



THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT

ORIGINS & PURPOSE

The *Older Americans Act of 1965 (OAA)* (P.L. 89-73) was signed into law on July 14, 1965 by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The Act was introduced by Congress as a result of the lack of availability and access to social services and supports for seniors in the community. Since the law’s enactment decades ago, the OAA has served as the primary federal legislation supporting community-based social services for adults age 60 and older, as well as their families and caregivers. The law was most recently reauthorized by the *Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020 (P.L. 116-131)*.

ADMINISTRATION & TITLES

The OAA has evolved and grown over time through prior reauthorizations and consists of seven titles today. Of the seven titles, all but one are administered by the **Administration on Aging (AoA)**, a federal sub-agency established by the OAA within the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) Administration for Community Living (ACL)**. At the state and local levels, OAA activities are carried out, respectively, by 56 **State Units on Aging (SUA)**, over 600 **Area Agencies on Aging (AAA)** and thousands community-based organizations.

AoA, which is housed within ACL, is tasked with advocating for older adults and persons with disabilities and supporting them in securing and maintaining their health, well-being and independence in the community. The AoA is led by the **Assistant Secretary for Aging** – a presidential appointee – who holds a dual role serving as the Administrator of the ACL, as well, and is responsible for ensuring that OAA programs and policies are in alignment with the goals of the agency.

TITLE	OAA TITLE SECTION SUMMARY	ADMINISTRATION OF PROGRAMS
I	Declaration of Objectives and Definitions: Sets policy objectives around providing equal opportunities for older adults to improve their lives; provides definitions.	AoA (HHS)
II	Administration on Aging: Establishes the following entities and their responsibilities: AoA, led by the Assistant Secretary for Aging; SUAs; AAAs.	AoA (HHS)
III	Grants for States and Community Programs on Aging: Authorizes grants for SUAs and AAAs to carry out a variety of supportive services (caregiver support, nutrition services, health promotion and disease prevention programs, etc.).	AoA (HHS)
IV	Activities for Health, Independence, and Longevity: Authorizes funding for a variety of programs and demonstration projects that support the health, independence and longevity of older adults through training, research, innovation and awareness.	AoA (HHS)
V	Community Service Employment for Older Americans: Establishes a program to promote self-sufficiency by providing community service opportunities – including employment – for low-income adults 55 years and older with poor job prospects.	ETA (DOL)
VI	Grants and Services for Native Americans: Authorizes grants given to tribal and Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian organizations for a variety of aging services.	AoA (HHS)
VII	Vulnerable Elder Rights Protection Activities: Authorizes grants to states for elder rights protection programs, such as the Long-term Care Ombudsman and other vulnerable elder protection activities.	AoA (HHS)

REAUTHORIZATION

The authorizing committee for the OAA in the U.S. Senate is the [Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions](#) (HELP) through the Subcommittee on Primary Health and Retirement Security. The committee that authorizes this legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives is the [Committee on Education and Workforce](#), specifically under the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services. Typically, a reauthorization of the OAA is considered every five years; however, the exact timeframe has fluctuated throughout its history.

Fifty-one years ago, on March 22, 1972, President Nixon signed a measure (P.L. 92-258) that amended the OAA to permanently establish a national senior nutrition program. Since that time, the OAA has been reauthorized and amended nearly 20 times. Most recently, on March 25, 2020, the President signed the *Supporting Older Americans Act* ([P.L 116-131](#)), authorizing the law for five more years, through the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2024.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	Area Agency on Aging	HELP	Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
AoA	Administration on Aging	HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
ACL	Administration for Community Living	NSIP	Nutrition Services Incentive Program
DOL	Department of Labor	SUA	State Unit on Aging
ETA	Employment and Training Administration	OAA	Older Americans Act
FY	Fiscal Year	PL	Public Law

CONTACT INFORMATION

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