

Senior LinkAge Line

Meeting the growing needs of Minnesotans: Strategic initiatives to expand access, empower communities, and enhance aging resources

MINNESOTA BOARD ON AGING

JANUARY 2025

MBA Policy Brief

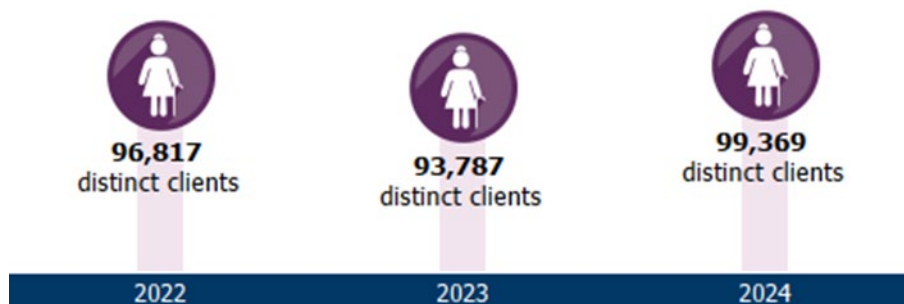
The Minnesota Board on Aging (MBA) policy briefs offer an opportunity for legislators, community partners and state agency stakeholders to understand the aging landscape in Minnesota. Additionally, it provides an opportunity to engage with the MBA in a planning effort to reform our system, and to prepare communities and the state to meet the challenges and opportunities associated with an aging population.

Background

The Senior LinkAge Line is a free, statewide service of the Minnesota Board on Aging in partnership with Minnesota's area agencies on aging. The Senior LinkAge Line helps older Minnesotans and caregivers find answers and connect to the services and support they need.

Key features:

- **Access:** Toll-free number, online resources, in-person consultation, online referrals, and community education, with language support available.
- **Comprehensive support:** Provides unbiased, personalized, information and assistance that connects people with local resources and benefits and supports informed decision making.
- **Fulfills federal requirements:** State Health Insurance Program (SHIP), Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP), Medicare Improvements for Patients & Providers Act (MIPPA), and level one preadmission screening and resident review (PASRR).
- **People reached:** The growth of distinct clients served from 2023 to 2024 demonstrates the expanded reach and impact our programs have as we continue to address the needs of Minnesotans seeking support and resources. It is important to note that while each client is counted only once, they may receive assistance multiple times and across several core services.



Core services:

1. **Information and assistance:** Connects older Minnesotans and their caregivers to resources, such as Medicare, food, housing, transportation, financial aid, affordable prescriptions, and fraud prevention and reporting.
2. **Resource coordination:** Assesses needs, supports care planning, and provides follow-up for those requiring help to remain at home or transition home from a hospital or nursing facility.
3. **Education and outreach:** Educates older adults, caregivers, and providers on navigating aging resources, including fraud prevention and reporting.
4. **Preadmission screening:** Ensures federal nursing facility requirements are met, helping individuals live in the most integrated setting possible.

Strategic Priorities

Meet increasing demand:

As Minnesota's population ages and the Baby Boomer generation moves through retirement, the demand for services and support from the Senior LinkAge Line continues to grow. Based on forecasting data, we anticipate a 5% annual increase in the number of calls received, reflecting the growing demand for services as Minnesota's aging population continues to expand.



The Senior LinkAge Line is committed to meeting these evolving needs by expanding access to resources and empowering individuals to live with independence and dignity. Due to current resource limitations, we are only able to answer a portion of calls offered to us. On average 150 calls every day go unanswered. During Medicare Open Enrollment, October 15 through December 7, the daily average of unanswered calls rises to 260. As people's needs become more complex and resources harder to find, calls take longer. In 2019, calls were an average of eight minutes long, and in 2023, were an average of 15 minutes. In our 2025 legislative proposal, we are requesting additional funds to increase staffing and capacity to better meet growing demand.

Rebrand:

A key initiative is rebranding the Senior LinkAge Line to a name that more clearly resonates with older adults and reflects the breadth of our services. To ensure we are reaching underserved communities, including low income and rural communities, we will strengthen community outreach efforts and develop responsive programs that address the unique challenges faced by these populations. The Senior LinkAge Line is often referred to as “Minnesota’s best kept secret.” We want Minnesota’s older adults and caregivers to know about the service and how it can help, but we have been hesitant to advertise our services more widely, when we cannot meet our current demand.

Increase self-service:

In addition, we are developing a new and improved resource database website to replace our current platform. This will provide an enhanced experience making it easier for the public to research and connect with the services they need. In line with our goal of empowering individuals, we are also creating more opportunities for self-help, offering tools and resources that enable people to independently access information and make informed decisions. These additional opportunities will nicely supplement the direct support that Senior LinkAge Line staff provide.

By embracing these priorities, we are positioning Senior LinkAge Line to better serve Minnesotans during this unprecedented period of increased demand, ensuring that older adults and their caregivers can navigate the challenges of aging with confidence and support.