



First Tennessee Area Agency on Aging and Disability

# Annual Report 2024–2025

September 30, 2025



## FIRST TENNESSEE AREA AGENCY ON AGING AND DISABILITY ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

- A. Grantee's Name: **First Tennessee Development District Area Agency on Aging and Disability**
- B. Grant Contract's Edison Identification Number: **2084**
- C. Narrative Section, describing our program's goals, outcomes, successes and setbacks: **Below**

### Older Americans Act Funding

- ❖ **Title IIIB Supportive Services:** Title III-B funding supports eight Options Counselors—six full-time and two part-time—who continue to conduct in-home assessments and reassessments to identify client needs and address service gaps. During Hurricane Helene, service delivery was significantly disrupted across several areas. Despite these challenges, Options Counselors maintained consistent communication with clients and provider agencies, helping to assess needs and coordinate access to critical resources.

Provider agencies faced staffing shortages and were forced to adapt by rescheduling services and developing new routes to safely reach clients' homes. In addition to their regular programming, the eleven senior centers across the district—funded through Title III-B—played a vital role during the storm. These centers provided transportation, health, social, nutritional, educational, and recreational services for adults aged 60 and older. During Helene, they also served as community hubs, offering emergency supplies, access to resources, and a familiar place for individuals to gather and support one another through the aftermath.

Senior Centers in Carter, Greene, Johnson, Hawkins, and Washington Counties contract with the First Tennessee Area Agency on Aging and Disability (FTAAAD) to employ and host Options Counselors within their communities. Title III-B also funds the Legal Services for the Elderly program. This year, the majority of priority cases have focused on healthcare and powers of attorney, housing concerns, and protective services related to income security—all of which align with DDA legal priorities. Among non-priority cases, assistance with wills has been the most frequently requested service.

- ❖ **Title IIIC Nutrition Services:** FTAAAD continues to look at programs and explore ideas to increase congregate meal site numbers. Hurricane Helene caused some of our sites to be closed during the disaster, but most were up and running within days to make sure their clients were supplied with food, water and other items. We also went boots-on-the-ground to check on our homebound clients and get them emergency meals and update addresses, etc. when needed.

FTHRA has struggled to maintain consistent staffing, especially with the positions of Director of Nutrition Services and Nutrition Site Supervisor. Currently there is a new director of nutrition, and they are in the process of hiring a new nutrition site supervisor. The nutrition monitor at FTAAAD has worked with FTHRA on the training of both positions each time they have been



filled to ensure they understand monitoring requirements and other key components of the nutrition program.

Fit Clean Meals continues to provide frozen meals to our most isolated and rural communities. FTAAAD continues our partnership with ETSU's Dietetics department and Dr. Whitney Bignell for telephone-based nutrition counseling and other nutrition education opportunities. ETSU and UT Extension are working with some of our senior centers to provide nutrition education and a virtual dinner club program. Our partnership with ETSU Dietetics has also provided volunteers to the meal delivery efforts for Meals on Wheels Northeast TN.

- ❖ **Title IIID Disease Prevention & Health Promotion:** Evidence-based programs are offered mainly in-person by teaming up with our trained community partners. FTAAAD's standard programs: *Living Well with Chronic Conditions*, *Take Charge of Your Diabetes*, *Powerful Tools for Caregivers*, and *Matter of Balance* continue to be offered. This year some of the ARP IIID funds were carried over with some of our senior centers to start or continue their programs. They continued to partner with UT Extension FCS agents or trained senior center staff to provide new evidence-based programs in our service area, including *Drums Alive*, *Arthritis Exercise*, and *Active Living for Every Day* and *Healthy Eating for Every Day*. The funding allowed leaders to be trained and equipment to be purchased in order to offer the programs. Our evidence-based programs reached 137 older adults with 1,376 units of service. Our Healthy Aging & Nutrition Coordinator is a Master Trainer for *Living Well with Chronic Conditions* and *Take Charge of Your Diabetes* and works with the other Master Trainers at UT Extension to provide leader training so that new community partners can be trained for these programs.
- ❖ **Title IIIE National Family Caregiver Support Program:** FTAAAD launched a new platform for caregivers called Trualta. Caregivers can access the website when they need information and find short lessons, online support groups, training and more. With Trualta we have reached 51 caregivers who have logged 1,014 minutes of content and toolkit views on the platform. Due to one agent leaving, one agent taking a promotion, a change in leadership at one senior center as well as the effects of Hurricane Helene and providing for families in crisis, we did not offer *Coffee & Conversation* groups last year, which are designed to support grandparents raising grandchildren. We are continuing to partner with UT Extension FCS agents and senior centers to offer a *Coffee & Conversation* group for grandparents and other relative caregivers in both Carter and Washington counties for this year. These groups fall under the extension agents' programming in each county, but the Healthy Aging & Nutrition Coordinator works closely with them to provide resources, content and contacts for guest speakers.

FTAAAD also partners with our local Alzheimer's Tennessee director to offer programs for those individuals caring for someone living with Alzheimer's or other dementias. She is a trained leader for *Powerful Tools for Caregivers* and is getting trained in *Savvy Caregiver*. We also work closely with her to provide robotic cats and dogs to those living with dementia to help curb some loneliness and behavioral issues. The *Caregiver Connection* newsletter continues to be sent out quarterly and offers resources, tips, events, a community spotlight and a page dedicated to grandfamilies. The newsletter is distributed by mail, email and through distribution lists of community partners, reaching over 200 caregivers.



- ❖ **Title VII Elder Rights:** Awareness and prevention of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation of seniors in Northeast Tennessee is accomplished in many ways. The Northeast Tennessee Vulnerable Adult Coalition (NET-VAC) meets monthly to address issues pertaining to abused and exploited adults. These in-person meetings provide speakers and presentations that increase awareness of the signs of elder abuse. The meeting schedule is provided to the NET-VAC email list, published in the FTAAAD quarterly newsletter and is available to the visitors of the FTAAAD website. Additionally, several FTAAAD staff attend the TN Elder Justice Conference annually. We pay for Adult Protective Services workers to attend the annual FTAAAD Conference on Aging.
- ❖ **Title VII Ombudsman Program:** From 7/1/2024 through 6/30/2025, the Ombudsman program opened 161 cases comprised of 285 complaints. Ombudsmen conducted 185 routine presence visits as well as 317 non-routine visits for the purpose of investigating complaints and case follow-up. During these facility visits, Ombudsmen interacted with 1,191 residents, 235 family members, and 455 staff members. Furthermore, Ombudsmen provided 225 instances of information and assistance to individuals and 47 instances of consultations with facility staff. During the year, the Ombudsman Program had two Volunteer Ombudsman Representatives who conducted regular presence visits at their assigned facilities within the service area.

## State Funds

- ❖ **OPTIONS Home- and Community-Based Services:** OPTIONS 1.0 provides a range of essential services to qualified individuals, including information and assistance, service coordination, homemaker support, personal care, home-delivered meals, and personal emergency response systems. The program also connects participating individuals to additional resources such as clothing, food boxes, cleaning supplies, home repairs, home modifications, energy assistance, incontinence products, and help with household chores.

Counselors actively manage and update the waiting list for services in their respective areas to ensure timely support. However, Hurricane Helene caused significant disruptions to OPTIONS 1.0 services in the affected regions. Despite these challenges, OPTIONS counselors maintained continuous contact with clients and provider agencies to assess needs and coordinate care. Provider agencies faced staffing shortages and responded by rescheduling services and creating new routes to ensure workers could safely reach clients' homes. These efforts helped maintain continuity of care during a time of crisis and demonstrated the resilience and dedication of both the counselors and service providers.

- ❖ **OPTIONS 2.0:** OPTIONS 2.0 offers a comprehensive range of services to eligible individuals, including information and assistance, service coordination, homemaker and personal care services, home-delivered meals, personal emergency response systems, chore assistance, assistive medical devices, and minor home repairs. Additional support was provided to 14 individuals receiving CHORE services, including tasks such as mowing and heavy cleaning. Home modifications were completed for 23 individuals, including the repair or replacement of ramps and bathrooms, as well as the installation of safety rails to improve accessibility and safety.



Hurricane Helene caused significant disruptions to OPTIONS 2.0 homemaker and personal care services in the affected areas. Despite these challenges, Options counselors maintained continuous contact with clients and provider agencies to assess needs and coordinate care. Provider agencies faced staffing shortages and responded by rescheduling services and developing new routes to ensure workers could safely reach clients' homes and continue delivering essential services during the recovery period.

- ❖ **Public Guardianship:** A record number of 68 clients were served this year. With Covid and other illnesses, our visits are tailored to keep residents, volunteers and staff healthy. FTAAAD had 574 visits from staff and our three volunteers. These volunteers served 14 of our clients, giving 60 hours of their time.

The program was once again awarded the Beacon Grant by the Elks Club of Johnson City. These funds, along with volunteers from the Elks Club, provide much needed and much appreciated assistance for the PG clients at Christmas. Local hospital case management staff also “adopted” several clients and made their Christmas extra special.

- ❖ **TN SHIP:** FTAAAD's SHIP staff participated in several local events this year, including the Appalachian Fair; and provided numerous presentations to, and receives referrals from, retiree associations and human-resource departments of local employers, including East Tennessee State University, the Tennessee State Retiree Association, and the TVA Retiree Association. Open enrollment events were held in all eight counties (Washington, Sullivan, Carter, Unicoi, Greene, Hancock, Johnson, and Hawkins) during Medicare's Annual Enrollment Period and general Medicare counseling to beneficiaries continues.

Partnerships continue with local community agencies, including the Johnson City Community Health Center, local Social Security Administration offices, social workers at the local Veterans Affairs Medical Center, local parish nurses, and ETSU's College of Public Health for education and interns. SHIP created new partnerships this year with Chambers of Commerce in Johnson City, Elizabethton, and Erwin; Citi Bank; Mountain Electric; Carter County Health Department; and East Tennessee State University medical students. SHIP also distributed educational materials on Medicare, SHIP, LIS and MSP to community partners, including agencies that serve the homeless population, rural counties, and the ESL population. 3,436 individuals were served, accounting for 5,051 units of service.

- ❖ **ARP Funds: 2024-2025**

- ❖ IIIB– \$260,056: For homemaker (\$193,662); personal care (\$11,908); other services (\$32,198), senior centers (17,288), Legal Aid (\$5,000)
- ❖ IIIC– \$338,299: For home-delivered meals (\$221,139), senior centers (\$14,416), congregate meals (102,744)
- ❖ III-D– \$51,791 For senior centers (15,344), personnel (33,840), supplies (2,607)
- ❖ IIIE– \$129,379: For homemaker (\$73,898); in-home respite (\$28,723); personal care (\$9,123), other services (\$17,635)



❖ IIIB-ARP– Long-Term Care Ombudsman part-time position- \$15,949

❖ **MyRide Tennessee:** FTAAAD has current day-to-day oversight of three MyRIDE operations located in Johnson County, Jonesborough and Greeneville, as well as two MyRIDE programs, Kingsport and Johnson City, managed in-house, with the two programs being located in the First TN Development District. FTAAAD had a goal of 5,000 total completed rides across all programs between 7/1/24 and 6/30/25. We surpassed this number and provided 5,250 rides, with an average of 438 rides per month. As of 6/30/25, MyRIDE had 105 volunteers that donated 4,088 hours of their time, drove 49,055 miles, and accumulated an equivalent of \$124,929 of in-kind. MyRIDE programs Johnson County, Jonesborough and Kingsport all celebrated their six-year anniversary during this time frame, while Greeneville celebrated their three-year anniversary and Johnson City celebrated their 2nd anniversary.

❖ **CHOICES:** FTAAAD continues to serve our aging and disabled populations by completing CHOICES home visits and assisting individuals with Medicaid redeterminations, including MSP applications. FTAAAD utilizes Pre-Admission Evaluations and Referrals for Long-Term Services and Supports (PERLSS) that allows users to input the PAE and Medicaid applications into one system.

TennCare approved adding 2,000 additional Group 3 slots for non-SSI recipients (they must still qualify for Medicaid) starting in July 2025 to help alleviate the Group 3 waiting list. From July 2024 to June 2025, 40 individuals enrolled into Choices Group 3 that may have not previously received any services. FTAAAD is contacting individuals who were seeking nursing facility level of care but did not meet that level of care but did meet at risk level of care and who are not currently Medicaid eligible to see if the person is interested in enrolling into CHOICES Group 3.

Through marketing and outreach FTAAAD has contacted community-partner agencies, including hospitals, and provided training, brochures, and other educational materials. The CHOICES intake coordinators have completed yearly training and renewed certification to complete the National Core Indicators–Aging and Disability surveys as well as ongoing training to utilize the PERLSS system. One vacant position has been filled in the past year, and the employee has completed their training and is independent in their role.

❖ **Collaborative Response to Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse (CREVAA):** The CREVAA program addresses unmet needs, both emergent and ongoing, of elder and vulnerable adult victims of crime. It is funded by a grant from the Victims of Crime Act. On July 1, 2022, the CREVAA program was the beginning of a new contract with the Office of Criminal Justice Programs. This year, the CREVAA program transitioned to the Department of Human Services for programmatic oversight. The CREVAA program continues to assist victims of crime that meet CREVAA eligibility.

Referrals for services are received from Adult Protective Services. CREVAA received 45 grant referrals from APS (7/1/2024–6/30/2025). For FY25, \$20,184 was spent on clients. This includes financial assistance with groceries, personal-care needs, assistance with home modification (such as restoring services for electricity and/or water), providing cell phones, back rents, transportation and security cameras. All money spent on clients' needs is related to the alleged



crimes. CREVAA works closely with Tennessee's Adult Protective Services investigators and provides staff training on the CREVAA program during an annual lunch-and-learn event. Stakeholders are given updates of the program throughout the year at meetings with FTDD Board members, NET-VAC meetings (Northeast Tennessee Vulnerable Adult Coalition).

- ❖ **Collaborative Response to End Self-Neglect in Tennessee (CREST):** On April 1, 2022, FTAAAD launched the CREST program through a partnership with Tennessee's Department of Human Services and Adult Protective Services. The CREST program addresses unmet needs resulting from self-neglect in older and vulnerable adults. The program responds to both the emotional and physical needs of self-neglecting clients to stabilize their lives and reduce harm. FTAAAD has one CREST advocate that works with Adult Protective Services to provide emergency/ client-centered services and resources.

CREST has been able to provide emergency housing, emergency food and clothing, home modifications, assistance with restoring electricity and running water, transportation, durable medical equipment, medication and pest control. Referrals for the CREST program can only come from Adult Protective Services. CREST received 96 grant referrals from APS. In May 2025, Specific Assistance to Individuals Only (SATIO) was added to the CREST procedures manual. The specific assistance (SA) purpose is to assist clients who do not require an in-person assessment nor a CREST Participant Authorization form. There are a total of four cases under specific assistance. For FY25, \$82,331 was spent on CREST clients. The CREST advocate works with clients to become educated about the resources and programs available in their community and make referrals to programs, as necessary.

- ❖ **SNAP Outreach Program:** Between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025, a total of 6,037 individuals were screened for interest in SNAP and 126 applications were completed. In addition, FTAAAD staff attended more than 40 events or presentations where SNAP information was presented.
- ❖ **Grants:** FTAAAD was awarded a \$50,000 grant extension from US Aging's nationwide aging/disability COVID-19 and influenza vaccine support grant to partner with local senior centers and senior housing facilities to host fall and winter vaccination events for older adults. The primary responsibility of FTAAAD in this grant was to assist the host sites in promoting the events, connect them with a pharmacy (if needed), and provide refreshments and high-level giveaways for all attendees to encourage participation. The grant also required FTAAAD staff to complete surveys for each participant and to take photos of participants who gave their written approval. In addition to the actual vaccination events, FTAAAD conducted media promotion, provided phone and in-person outreach assistance and overall education to older adults and adults with disabilities on the importance of these vaccines, and provided resources to help individuals secure transportation to a vaccination site, if necessary.

FTAAAD was again awarded one of 12 \$1,000 grants from Appalachian Maid Service to use to serve older adults in any manner the agency selected. FTAAAD chose to use this year's funds to purchase four additional Joy for All robotic pets and replacement batteries for distribution as needed to the Public Guardianship program's clients suffering from dementia or other conditions that would make them receptive to these "pets". FTAAAD has purchased and distributed these cats and dogs to dementia sufferers for several years as funds permitted, and their effectiveness is nothing short of amazing. The balance of the grant funds were applied to





FTAAAD's Emergency Assistance Program (EAP), which provides funds for small, one-time needs experienced by older adults in the community. Past EAP funds have been used to purchase groceries after SNAP benefits were stolen, change door locks, help paying a heat-pump repair bill, pay a utilities deposit, and for many more requests.

FTAAAD applied for and received a \$10,000 grant from the Food Lion Feeds Foundation that was designated for purchasing food to assist with food insecurity issues in our service area. Half of the total amount was used to purchase shelf-stable emergency food boxes from Chef 5 Minute Meals, and the balance was used to pay for shelf-stable individual Mom's Meals entrees which were purchased immediately after Hurricane Helene. FTAAAD also received a \$5,000 grant from NANASP to purchase additional shelf-stable food boxes.

Meals on Wheels America awarded FTAAAD a \$35,000 Emergency Response grant in response to Hurricane Helene. Funds were split between ordering larger shelf-stable food boxes from Chef 5 Minute Meals and purchasing replacement kitchen appliances for older adults who lost their original appliances as a result of storm damage to their homes.

FTAAAD also received a \$40,000 hurricane relief grant from the East Tennessee Foundation that was used to assist older adults who experienced storm damage or loss with items or services to help them recover from the disaster. These funds were used for purchasing replacement furniture, help with home repairs, property clean-up, and other much-needed help for the residents of the six counties with official disaster designations.

Finally, FTAAAD received a second grant from the City of Kingsport Community Development Block Grant, where the agency was awarded \$40,000 to perform emergency home repairs for older adults within low-income neighborhoods in the City of Kingsport. These repairs are ongoing.

- ❖ **Media Relations/Website:** FTAAAD's redesigned website continues to be heavily used by visitors. Between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025, there have been 10,987 sessions with 7,627 unique visitors to the site. These visitors spent an average of three minutes and 53 seconds on the website and viewed an average of 2.3 pages per visit. Additionally, FTAAAD distributed four press releases to local media in all eight counties of Northeast Tennessee in the same time period.
- ❖ **Setbacks:** Hurricane Helene had a devastating impact on six of the eight counties we serve including Carter, Greene, Hawkins, Johnson, Unicoi, and Washington counties—all of which were included in a Major Disaster Declaration. The storm displaced numerous individuals and families, destroyed businesses, and even led to the loss of a hospital in Unicoi County. Critical infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and water systems, suffered extensive damage. Many residents were already financially vulnerable, living paycheck to paycheck, and now face the overwhelming task of rebuilding their lives. A year later, unmet needs persist. FTAAAD continues to receive calls for assistance with housing, food, home and driveway repairs, and land erosion mitigation.

In addition to disaster recovery demands, FTAAAD is confronted with long-standing challenges. Insufficient funding limits our ability to respond to the growing and evolving needs of the aging population. Staffing resources are stretched thin, and current programs lack the flexibility to meet the individualized needs of consumers who wish to age in place.





Barriers to progress include limited access to enabling technologies, insufficient resources for developing innovative programs, and a lack of capacity to collect and report meaningful quality metrics that demonstrate the impact of social services on overall health outcomes

Despite rising demand, federal funding remains stagnant and does not reflect the increasing needs of older adults or the growing number of younger individuals with complex health and social challenges. As a result, waiting lists for essential services continue to grow.

There is an urgent need for diversified funding sources and the ability to clearly demonstrate the cost savings associated with aging in place. Additionally, there is a critical gap in awareness and understanding of enabling technologies and their potential to enhance service delivery and improve outcomes.

#### FTAAAD FY25 Senior Center Data:

Senior Centers	Consumers Served	State Funding
Bristol Slater	1,379	12,660
Church Hill	451	5,940
Clinchfield	243	5,330
Elizabethton	404	9,190
Hancock	49	3,630
Johnson City	3,706	20,000
Johnson County	1,693	8,430
Jonesborough	1,823	12,180
Kingsport	5,199	17,780
Roby Fitzgerald	363	10,210
Rogersville	235	6,350
<b>Total</b>	<b>*14,946</b>	<b>\$111,700</b>

\*This is an unduplicated number of consumers across all centers

#### FTAAAD FY25 Program Direct Services Data:

Services	Funding	Consumers Served	Units of Service
Congregate Meals	412,979	1,369	64,400
Evidence Based Activities	47,110	137	1,376
Home-Delivered Meals	2,004,540	1,265	236,558
Homemaker	1,534,808	562	56,398
Personal Care	146,264	146	5,489
Home Modifications and Chore	126,065	37	404
Service Coordination	751,056	1,787	6,215
In-Home Respite	235,590	58	5,974
Legal Services	30,000	131	800



Long-Term Care Ombudsman	157,454	**	**
Public Guardian	225,639	68	574
Personal Emergency Response	11,723	41	395
Caregiver Equipment & Supplies	831	4	18
Assistive Technology	962	11	11
Emergency Assistance Programs	103,195	511	1,269
SHIP/SMP/MIPPA	172,479	3,436	5,051
SNAP	80,746	6,037	6,037
MyRIDE	150,000	172	5,250
CHOICES	1,112,471	5,403	5,926
CREST	124,247	100	100
CREVAA	64,327	45	45
Transportation	85,543	1,298	19,071

\* consumers not totaled due to duplication

\*\* Information was not available in the Mon Ami database at the time of this update. Two requests were sent to Mon Ami for assistance. DDA was notified.

Funding in above table does not include in-kind