



Systematic Review on Climate Change and Long-Term Care

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Vulnerabilities: Health and Function

Individuals with health challenges are more susceptible because they may require assistance, be reliant on medical devices, and can have disruptions to critical infrastructure systems

Physical impairments limit older adults' ability to evacuate homes

Cognitive impairment can interfere with information processing and decision-making needed to prepare for and navigate through a disaster event

Vulnerabilities: Social and Economic Factors

Social isolation can prevent older adults from receiving help or emergency information, and they may be less able to flee from potential harm

Fixed incomes may limit access to air conditioning, transportation, and safe housing

Many older adults live in disaster-prone areas such as coastal communities and urban heat islands

Ethnic and economic disparities increase risk through poorer health and housing

Impact of Climate Change on Older Adults

Heat Waves → Increased risk of hospitalization and mortality

Air Pollution → Increased risk of negative health effects compared to younger adults and higher incidence of dementia

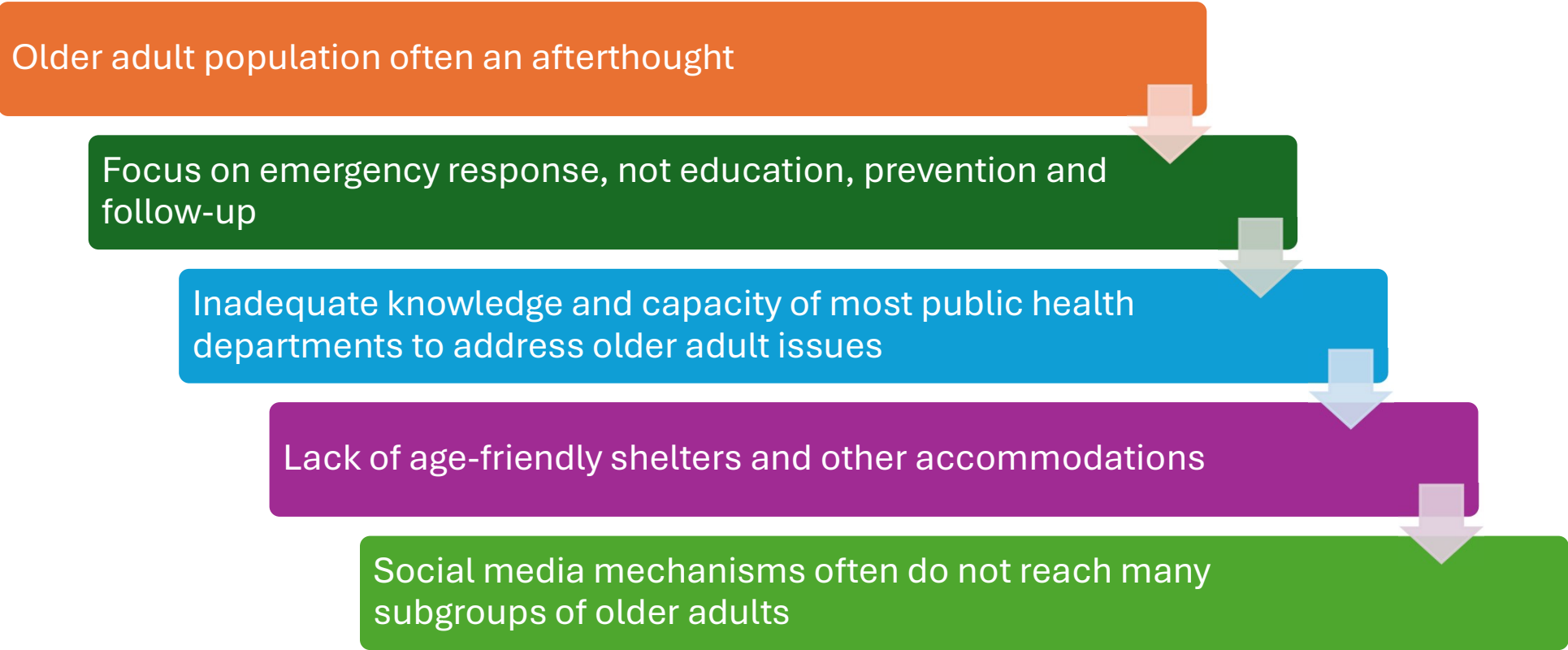
Extreme Weather Events → Higher risk of mortality and spikes in ED visits

Evacuation can be detrimental to health and well-being

Increased rates of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder during and immediately following natural disasters

Major Challenges

Older adult population often an afterthought



Focus on emergency response, not education, prevention and follow-up

Inadequate knowledge and capacity of most public health departments to address older adult issues

Lack of age-friendly shelters and other accommodations

Social media mechanisms often do not reach many subgroups of older adults

Major Challenges

Racial/ethnic and social class inequities in attention, response and follow-up

Rural older adults more at risk but more invisible and hard to reach

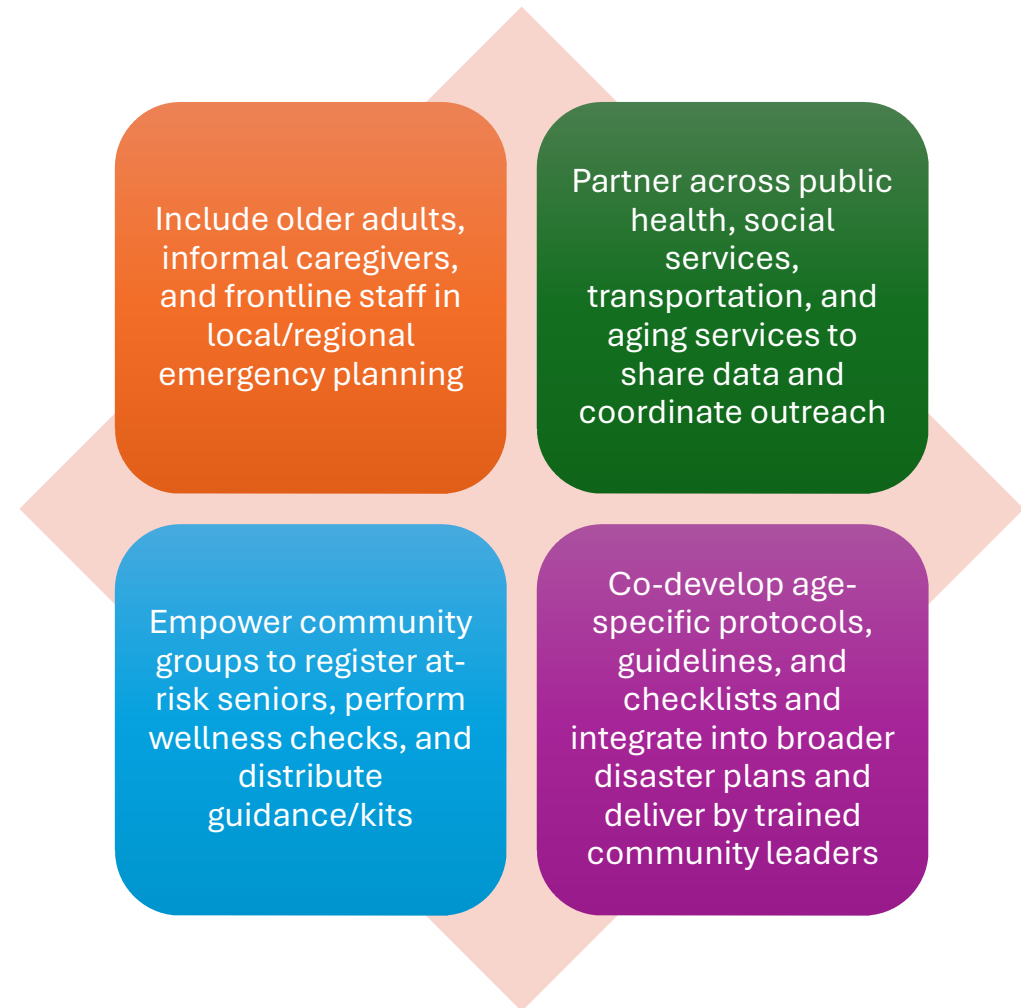
Lack of coordination across agencies, practitioners and CBOs at all levels



Preparedness and Education



Agencies, Community Leaders & Providers



Frontline Professionals Serving Older Adults



USE CLIENT ASSESSMENTS
(MOBILITY, COGNITION, SOCIAL
SUPPORTS) TO MAP
VULNERABILITIES AND
ANTICIPATE NEEDS



TRAIN STAFF TO SUPPORT
INDIVIDUALS BASED ON NEEDS



AFTER DISASTER, RECONNECT
INDIVIDUALS TO SHELTERS,
CARE TEAMS, FINANCIAL/
LEGAL AID, AND MONITOR FOR
DELAYED HEALTH IMPACTS



Evacuation and Relocation Considerations

- Plan accessible transport and designate age-friendly or special needs shelter areas
- Ensure older adults have appropriate supports and resources to address needs
- Relocate to areas where informal support networks can provide care and where older adults can reestablish contact with providers
- Advocate for shelters staffed by professionals experienced in older adult care

Recommendations

- Equal attention to all elements of climate change-related activities focused on older adults
- Age-friendly public health, hospitals and health systems and shelters
- Appropriate and targeted communication strategies
- Federal, state and local agency coordination
- Better community-level education planning and coordination
- Attention to population and geographic disparities



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- Connelly, C., Boerner, K., Bryant, N., & Stone, R. (2024). “At risk but overlooked and underserved: Older adults and vulnerabilities to climate change impact,” In Rajini Srikanth and Linda Thompson (eds). Climate Justice and Public Health: Realities, Responses, and Reimagining for a Better Future. University of Massachusetts Press.
- Bryant, N., Stone, R., Connelly, & Boerner, K. (2022). The Impact of Climate Change: Why Older Adults are Vulnerable. Research Report. LeadingAge LTSS Center @UMass Boston. www.LTSSCenter.org.