roles of Older People

19.1 Promoting positive images of aging by sensitizing society to the value of older adults

WHEREAS the lifelong contributions of older persons to the economic, cultural and educational achievements of the nation are often unrecognized;

WHEREAS negative attitudes and misconceptions regarding the capabilities of older persons exist;

WHEREAS the media often portray images of old age that unfairly stereotype elders as senile and unproductive;

WHEREAS creativity in later life is much greater than is generally recognized;

WHEREAS problems of aging are disproportionately emphasized over its positive and productive aspects;

WHEREAS the elderly and children are often pitted as adversaries in government-funded programs,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the WHCoA support policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Develop a public education campaign that highlights the positive roles of older persons;

Pressure the media to remove radio and television programs that stereotype older persons;

Develop partnerships between national aging organizations and the media to work towards recognizing the contributions and worth of older persons;

Require school districts to integrate information about the aging process into existing curricula;

Eliminate the dread and despair normally associated with aging through education about options for aging adventurously;

Educate health care professionals to recognize the established creativity of older adults;

Encourage research on trends in the depiction of older adults in the media and the public image of older adults;

Encourage related research on the trends in the productivity and potentials of older adults.

Maximizing Options for a Quality Life

19. Image and Roles of Older People

19.2 Supporting cooperation across the generations

WHEREAS generations benefit from interaction with each other;

WHEREAS older persons desire to transmit a legacy of hope and concern to the next generation;

WHEREAS intergenerational programs are particularly effective because they meet the needs of the old and young, as well as families and communities;

WHEREAS intergenerational program models bridge the gap between diverse cultures and ethnicities as they build networks and community systems;

WHEREAS intergenerational programs are cost-effective and easy to implement because they incorporate well into existing community locations,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED That the WHCoA support policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Maximize cross-generational interaction through intergenerational programs;

Reauthorize, fully fund and amend the Older Americans Act and the National and Community Service Trust Acts;

Encourage collaboration among service delivery systems;

Build formal linkages among intergenerational networks at the federal, state and local levels;

Support intergenerational coalition building and provide funds for training, technical assistance and demonstration models;

Encourage shared community resources at the federal, state and local levels by removing regulatory barriers;

Require agency collaboration as a pre-requisite for receiving federal funds;

Establish a National Intergenerational Resource Center to issue demonstration, training and technical assistance grants;

Reinforce the notion of life as a continuum of generations.

Maximizing Options for a Quality Life

20. Elders as Resources and Opportunities for Volunteering

20.1 Acknowledging the Contribution of Older Volunteers

WHEREAS America boasts and will continue to boast the largest, best-educated and most vigorous collection of older adults unparalleled in our nation's history;

WHEREAS the senior population is retiring earlier, living longer and sharing its wide range of talents and experience which constitute the country's only increasing natural resource;

WHEREAS the older adult population is often overlooked as a valuable resource, and relatively few mechanisms exist to assist older persons in fulfilling their potential;

WHEREAS the country is in desperate need of help to address growing needs in education, health care, social services, public safety, the environment and other fundamental areas of American life;

WHEREAS 20 - 30% of older Americans are actively involved in volunteer activities and another 15% report that they would like to be,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED That the WHCoA support policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Charge the Corporation for National Service to take a leadership role by establishing the goal of enrolling 1 million older volunteers by the year 2000;

Create incentives for older volunteers, including full-time, part-time, half-time and episodic work opportunities, stipends, and the flexibility combinations such options provide;

Facilitate collaboration at the national, state and local levels of organizations involving senior volunteers, such as the Area Agencies on Aging, Volunteer Action Centers (VACs) and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), especially in regard to intergenerational involvement;

Develop federal partnerships that provide additional resources to support senior volunteers as a resource;

Reauthorize the National and Community Service Trust Act as a means of reaffirming the National Senior Service Corps Programs (i.e., Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program);

Encourage research to identify gaps between volunteer participation and productive potentials of older persons.

Maximizing Options for a Quality Life

20. Elders as Resources and Opportunities for Volunteering

20.2 *Advocating for children*

WHEREAS the development of a medicare-like program that ensures comprehensive health coverage for children and pregnant women is a social need in this country;

WHEREAS older persons possess the wisdom and experience that can benefit younger students and workers;

WHEREAS one in five children living in poverty portends a national disaster;

WHEREAS a functionally illiterate child or teenager lacking basic health care now will become dependent on public benefits and assistance through old age;

WHEREAS the older population is highly dependent on the capabilities and productivity of the work force;

WHEREAS today's older adults represent the largest, best educated and most vigorous group in our nation's history;

WHEREAS the rapid growth of the senior population coincides with spiraling social problems that deal with children;

WHEREAS the public sector is disinvesting in vulnerable populations of all ages including children;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT the WHCoA support policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Promote older people as mentors in the formal (K-12) educational system, and with at-risk youth;

Harness the productive and humanitarian potential of the older population to meet social human, environmental, and societal needs of children;

Involve older persons in the development of high quality child care, early childhood and youth development programs and financial safety nets for children;

Encourage older persons to form coalitions in using their political power to benefit children, especially poor children;

Enable older persons to take the lead in the "Medikids" program ensuring comprehensive health care coverage for children and pregnant women.

Establish a National Recognition of Intergenerational Week.

Maximizing Options for a Quality Life

20. Elders as Resources and Opportunities for Volunteering

20.3 *Issues related to grandparenting*

WHEREAS over two million children are being raised by grandparents;

WHEREAS these families represent all socioeconomic levels and ethnic groups;

WHEREAS nearly half of grandparent-headed households live on \$20,000 or less;

WHEREAS grandparents who are forced into the role of primary caregiver experience major upheaval, additional stress and family conflict;

WHEREAS support services generally do not address this group of older persons,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED That the WHCoA support policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Grant legal surrogate decision-making authority to grandparents in the absence of other responsible persons;

Provide culturally-sensitive information and referral services to grandparent caregivers;

Establish comprehensive programs that include respite and day care, legal assistance, mental health and advocacy services and substance abuse treatment;

Promote the development of Grandparent Support Groups;

Provide financial, social and legal supports to grandparents raising grandchildren;

Remove legal and administrative barriers to grandparents for access to AFDC and Food Stamps as well as other safety net programs;

Provide public and private health insurance for children in the care of grandparents;

Educate human service providers about the rights of grandparent-headed households;

Educate grandparents about their access to public benefits.

Maximizing Options for a Quality Life

21. Isolation and Loneliness

21.1 Enhancing community participation

WHEREAS the number of older persons living alone has increased by 32%;

WHEREAS about 80% of older persons are healthy enough to engage in their normal activities;

WHEREAS older persons can anticipate at least twenty productive post-retirement years;

WHEREAS the rapid growth of the senior population coincides with spiraling social problems;

WHEREAS communities can mobilize resources that will assist the older population in maintaining ties to its social, cultural and spiritual life,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED That the WHCoA support policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Promote policy and programs that recognize and involve older adults as valuable resources in the transmission of cultural values;

Encourage the aging network to devote resources toward enrolling older persons to contribute to their communities;

Develop public/private partnerships to link older persons with their communities through such programs as friendly visitors, telephone reassurance and computer networking;

Promote opportunities for the exchange of skills between the generations;

Support shared community resources at the federal, state and local levels that encourage partnerships and remove regulatory barriers;

Utilize elders as reservoirs of wisdom and experience in intergenerational programs;

Encourage and assist older persons in finding meaningful roles in their respective communities;

Expand senior center programming to include social support and outreach programs for older persons and caregivers.

Maximizing Options for a Quality Life

21. Isolation and Loneliness

21.2 Meeting mental health needs

WHEREAS surveys indicate that a substantial number of older adults have some sort of mental disorder;

WHEREAS current federal, state, and private reimbursement policies discourage access to mental health treatment;

WHEREAS ample research evidence supports the benefits and efficacy of mental health interventions for older persons;

WHEREAS older individuals have the highest suicide rate of any age group in the United States;

WHEREAS many older persons do not know how to access or utilize the service delivery system;

WHEREAS mental health services for older adults tend to focus on diagnosis and treatment rather than prevention and early identification of high risk individuals;

WHEREAS mental disorders of late life (Alzheimer's Disease, depression, etc.), represent major burdens to older Americans and their families,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED That the WHCoA support policies that,

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Mandate a current level of services equal to that required under the Community Mental health Services Act of 1963;

7 Provide mental health services through Medicare;

Coordinate mental health services with other aging network services;

Emphasize early identification of high risk individuals;

7 Amend Medicaid to include provisions that ensure the availability of home and community-based mental health services;

Establish standards for collaborative service provision to meet consumer mental health needs;

Distribute culturally sensitive information about accessing community-based mental health services;

Expedite a mental health and aging research agenda and ensure wide dissemination of the findings.

Maximizing Options for a Quality Life

22. Legal Issues

22.1 Guardianship

WHEREAS guardianship is a relationship created and governed by state law, in which a court vests in an individual the duty and power to make personal and property decisions for another;

WHEREAS guardians make critical decisions regarding medical care, placement, finances and lifestyle for frail older Americans and younger persons with mental disabilities;

WHEREAS virtually every state has modified state guardianship laws during the past decade, and legislatures have addressed issues such as protecting procedural due process in guardianship appointments, training guardians, establishing clear standards for determining incapacity, court monitoring of guardians, and a scarcity of guardianship services for those in need;

WHEREAS less restrictive alternatives to traditional guardianship do exist (e.g. health care directives, durable powers of attorney), and may be more appropriate in certain situations;

WHEREAS need for guardians is rapidly increasing as the population ages, the frequency of dementia correspondingly increases, and families have fewer children, more divorces, and greater mobility;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, That the WHCoA support policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

Ensure procedural due process protections in guardianship, including the right of the proposed ward to adequate notice, representation by counsel, and to be present and introduce evidence at hearings and to participate in the proceedings to the full extent of their abilities;

Support education and training efforts to inform guardians, judges, professionals and the general public of state guardianship guidelines as well as less restrictive options to guardianship;

Develop effective systems on the State and local levels to provide guardians of last resort for needy persons without available relatives and friends;

Emphasize a functional determination of incapacity rather than a strict medical diagnosis to identify specific areas of personal and property management in which the proposed ward may need assistance, thereby enabling them to retain as much autonomy as possible;

Establish court programs that ensure accountability of guardians in financial transactions and personal decisions by providing adequate reporting by and *ongoing* court supervision of guardians; and

Support the adoption of laws and court procedures which promote and encourage the use of the least restrictive level of guardianship.

Maximizing Options for a Quality Life

22. Legal Issues

22.2 The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

WHEREAS the ADA is designed "to provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities;"

WHEREAS the human and economic resources of the aging and disability communities cannot be ignored in a society where every person who would like to contribute to society should be encouraged to do so;

WHEREAS approximately 49 million, or 20%, of all American have a disability, this number is expected to increase to 70-85 million by the year 2000;

WHEREAS one out of three people over the age of 65 has a physical disability and one half of the population over the age of 85 has a disability;

WHEREAS the developmentally disabled population is both living longer and residing in their communities, yet disabled individuals regularly remain unaware of programs for which they may be eligible;

WHEREAS disabled people of all ages often require assistance to meet their basic needs at home and avoid institutionalization;

WHEREAS implementation for the Americans with Disabilities Act has led to the dismantling of numerous city para-transit systems;

WHEREAS OAA service providers and elderly individuals who are disabled are frequently unaware that their interests are addressed by the ADA;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, That the WHCoA support policies that:

Recognize the importance of interdependence among generations and among members of extended families, the responsibility of individuals to plan for changes that will occur throughout the lifespan and the unique contributions and needs of special populations, including veterans, caregivers (including grandparents), rural elderly, women, minorities and individuals with disabilities;

utilize the ADA as an enforcement and technical assistance mechanism to remove barriers to access programs and services;

provide assurances by the Department of Transportation that para-transit services for the frail elderly are grandfathered into ADA regulations, thereby ensuring that such services remain available to this particularly needy population;

establish centrally located information dispersal points on the state and local levels to educate interested and/or eligible parties on ADA rules and facilities that comply with them; and

inform the disabled population and OAA service providers on ADA protections, especially the areas of discrimination, access to transportation, employment opportunities, and obtaining communication services.