

Statement of  
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I am pleased and honored to be here in my capacity as Program Director for "Options Cincinnati", the Jewish Family Service of Cincinnati's NORC Supportive Service Program.

I have 25 years of experience serving the aging network, with the vast majority of that time focused on community-based care. From this perspective, I have embraced the NORCs service concept for its innovative preemptive nature in community-based supportive services. The vast majority of programs serving older adults are ones where we wait for the phone to ring. We wait for a crisis. With Options Cincinnati we've turned this around by developing an approach that:

- Identifies clusters of seniors: NORCs.
- Establishes a comfortable presence.
- Engages residents one-on-one and through programming.
- Builds relationships.
- Creates a sense of community.

Through this program, we have built a trust with the older adults, who now turn to us to head off developing problems together.

NORC Supportive Service Programs, like Options Cincinnati, are responsive to the trends in aging -- research tells us that older adults want to age in place (9-in-10, according to AARP). This trend is not fleeting, as AARP research also indicates that the vast majority of the 45 and older population wants to age in place and receive the services that will allow them to do so. NORC programs, on a large scale, could help a great many older adults throughout the country, perhaps as many as one-third of the senior population, according to the research. In our local experience, we have created a supportive environment to prevent situations from deteriorating to a point where a move out is the only choice left.

In this vein, I want to share with you a story of a couple we work with, Bernice and Albert Kaplan. They have been married 58 years and are both in their mid-

eighties. They live independently in a market rate apartment within a NORC building we service. Bernice uses a walker and most of their care falls to Albert to provide. All of their adult children reside at least a day's drive from Cincinnati.

The Kaplans established their relationship with Options Cincinnati when Bernice began to attend events we would hold in their building and Albert would stop by our office, located on the premises, to sign her up for programs. Albert then began to drop by on a regular basis simply to "chat" with our social worker. These visits over time became supportive counseling for Albert. This relationship became critical after Albert injured his back and was confined to bed. Although their privacy was precious to them, the Kaplans allowed our social worker into their home to help them figure out what they were going to do next.

After completing an assessment our social worker recommended home care and she worked with the Kaplans to arrange the services. Albert has since recovered from his injury, but the positive experience with Options Cincinnati continues to enrich the Kaplan's lives in other ways. Bernice, who previously relied on Albert for all of her transportation needs, now utilizes services of one of our business partners to run errands and outings outside of the building. This reprieve has greatly reduced Albert's caregiver burdens and enhanced both his and Bernice's independence. Any worries about Albert and Bernice's need to move to a more restrictive setting are now nonexistent.

Currently JFS operates in two NORC buildings. Both are non-denominational programs, and one site is home to a significant African American population (22%). To date, the programs serve more than 200 residents combined.

Property owners, CMC and Towne Properties, both openly welcomed locating our programs in their buildings. They understood the merits of our program from the perspective of building stabilization (rents get paid, apartments are safe and accessible, emergencies are reduced and crises avoided, and a caring network is in place). For their part, both properties provide Options Cincinnati with donated space (converted apartments) for our use as offices. They also contribute financial support.

The business community has also embraced our model. Businesses that cater to older adults, such as Bethesda North and Good Samaritan Hospitals (TriHealth), Comfort Keepers, Mullaney's Pharmacy + Home Care and Arden Courts, have helped support our local matching requirement in exchange for advertising space, display space and opportunities to present programs to our residents. Despite there being no exclusivity for referral to their services they have seen the benefit of such a private-public partnership.

Additionally, the Scripps Gerontology Center at Miami University of Ohio is partnering with Options Cincinnati on program evaluation. Some of their project work has revealed that residents living in the Options Cincinnati NORC sites

were “more likely to feel connected to their community, be age-integrated, and have higher assessments of their health,” than senior living in similar buildings not served by the program.

If there was an opportunity to expand the NORC-SSP model, Options Cincinnati has received interest about collaboration from several community partners in our aging network, including Clermont Senior Services (whose interest is a rural NORC in Felicity Ohio), Community Services West in western Hamilton County and Senior Citizens, Inc. about the African-American community in Hamilton Ohio. JFS and the Jewish Federation is looking at how to use the NORC-SSP model to better serve resettled New Americans

If NORC Supportive Service Programs were to become a part of the Older Americans Act, it could significantly help reposition aging services to better serve those aging in place. As the NORC model has a flexible approach to programming and service development -- in order to respond to the specific wants, as much as perceived needs of the service recipients -- the model is adaptable and well suited for the changing continuum of care required as older adults age in the community. Additionally, the model promotes choice, as the older adults contribute to the direction services and activities take and foster the program through their engagement. With so many independent minded baby boomers on the cusp of retirement, NORC Supportive Service Programs that foster their empowerment and self-determination would add to their wellbeing and quality of life.

In Cincinnati we have a well regarded aging network with a range of services available thanks in large part to support by our Jewish Federation, United Way and our area agency on aging: Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio. This great network has been made even better through the opportunity Senator DeWine has afforded us with the Options Cincinnati grant. Our demonstration project has shown that NORC Supportive Services Programs are a natural compliment to services and providers already existing in our community. It has also shown that a program designed to be proactive, rather than reactive, can help reduce the burden on limited resources and improve the health and social outcomes of the seniors served.

I applaud Chairman DeWine, Ranking Member Mikulski and the Subcommittee for holding this morning’s hearing on innovative NORC Supportive Service Programs. As you work to fashion your reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, I hope you will provide an opportunity for further development of NORC Supportive Service Programs throughout the country.

Thank you, again, for this opportunity to contribute to this discussion, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have,

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