**AGING SERVICES SECTOR**



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| A comparison of senior service levels in Washtenaw and Kent Counties |

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| **Benchmark County Comparison Suggests Washtenaw County Seniors**  **may be Underserved by Home and Community Based Services** |  | **Prepared by**  **Area Agency on Aging 1-B**  **April 2018** |
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**Benchmark County Comparison Suggests Washtenaw County Seniors**

**may be Underserved by Home and Community Based Services**

Washtenaw County’s “Aging Network” consists primarily of agencies providing home and community based services funded with state and federal Older Americans Act dollars. These organizations consistently earn high customer satisfaction ratings from the older Washtenaw County residents they serve and have earned recognition for effective service delivery. However, it has been documented that there are many older adults seeking services whose needs are not being fully met due to limited resources that foster wait lists, service rationing, and under serving. This begs the question: How well is the demand for Aging Network services being met in Washtenaw County?

This report attempts to answer that question by examining the level of services provided to the senior population in a ‘sister county’ with comparable socioeconomic demographics: Kent County, Michigan, whose anchor city is Grand Rapids. The study benchmarks Kent County serving levels for six services (Congregate and Home Delivered Meals, Adult Day Care, Elder Abuse Prevention, Legal Assistance, and Outreach/Resource Advocacy) provided in both counties that operate under the same Aging and Adult Service Agency service definition, as reported in the National Aging Program Information System (NAPIS). In addition, the report identified all services that are provided through the respective county’s Area Agency on Aging that are not provided in the other county.

The finding is that overall, Washtenaw County residents receive significantly fewer units of service per senior than Kent County seniors. In addition, there are many more unique services that exist in Kent County than are available to older Washtenaw County residents. This inequity exists despite strong financial support by local supporters including Washtenaw Coordinated Funders, the Anna Botsford Bach fund, and the University of Michigan. The disparity is largely explained by the presence of a countywide senior citizens property tax millage in Kent County that raises $11.1 million to enhance the Aging Network service delivery system.

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| County Aging Network Service Unit Comparison - 2016 | | |
|  | **Total Service Units** | **Service Units per 1,000 Seniors** |
| Washtenaw County | 262,040 | 4,547 |
| Kent County | 912,853 | 8,799 |

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### DEMOGRAPHIC COMPARISON

While the Kent County age 60 and older population is almost twice as large as in Washtenaw County, key demographics of the population receiving home and community based services funded through each county’s Aging Sector follow the same pattern. The key difference is that service recipients with characteristics that are associated with a higher incidence of need (low income, living alone, advanced age, and minority status) are served at a slightly higher proportion.



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| ***The 2012–16 American Community Survey reports that the age 60 and older population percent in both counties is 17.6%*** |

### REGISTERED AND ENROLLED PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS FOR

### SIX BENCHMARK PROGRAMS

Kent County service and program participant data from NAPIS was made available for this comparison by the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan. There were five service categories that matched the service definition and NAPIS reporting requirements for programs funded by the Area Agency on Aging 1-B in Washtenaw County. (Note: There are several other similar services provided in both counties, but not all program information is reported in NAPIS.) Only one of the five Washtenaw County programs, Legal Assistance, reported serving levels that were higher per 1,000 seniors than Kent County. The greatest inequality was for Home Delivered Meals, where twice as many meals per 1,000 seniors are served in Kent County. Conversely for Legal Assistance, Washtenaw County serving levels per 1,000 seniors were four times higher. Detailed comparison data for the five services are provided below:

## ADULT DAY CARE

Kent County provided more than twice as many service units as Washtenaw County per 1,000 seniors. However, this was due solely to the presence of senior millage funds. Without the Kent County service units attributed to the senior millage, Washtenaw County delivered slightly more units.



## CONGREGATE MEALS

Kent County served one third more Congregate Meals than Washtenaw County per 1,000 seniors. Even when senior millage funded meals were subtracted, Kent County served 95 more meals per 1,000 seniors than Washtenaw County.



## ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION

Kent County provided two (40%) more units of Elder Abuse Prevention services per 1,000 seniors than Washtenaw County. No senior millage funds supported this service.



## HOME DELIVERED MEALS

Kent County served more than twice the number of Home Delivered Meals (Meals on Wheels) than Washtenaw County per 1,000 seniors. Even when senior millage funded meals were subtracted, Kent County served 1,273 more meals per 1,000 seniors than Washtenaw County.

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| **Home Delivered Meals Served Per 1,000 Seniors Comparison** | | | | | | | |
|  | All Units | | |  | Non Millage Units Only | | |
| County | Units | Units/1000 | Difference |  | Units | Units/1000 | Difference |
| Kent | 755,869 | 7,455 |  |  | 496,182 | 4,894 |  |
| Washtenaw | 208,719 | 3,621 | (3,835) |  | 208,719 | 3,621 | -1273 |
| *One unit equals one meal delivered to a home, including liquid meals* | | | | | | | |

## OUTREACH/RESOURCE ADVOCACY

Kent County provided more than twice as many service units as Washtenaw County per 1,000 seniors. However, this was due solely to the presence of senior millage funds. Without the Kent County service units attributed to the senior millage, Washtenaw County delivered slightly more units.



### SERVICES THAT ARE UNIQUE TO EACH COUNTY

The study identified services that were present in one county’s Aging Network service delivery system but not the other, and identified their primary funding source when possible. Eleven of the twelve services unique to a county were in Kent County and funded by the county senior millage, with one of the services (Counseling) also receiving Older Americans Act (OAA) funding in Kent County. These unique services are listed in the table below.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Service | Present in Washtenaw County Only | Present in  Kent County Only | Primary Funding Source |
| Counseling |  | **X** | Millage/OAA |
| Dental Services |  | **X** | Millage |
| Dementia Care  Fraud Prevention |  | **X**  **X** | Millage  Millage |
| Guardianship |  | **X** | Millage |
| Hearing Aids |  | **X** | Millage |
| Home Modifications |  | **X** | Millage |
| In-Home Recreation Therapy  Money Management |  | **X**  **X** | Millage  Millage |
| Partner Training |  | **X** | Millage |
| Shared Housing | **X** |  | University of Michigan |
| Vaccinations |  | **X** | Millage |

### CONCLUSION

The provision of service units per 1,000 seniors in Washtenaw County using funding available through their Area Agency on Aging is comparable to Kent County, with the exception of the prolific delivery of home delivered meals, where one third more meals are delivered to older Kent County residents. When the service units supported by the Kent County Senior Millage is factored into the service levels, senior needs in Kent County are better met by the county’s Aging Network. To the extent to which the incidence of disability and prevalence of activity of daily living limitations in each county’s senior population are comparable, Washtenaw County seniors have a higher level of unmet needs and are underserved. The Kent County Senior Millage assessment of 0.5 mils that raises approximately $11.1 million annually is clearly the factor that is responsible for the inequity.