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# Definition of a Senior Center



**A** senior center is a community focal point where older adults come together for services and activities that reflect their experience and skills, respond to their diverse needs and interests, enhance their dignity, support their independence, and encourage their involvement in and with the center and the community.

As part of a comprehensive community strategy to meet the needs of older adults, senior centers offer services and activities

within the center and link participants with resources offered by other agencies. Center programs consist of a variety of individual and group services and activities.

The center also serves as a resource for the entire community for information on aging, support for family caregivers, training professional and lay leaders and students, and for development of innovative approaches to addressing aging issues.

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# The Senior Center Philosophy



**T**he philosophy of the senior center movement is based on these premises: that aging is a normal developmental process; that human beings need peers with whom they can interact and who are available as a source of encouragement and support; and that adults have the right to a voice in determining matters in which they have a vital interest.

In accordance with these premises, senior centers adhere to the following beliefs:

- ◆ older adults, like all people, are individuals with ambitions, capabilities, and creative capacities
- ◆ they are capable of continued growth and development
- ◆ they have certain basic needs, including opportunities for relationships and for experiencing a sense of achievement
- ◆ they need both access to sources of information and help for personal and family

problems, and the opportunity to learn from individuals coping with similar experiences

- ◆ they have a right to maximum opportunity for involvement in all aspects of a center's decision-making process

Senior center staffs are obliged to create an atmosphere that acknowledges the value of human life, affirms the dignity and self-worth of the older adult, and maintains a climate of respect, trust, and support.

Within this atmosphere, staff creates opportunities for older adults to apply their wisdom, experience, and insight, and to exercise their skills.

As an integral part of the aging network, a center serves community needs, assists other agencies in serving older adults, and provides opportunities for older adults to develop their potential as individuals within the context of the entire community.