

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS TASK FORCE for MENTAL HEALTH, AGING & SUBSTANCE ABUSE FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS:

Despite existing needs, services in rural Southern Illinois may be inaccessible for persons over the age of 60 due to these **barriers**:

- **Lack of transportation:** none or lack of access;
- **Failure to properly screen and identify** potential alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA) disorders;
- **Lack of services** and appropriate AODA programs;
- **Misperceptions** by Public/Professionals of older adults' needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Educate** Senior, Faith, & Medical Communities to Identify Risks;
- **Train & Educate** physicians in local hospitals to provide medical detox;
- **Staff & Fund** treatment units in Shelter Care Homes for Seniors;
- **Increase Awareness** of existing treatments/interventions;
- **Examine** Uniform Accident and Sickness Policy Provision Laws that allow insurers to **deny claims** for alcohol-related injuries (the result is that doctors do not detect, disclose or report the role of substances).

MISPERCEPTIONS of normative aging:

“They’ve been drinking/using for this long, you cannot change it now”
or

“Why does it matter, this is all they have to look forward to”
leads to

Stigma and Ageism.

Stigma: Mental anguish/shame/embarrassment for having a condition that marks one as being different.

Ageism: Prejudice/discrimination against an age group—especially the elderly.

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