



## Department of Health

**ANDREW M. CUOMO**  
Governor

**HOWARD A. ZUCKER, M.D., J.D.**  
Commissioner

**SALLY DRESLIN, M.S., R.N.**  
Executive Deputy Commissioner

May, 2017

Dear Interested Party:

As part of Governor Cuomo's 2017 State of the State, an initiative designated to the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) called for the development and implementation of a regional hotline based program based on the successful Silver Line program in the United Kingdom. This initiative leads an effort to support older adults who are socially isolated or experiencing loneliness.

The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to inform the Department in planning and developing enhanced programming that reduces social isolation and loneliness in older adults. Your response to this RFI will assist in informing policy decisions as the Department and NYSOFA move forward in developing this unique opportunity.

Please send comments and recommendations to [laura.palmer@health.ny.gov](mailto:laura.palmer@health.ny.gov) by July 14, 2017. Please include your organization's contact information, in the case of questions regarding your response.

Sincerely,

Mark L. Kissinger  
Special Advisor to the Commissioner of Health  
New York State Department of Health  
Office of Primary Care and Health Systems  
Management

**Purpose:**

Loneliness and social isolation in older adults has been linked to poor health outcomes. The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to gather information from New York State providers on recommendations on how to best initiate a community-based pilot hotline program targeted at socially isolated and/or lonely older adults. The information gathered through this RFI process may be used to develop a Request for Application (RFA) to pilot a program targeted at socially isolated and/or lonely older adults.

**Background:**

In New York State, there are approximately 3.7 million individuals over the age of 60 (New York State Office for the Aging, 2015-2019, New York State Plan on Aging). As people age, the risk of isolation and loneliness increases. As the proportion of older adults who live alone or who provide care for a spouse or partner with multiple chronic conditions, health issues, or cognitive impairment increase, the likelihood of social isolation will also increase. Research has shown that social isolation and loneliness in older adults is a major public health concern. Loneliness is a risk factor for a number of poor health outcomes, including declining functional abilities and even death (Perissinotto, 2012). A study of older adults over the age of 60 showed that 43 percent of participants reported feeling lonely (New York Times, 2016). Older adults who are socially isolated are more likely to have declines in mobility, bathing, dressing, and other activities of daily living (New York Times, 2016). There is also an increased risk of death, depression, and cognitive decline associated with older adults who report being socially isolated (Cornwell & Waite, 2009). In addition, social isolation has been linked to cognitive decline, increased stress levels, high blood pressure, and a decreased ability to fight infection (New York Times, 2016),

In Governor Cuomo's 2017 State of the State, an initiative, led by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) was included to "jointly launch five regional hotlines modeled after the successful Silver Line program in the United Kingdom" ([www.thesilverline.org.uk](http://www.thesilverline.org.uk)). These hotlines will support older adults in the community or in institutional settings. Hotlines will be available for older New Yorkers to call for information, advice, or just a friendly conversation. Older adults looking for more contact may be assigned a friend who will complete regular calls, can use technology for virtual visits or write letters to provide additional support and contact. In addition to the hotline program, additional services based on community need will be built to support older adults. The Department and Office for the Aging envision a community based volunteer network and have engaged the Governor's Office of Faith Based Initiatives, regional colleges and universities, retiree corps, and the New York State Commission on National Service to develop a partnership for volunteer recruitment and training.

**Future Funding:**

The Department and the Office for the Aging are interested in developing a pilot project that would target and support older adults who are socially isolated and/or lonely. Funding would be provided to an eligible applicant through a competitive Request for Application process (RFA) and would:

- Establish a hotline based pilot program that incorporates additional supportive services based on community need;
- Examine and analyze the assumption that social isolation and loneliness contribute to poor health outcomes for older adults;
- Establish a knowledge base of best practice interventions; and
- Develop a robust data set that identifies and recommends interventions for unmet service needs of socially isolated and lonely older adults.

### **Information Request:**

The Department and the Office for the Aging are seeking information from all providers, but are especially interested in receiving feedback from providers that are currently or have previously specialized in serving older adults. Providers should submit information and data on best practices currently in use and recommendations on how to effectively and efficiently implement a successful community-based volunteer program targeted at socially isolated and lonely older adults.

Please review the questionnaire and include your responses and recommendations. Respondents are asked to use the template provided and to submit their response in Microsoft Word.

Please send responses and recommendations to [laura.palmer@health.ny.gov](mailto:laura.palmer@health.ny.gov) with the subject line "Social Isolation RFI". Responses should be sent no later than 5pm, July 14, 2017. Information in addition to the prescribed questions is welcome. Your time and input are greatly appreciated.

The submitted information will be reviewed by the Department and the Office for the Aging and will be shared with other relevant Department and NYSOFA staff.

This RFI is for planning purposes only and should not be interpreted as a solicitation for applications or obligations on the part of the Department or the Office for the Aging. The Department or the Office for the Aging will not pay for the preparation of any information submitted or for the use of that information.

The Department and the Office for the Aging will use the information submitted in response to this RFI at their discretion and will not provide comments to any responder's submission. However, responses to the RFI may be reflected in future funding opportunity announcements. The information provided will be analyzed and may appear in reports. Respondents are advised that the Department or the Office for the Aging are under no obligation to acknowledge receipt of the information or provide feedback to respondents with respect to any information submitted. No proprietary, classified, confidential, or sensitive information should be included in your response. The Department or the Office for the Aging reserve the right to use any non-proprietary technical information in any resultant solicitation(s).

### **Respondent Information**

1. Describe your experience in the provision of services to older adults.
2. If applicable, describe any specialized services that you provide.
3. Describe the community in which your organization provides service (i.e. rural, urban, suburban, etc.)
4. Describe any strategies that you or your organization use when approaching your work with older adults.

### **Applicant Qualifications**

1. What experience or qualifications should be required of potential applicants to be considered?
2. What strengths, capabilities, and knowledge should the potential applicant have to be considered?

### **General Information**

1. Identify and describe any barriers to implementing a program targeted at older adults as described above.
2. Describe barriers and challenges in working with older adults. If applicable, please describe your work in rural areas and the unique challenges of the population.
3. Identify any additional program components the Department and the Office for the Aging could include that would solicit interest and participation.

4. Identify any requirements that could prohibit interest and or participation.
5. Describe recommended staffing qualifications for program operation.
6. Describe milestones to be achieved that will demonstrate program effectiveness.
7. Describe how communities or regions should be identified for program engagement.
8. Describe how communities or regions should be assessed for unmet needs.
9. Identify and describe program elements that should be required in addition to the hotline.
10. Identify and describe measurable outcomes for the program.
11. Identify and describe targeting and outreach strategies on community engagement, including specific strategies for populations that are at the greatest risk.
12. Identify and describe volunteer recruitment, training, management, and supervision strategies.
13. Identify and describe a methodology for data collection to demonstrate program effectiveness.
14. Identify and describe how to create linkages between existing services (i.e. NY Connects) and a hotline based program.