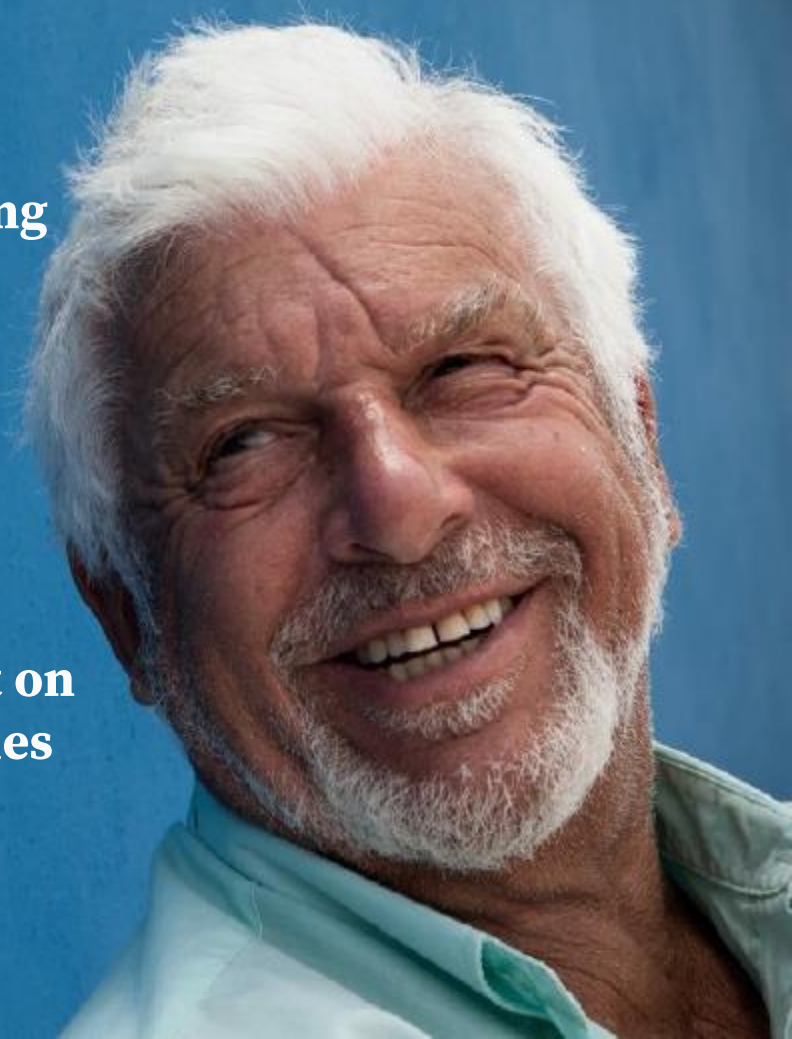


**National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging  
and  
National Council on Aging**

**Present**

**Understanding Social Isolation and its Impact on  
Older Adults and Those Living with Disabilities**

**July 28, 2021**



# Tips for using Zoom

- You have joined the webinar in **listen-only mode**.
- The audio portion of this call will be **heard through your computer speakers**.
- Please make sure your speakers are on and the **volume is turned up!**
- Click the microphone at the bottom of your screen for instructions **if you prefer to join by phone**.
- Type all questions into the **Q&A box** at the bottom of your screen.
- The **slides and recording** of this webinar will be shared by email within a few days.



## Mission:

To provide opportunities for professional, consumer and government organizations to work together towards **improving the availability and quality of mental health preventive and treatment strategies** to older Americans and their families through education, research and increased public awareness.

**Visit: [www.ncmha.org](http://www.ncmha.org)**



## **History, Membership and Activities:**

- Formed in 1991 by a group of organizations from the aging and mental health fields
- Comprised of 100 national and state associations, state coalitions, and governmental agencies, e.g., SAMHSA and ACL.
- Co-sponsor events to highlight challenges of mental health and aging
- Identify new approaches to addressing problems.

# NCOA: Who we are

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## Vision

A just and caring society in which each of us, as we age, lives with dignity, purpose, and security

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## Mission

Improve the lives of millions of older adults, especially those who are struggling

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## Goal

Impact the health and economic security of 40 million older adults by 2030, especially women, people of color, LGBTQ+, low-income, and rural individuals

# NCOA's Center for Healthy Aging

- **Goal:** Increase the quality and years of healthy life for older adults and adults with disabilities
- **Two national resource centers funded by the Administration for Community Living**
  - Chronic Disease Self-Management Education (CDSME)
  - Falls Prevention
- **Other key areas:** Behavioral health, physical activity, immunizations, oral health



# Webinar Series on “Addressing Disparities in Behavioral Health Care for Older Adults”

- **Identify specific approaches that address disparities in behavioral health care for older adults**
- Ensure that older adults with mental health and addiction-related conditions are **integrated within all MH awareness raising, policy, programmatic and research efforts going forward.**
- **Raise awareness among primary care, mental health, other health service providers and the aging network** about the impact of suicide, opioid use, and interrelated problems, and impact provider practice patterns for older adults.
- Identify **specific tools such as geriatric assessment, questions** – suicide ideation, firearm presence, opioid use and other screening tools – and detailed guidance.

# UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL ISOLATION AND ITS IMPACT ON OLDER ADULTS AND THOSE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

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Emily Allen, SVP Programs, AARP Foundation  
NCMHA | 28 July, 2021



# Discussion Outline

- **Introductions**
- **Overview of Social Isolation Among Older Adults**
- **Measuring Social Connectedness and Evaluating Effectiveness**
- **New Initiatives to Reduce Social Isolation**
- **Questions and Discussion**

## Let's hear from the audience!

- **Poll Question: Do you believe someone in your life may be experiencing significant social isolation or loneliness?**



Social isolation affects  
nearly *1 in 5* older adults.

# Isolation & Loneliness

## Objective

**Isolation** involves quantifiable measurements, such as the size of one's social network (and the frequency of engagement with it), availability of transportation, and ability to access resources and information.

## Subjective

**Loneliness** (also known as subjective isolation) denotes how people perceive their experience and whether or not they feel isolated.

# Isolation is a health issue.

Research shows that the negative health effects of chronic isolation and loneliness, while harmful at any age, are especially dangerous for people over 50. Social isolation and loneliness are associated with:

- Higher blood pressure
- Increased susceptibility to the flu
- Greater risk of heart disease
- Earlier onset of dementia

Social isolation  
is as bad for  
health as smoking  
**15 cigarettes**  
a day.



## Subjective feelings of loneliness can increase the risk of death by as much as **45 percent**.




of adults age 65 and older are isolated.



of women age 75 and older live alone.

Older adults who describe themselves as lonely have a **59% greater risk of functional decline** and a **45% greater risk of death**.

59% 

45% 

## The Costs:



Social isolation among older adults is associated with an estimated **\$6.7 billion** in additional Medicare spending annually.

Each month, Medicare spent an estimated **\$134 more** for socially isolated older adults (**\$1,608** more annually).

Social isolation

**\$134**

High blood pressure

**\$117**

Arthritis

**\$163**

Diabetes

**\$241**

Heart disease

**\$270**

# Identifying social isolation and loneliness in a population

## There is no “gold standard”

Multiple different measurement tools

- All scales have benefits and drawbacks
- Most developed for research purposes

Commonly used tools:

- UCLA Loneliness Index
- Lubben Social Network Scale
- Berman-Syme Index
- Duke Social Support Index



# Measuring Social Connectedness

## Integrating Outcomes into our Strategic Plan Dashboard

- Journey from our own 'isolation index' to the Duke Social Support Index
- Implementing DSSI-10
- Testing administration modes
- Adaptations for coronavirus pandemic
- Integration into Chatbot and Connect2Affect platforms
- Explain purpose and ask for consent.
- Collect data in ways that honor privacy, comfort and access to technology.
- Consider how to store data securely.
- Matching pre & post surveys is hard work and takes planning.
- Clean the data before analyzing. What if questions are skipped?
- Analyze data to understand who is at highest risk and to detect change in risk over time.

Connect2Affect features tools and resources to help assess isolation risk, reach out to others who may be feeling lonely and disconnected, and find practical ways to reconnect to the community.

- Increase social connectedness by addressing the root causes of social isolation through a consumer portal of curated content and activities
- An easy-to-use online assessment and content that offers recommendations for programs, activities and resources that can help users connect to others and engage in the community, based on their individual needs, interests, and abilities
- A center of excellence and clearinghouse of best practices and evidence-based solutions to address social isolation

Home - Connect2Affect

connect2affect.org

Apps Home | Salesforce Login Home The 11 Most Beauti...

View resources to help you stay healthy & connected during the coronavirus pandemic.

Learn More


## Social Isolation is more than feeling lonely

How connected are you?


Social isolation has reached epidemic proportions and has a negative impact on our emotional and physical health.

Are you or a loved one at risk for social isolation? Take this assessment to find out if you are at risk.


TAKE THE ASSESSMENT



17%  
of adults age 65 and older  
are isolated



26%  
increased risk of early  
death due to subjective  
feeling of loneliness



46%  
of women age 75 and older  
live alone

Here to Help During

Connect2Affect



# Community Workshop



# Welcome!

Learn more about staying connected ►

**AARP** Foundation  
connect2affect

with the generous support of  
 **UnitedHealthcare**

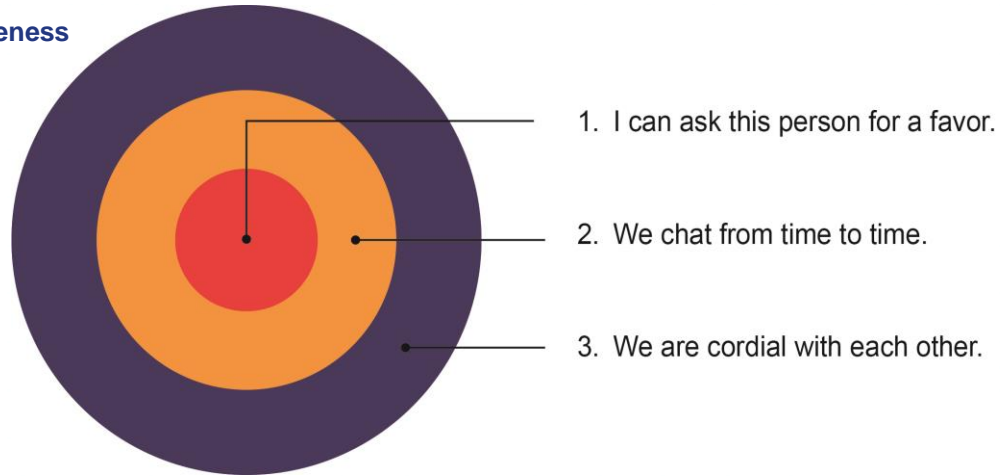
**AARP** Foundation®  
For a future without senior poverty.

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# Friendventory Activity

## Make Your Connection Plan

Circle of Closeness



# Commit to Connect



[HOME](#) [LEARN](#) [TAKE ACTION](#) [ABOUT](#)

## Tools to Overcome Social Isolation

### Connecting Older Adults and People with Disabilities

Social isolation is an epidemic that poses serious health risks affecting millions of people in the United States. To address this growing public health issue, the Administration for Community Living established a public-private coalition to reach socially isolated older adults and people with disabilities to help them connect with services and supports to build the social connections they need to thrive.

The coalition consists of partner organizations dedicated to increasing engagement and improving well-being and access to services for socially isolated individuals nationwide. This initiative will include a multi-media public awareness campaign entitled "Commit to Connect," and a clearinghouse of solutions which will allow individuals, caregivers and professionals to connect to programs and technologies that best meet their needs, capabilities and interests.



#### Learn

Explore a library of research articles, fact sheets and case studies that share best practices and proven ways to overcome social isolation.

[CONTINUE](#)

#### Take Our Free Assessment

Take our science-based assessment to find out if you (or a loved one) are at risk of social isolation – and then get connected to resources, programs and technologies that target isolation and loneliness.

[NEXT](#)



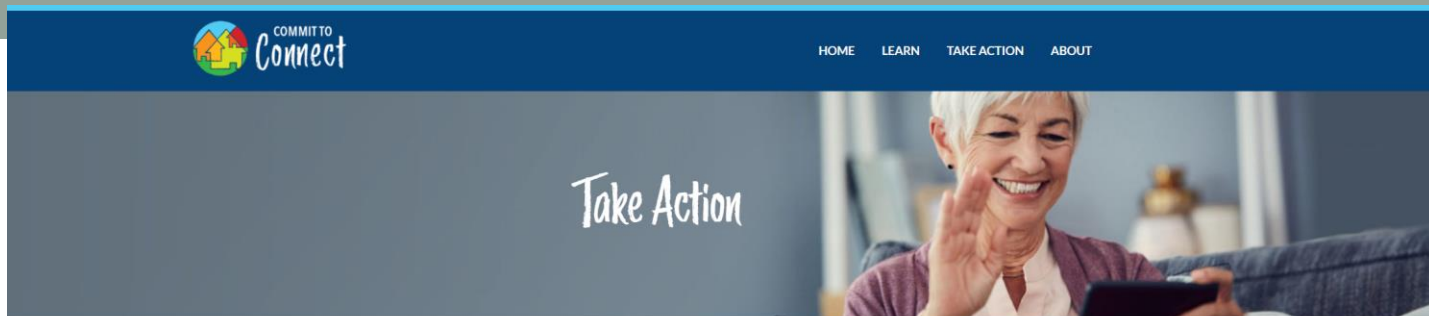
#### About Commit to Connect

AARP Foundation is part of a new public-private coalition with the Administration for Community Living to connect older adults and people with disabilities with services and supports to build the social connections they need to thrive.

[LEARN MORE](#)



# The Clearinghouse



Home > Take Action

Clearinghouse

Assessment

## Search for Resources

Enter a topic and/or your ZIP code for programs, technologies and resources that address social isolation.

Filters	Clear All
Expand All	
Evidence Level	+
Intervention Type	+
Intervention Focus	+
Technology	+
Category	+
Target User	+

NAME	LOCATION	INTERVENTION TYPE	INTERVENTION FOCUS	SOURCE
<a href="#">Program to Encourage Active &amp; Rewarding Lives (PEARLS)</a>	In-Person, Community-Integrated, Home-based	Program and services for individuals, Community-based approaches	Late Life Depression	University of Washington Health Promotion Research Center
<a href="#">Connect 2 Affect</a>	Online	Program and services for individuals, Technology-based	Social Isolation	AARP
<a href="#">AASC Feeds the Pets</a>	In-Person	Program and services for individuals, Community-based approaches	Social isolation	Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens

# Commit to Connect

## Nationwide Network of Champions

- Built and beta tested a hub for Nationwide Network of Champions
- Convene (weekly) subcommittee members to inform the work and guide thinking

## Clearinghouse & Site

- Built an MVP (minimal viable product) or CommittoConnect.org to house the clearinghouse
- Integrated USIRS into the CtC.org Site
- Successfully secured domain transfer of site

## Scientific Advisory Group

- Convene (biweekly) the scientific advisory group establish a framework for assessing evidence base solution for the clearinghouse and identify initial interventions





# *Thank you!*

## **Key websites:**

[www.Connect2Affect.org](http://www.Connect2Affect.org)

- Isolation risk assessment
- Resource finder
- Info, articles, monthly newsletter
- Links to volunteer opportunities

[www.aarpfoundation.org](http://www.aarpfoundation.org)