



Milford Senior Center offers a variety of programs and services to its members, ranging from local trips to fitness programs, educational aging programming, social services, transportation services, and a mini-lunch program. Members of Milford Senior Center who participated in the focus group provided valuable feedback on these services.

FOCUS GROUP INSIGHTS

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES REVIEW



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1. Local Trips

The local trips program at the Center has been successful in providing enjoyable trips to participants at reasonable prices. Participants have expressed their satisfaction with the program and appreciate the affordability and entertainment value it offers. Suggestions for improvement include offering more trips with different themes to cater to various interests of members, including more outdoor activities, art-focused trips and natural trips. Participants have expressed a desire to explore and learn about different environments, wildlife, and nature in Connecticut.



Positive feedback:

The Center's local trips program has received positive feedback from interviewees, who have expressed their satisfaction with the enjoyable and affordable trips. It has been successful in catering to a diverse range of interests and budgets, enabling many to participate. The program's ability to **provide entertainment value at reasonable prices** has been particularly praised by participants, who have found it to be a great option for exploring new places and trying out new activities.

"And also, they did do some out of state trips. I don't know how those would be with the person that's in charge now, but those were always enjoyable too. And the price is, you know, reasonable. So, a lot of people could go." -Participant 2

Areas for improvement:

Suggestions for the local trips program include **offering more trips with various themes that cater to different interests** of the members. This could include more outdoor activities during pleasant weather, such as picnics, hikes, and visits to nearby beaches. Additionally, focusing some of the trips on art and natural spaces such as art museums, galleries, botanical gardens, and zoos could be of interest to members. Participants have expressed great interest in exploring and learning about different environments, wildlife, and nature in Connecticut.

"And I just want to add more nature places. We are older people, and we are all stuck together, especially during the winter. There isn't too much to do, so getting out is the main reason, and anywhere with just nature places, like the amphitheater or anything anybody mentions, would be great." -Participant 5



2. Fitness Program

The fitness programs at the Center are well-regarded and provide valuable opportunities for members to maintain or improve their physical health. The Center's efforts to offer a range of classes and introduce new options were greatly appreciated by interviewees. Suggestions for future improvement include revising the sign-up procedure and having a waitlist system for classes to help members navigate their choices.



Positive feedback:

The fitness programs offered by the Center have received positive feedback from interviewees. The programs are greatly praised for having **a rich variety of classes that cater to a range of interests and abilities** that encouraged everyone to participate.

".....they seem to be offering more and more or trying new things and I think that's wonderful because not everyone wants to go to a fitness class.....And I really think the more that they look and the more they bring in, the more people will participate because there's something for everybody." -Participant 4

"I think the variety is increasing. I think they have a broad breath of classes." -Participant 3

The Center is also proactive in introducing new classes to keep the offerings fresh and engaging for participants. This has been well-received by members who enjoy having access to a diverse range of fitness options.

Areas for improvement:

There are also areas for improvement in the fitness programs. Specifically, it was brought up that the **sign-up procedure for classes could be improved** to make it more user-friendly and convenient for members. Currently, some members have reported confusion or difficulty with the sign-up process. The Center could benefit from streamlining the procedure, ensuring that it is easy to understand and navigate. Additionally, it may be useful to **establish a waitlist system for classes** that are in high demand. This would allow members to be notified when spots become available and have more flexibility in planning their class schedules ahead.



3. Outdoor activities

The outdoor activities program at the Center is an essential element of the overall wellness program offered to members. While the program currently offers a range of activities, interviewees provided several comments for improvement in terms of the variety of activities offered and the consideration of the age group of senior center participants.



Areas for improvement:

One suggestion for improving the program is to **have more varieties of outdoor activities** to include members with different interests. By doing so, the program can better cater to the needs and preferences of its diverse membership base. Additionally, the program is suggested to **have more consideration about the age groups** of senior center participants when selecting and designing activities. This can help ensure that the activities are safe, enjoyable, and appropriate for participants of different ages and capabilities.

"I'm a little older than 85 so I don't know that I would be able to do those, I mean I love the exercise programs and I think the variety would be great. But I'd like something for my age group." -Participant 6

Another suggested way to bring new and exciting experiences to the outdoor activities program is to **move some indoor exercises outside**. This can help to break the monotony of the traditional indoor fitness programs while also providing an opportunity for members to enjoy the benefits of being outside. Additionally, this can help members to connect with nature and the community in a new and refreshing way.



4. Educational aging programming

The educational aging programming can serve as a valuable resource for members to navigate aging and engage in various activities that help promote mental and physical wellness. The following suggestions are offered by the interviewees to enhance the educational aging programming at the Center. In conclusion, by implementing these suggestions, the Center can enhance its educational aging programming and continue to provide valuable learning opportunities for its participants.



Areas for improvement:

To increase the variety of topics covered and provide a more well-rounded educational experience, it is recommended to **invite speakers from various backgrounds to give talks on different topics regarding aging**. This could include professionals in health care, social work, finance, and more. The talks should be informative and engaging, and provide useful insights to seniors in attendance.

Another suggestion is to **organize a “Lunch with a Doctor” program** within the Center, where a doctor could come and explain medical issues relevant to seniors, and answer their health-related questions. This program could provide an opportunity for seniors to learn more about their health, as well as help reduce any anxiety they may have about medical issues and changes.

“Lunch with the doctors where a doctor comes and explains a procedure.....that would be interesting for people to actually come and understand what is going on something like that.”
-Participant 5

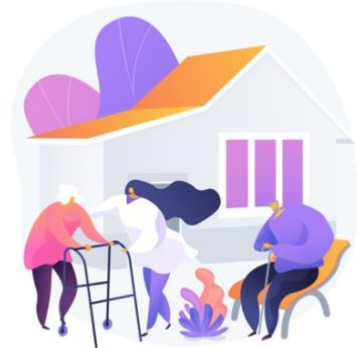
It is also important to note that the programming should not include organizations that aim to profit from seniors. Instead, the focus should be on providing valuable and informative experiences for the senior community. In addition, **including other family members (e.g., caregivers) in the educational programming** would also be beneficial. This program could apply a dyadic approach that involving both members and their caregivers in receiving education and support from the communities, providing an additional opportunity for caregivers to learn more about how to support their loved ones, therefore creating a more inclusive and diverse community.

“I would like to see more and also to include other members of the family, especially when you're dealing with, you know, memory loss issues. And for caregivers, sometimes caregivers do not know how to adapt.”-Participant 1



5. Social Services

The Social Services programs at the Center offer a comprehensive support system for participants, providing crucial services such as the Ahrens program, Meals on Wheels, and the Food Bank. While there are areas for improvement, such as providing more vegetarian options for Meals on Wheels and increasing awareness of the programs, the services provided by the Center are essential to the health and well-beings of the seniors who participate in them and they play a vital role in the community.



Positive Feedback:

"Yes, the social services department here at the senior center is on point. It's a very, very well-run department..... And all of the resources pertaining to that have been extremely helpful to me. And I try to refer other people to it because it's been very, very resourceful as far as their knowledge and recommending different resources for us renters' rebate, the energy resources, the telephone assistance, everything that they provide is very helpful." - Participant 7

The Ahrens program is particularly notable for the benefits it provides to both the participant and the caregiver, providing necessary respite time for caregivers while ensuring that participants receive quality care in a safe and comfortable environment. The program's comprehensive services make it an excellent resource for families and caregivers, providing essential support that eases the burden of caregiving.

The Meals on Wheels program has been well-received by participants and has received many compliments. The program offers nutritious meals to seniors who may have difficulty cooking for themselves.

The Food Bank program has also been a great service to the community, providing food assistance to those in need. This program has helped many who are struggling to make ends meet and has made a positive impact on their lives.

Areas for Improvement:

While the social services programs have been effective, there are still areas that can be improved upon. While the Meals on Wheels program is generally excellent, some interviewees have reported that the food can be too salty sometimes. Providing more vegetarian options would also be helpful for participants with dietary preferences. Additionally, it was suggested by interviewees that more efforts could be made to advertise the programs more to reach more people who could benefit from them,



especially regarding the food bank and the Ahrens program. **Raising awareness of the Social Services programs** would help ensure that more seniors in the community can access the services they need to maintain their health and well-being.

“But I think there is lack of knowledge of the food bank..... And a lot of people are is like in some of my circles, they're not even aware that there is a food bank. So, I think there could be greater advertisement about the food bank.” -Participant 1 & 3 & 6



6. Transportation

The transportation services offered by the Center have been a valuable resource for its members, particularly those who do not have their own means of transportation. The extended service has been positively received by members. While the service is overall quite useful, there are opportunities for improvement in having additional training for the drivers and improving customer service.



Positive Feedback:

The transportation services offered by the Center have been deemed extremely useful by its members. The service is particularly important and useful to those who do not have their own vehicles or means of transportation. The extended service has allowed more people to access the transportation services.

"I think it's a very useful service for the center, you know, especially people who don't have means of transportation or for whatever reason you cannot drive the vehicles. I think it's very useful and I've heard some positive things, you know, from the from for members who use it." -Participant 1

Areas for Improvement:

While the transportation service is overall very useful, there are some areas for improvement. Some drivers may benefit from additional training on how to assist members, particularly in helping members in and out of the car. Being more courteous and conscientious in conversations with members may also improve the service.



7. Mini Lunch Program

The Mini lunch program and food service provided by the Center serve as an important aspect of the overall experience for participants. It provides a daily meal option that is considered tasty and affordable by members and benefits seniors who may not have access to other food options. Additionally, the lunch time at the Center also serves as a social gathering time for participants to connect with one another.



Positive feedback:

The meals provided through the Mini lunch program are excellent in terms of taste and cost-effectiveness.

The program offers **a variety of menu options** to cater to different dietary needs and preferences, and the food is consistently **fresh and flavorful**. The **affordable price** of the meals is also appreciated by the interviewees, as it allows them to enjoy a nutritious meal without big cost.

"I think the meals are excellent for the price. You get a full meal soup, dessert for \$3. You cannot beat that. You can get it to go and have it for dinner. You can have soup for lunch. And I just think it's an excellent program and they should keep it up." -Participant 2

Areas for improvement:

The overall quality of the meals provided through the Mini lunch program is commendable. However, some interviewees have noted that the food can be salty at times, and there is a need for more vegetarian options.