



## **Housing Accessibility and Safety Support for Aging in Place**

### ***Aging and Community Housing Nonprofit Partnerships in Georgia***

For several years, home rehabilitation and housing were prominent needs identified in the **River Valley Area Agency on Agency's (RVAAA)** annual community assessment. When the **Columbus Area Habitat for Humanity (CAHFH)** in Columbus, Georgia, received a grant for home preservation and modification for older adults, they reached out to RVAAA to do the social/wellbeing assessment component. A natural fit, the partners created cross-system referral processes, now being used with a third round of funding.

### ***Programs***

In addition to its homeownership program, CAHFH occasionally receives grants to do home modifications for older adults. As a part of CAHFH's **Continuing Hope Critical Repair and Aging in Place Home Modification Program**, the RVAAA works in partnership with CAHFH to conduct person-centered assessments of eligible homeowners and their homes. To qualify, homeowners must be aged 62 or older and have a disability. Before starting the project, CAHFH asks RVAAA staff to conduct a person-centered assessment of the homeowner or household member, including their activities of daily living and risk for falls. The assessment also provides the homeowner with information about community-based services, including assistive technology, for which they might qualify, and the option of six months of case management. RVAAA draws on Older Americans Act or Medicaid waiver funding for the assessment.

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For RVAAA, a partnership with the CAHFH made perfect sense. Most individuals who contact RVAAA are seeking transportation and housing assistance, yet the agency does not have consistent funding for housing supports. Working with CAHFH enables RVAAA to:

- Support the community need for home modification and repair by leveraging other funding sources and a skilled workforce;
- Offer evidence-based health and wellness programs, including A Matter of Balance, RVAAA's falls prevention program, to individuals who may have been unaware of this community resource.
- Outsource some one-time funding for home modifications and repairs to CAHFH, a trusted partner.

### *Lessons Learned*

- Although some home modification and repair projects are too costly to undertake, the collaboration leverages both partners' funding and organizational capabilities so older adults' homes become more accessible and safer. CAHFH's use of skilled volunteers enables each dollar to go further.
- The mutual referral system enables each agency to serve people they may not otherwise have reached.
- The coordinated service delivery process (assessments and home modification and repair) is seamless for older homeowners. Also, RVAAA's initial assessment brings the individual's priorities and needs to the forefront.

### *Additional Vital Partners*

In addition to working with CAHFH, RVAAA contracts with the area Centers for Independent Living to do options counseling for individuals who want to transition to the community. They also partner with the state Assistive Technology program's lab to improve access to products, equipment and systems that support independent living. RVAAA also collaborates with NeighborWorks to advocate for affordable housing, support applications for the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, and provide a range of services to NeighborWorks properties.

*Formal Agreements*

RVAAA and CAHFH, while not operating under a formal written agreement at this stage, have established a low-cost system for referral, assessment and service delivery.

*Funding Sources Used by RVAAA or CAHAH*

Program	Federal	State/Local	Other
Grant support for CAHFH’s Continuing Hope Critical Repair and Aging in Place Home Modification Program (occasional)			X
Community Development Block Grants (occasional)	X		
Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (2020)	X		
Older Americans Act	X		
Medicaid, when applicable	X	X	

*For More Information*

**Katie Howard**, Director, River Valley Area Agency on Aging, [khoward@rivervalleyrcaaa.org](mailto:khoward@rivervalleyrcaaa.org)

**Cecile A. Terry**, Homeowner Financial Services, Columbus Area Habitat for Humanity, [Cecile@ColumbusAreaHabitat.com](mailto:Cecile@ColumbusAreaHabitat.com)