



Racial And Structural Equity

Human Services & Older Adults



RocRASE.com

Community Advancing Recommendation Team (CART)

CART Facilitators: Phyllis Jackson, Sandra Katz. Current CART Members: Steven Carter, Tracy Collins, Ann Cunningham, Dan Ercolano, Linda James, Kitty Koul, Dr. Candice Lucas, Joyce Lucas, Jennifer McDermott, Elizabeth McGriff, Evelyn Parker, Denise Read, Shannon Regelsberger, Leanne Rorick, Dee Schwartz, Raquel Singletary, Dr. Silvia Sörensen, Estella Velez-Upegui, Pat Willis.

In fond memory of CART facilitator Martha Hope.

Introduction

Who we are – some background

The Human Services & Older Adults CART convenes monthly to address equity in Monroe County’s human services and aging systems.

Over the past five years, we have worked and volunteered countless hours partnering with DHS, the Monroe County Office of the Aging, the Monroe County Aging Alliance, and community organizations to make Monroe County a Livable Community for Older Adults and to revitalize the Citizens’ Advisory Council.

RASE seeks to dismantle systemic and structural racism and building a more just, equitable, and inclusive Rochester and Monroe County.

Challenges

What slowed us down – some examples

Funding & Policy Barriers

- Monroe is the only county that passes NYSOFA funds to subcontractors instead of providing a 25% match in the OFA budget.
- United Way ended funding to nonprofits that previously covered the 25% match.
- Underfunding continues to limit services despite growing need.
- Office for the Aging can no longer rely on community-based organizations for State-required matching funds.

Authority Limitations

- RASE recommendations were directed at DHS, so the CART’s role was limited to advocacy.
- Some recommendations can’t be addressed locally because of federal and state policies. In these cases, the CART can only act in an advocate role.
- Overlap and gaps between state and county regulations create confusion about agency responsibility and enforcement.

Progress

What got done – some examples

Reduce Racial Bias in Child Welfare Decisions (ref. H.S. R1)

- Monroe County CPS now uses a “Blind Removal” process, removing demographic details from case files to reduce racial bias in child welfare decisions.



Key Focus Areas:

Child Welfare

Cultural Competence

Public Benefit Eligibility

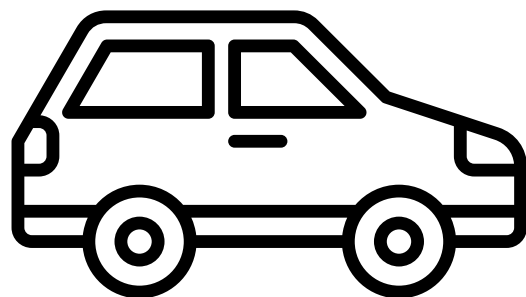
Older Adults

Cultural Brokers (ref. H.S. R2)

- Parent Advocate with lived experience hired to support families.
- HOPE585's Reimagine Initiative reduces unnecessary CPS involvement, centers the voices of families, and advocates for policies that keep kids safe and families together.

Eligibility to Receive Public Assistance (H.S. R10)

- DHS revamped its policies
 - Removed the 85% attendance rule for individuals recovering from substance use.
 - Auto-reschedule of the first missed appointment.
 - Robo-call reminders for upcoming appointments.
 - Transportation support for appointments.

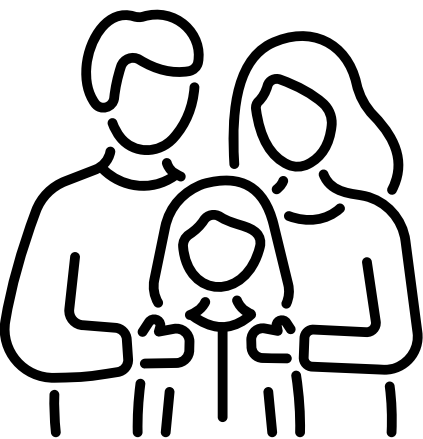


Support and Invest in Livable Communities for Older Adults (ref. O.A. R1)

- Rochester was named best U.S. city for aging in place by This Old House in 2024.
- Rochester and Monroe County are a part of the AARP National Network of Age-Friendly Livable Communities.

Kinship Care Support Increased (ref. H.S. R3)

- Kinship Caregiver Support Program serves Post-adoption, Guardianship, and Kinship families. They received a 5 year grant from OCFS that currently runs into 2029.
- Kinship Care Conference held to connect 49 participants to share resources and support.
- From 2022–2024, Lifespan provided 343-465 units of information and assistance each year to kinship caregivers.



LIVABLE COMMUNITIES Rochester and Monroe County

Future

What’s still to do – some examples

Continue Bridging the Digital Divide

- Broaden access to digital literacy programs for older adults and Black and Brown communities.
- Continue partnering with MCOFA and DHS to embed services in the community.

Advocate for More Programming (Elder Abuse, Isolation, & Mental Health)

- Educate on warning signs of elder & child abuse
- Expand programs for elder abuse to raise awareness of prevention and support.
- Enhance Adult Protective Services removing voluntary participation and fully protecting vulnerable adults when issues like elder abuse arise.

Support the Human Services Workforce

- Advocate for fair pay and benefits for home health aides.
- Highlight the need for ongoing training and professional development.
- Raise awareness of staffing shortages and transportation challenges.
- Promote policies that support career pathways and retention of human services staff.
- Encourage culturally competent workforce development to better serve diverse older adult communities.

Lift Up Community Voices

- Center lived experiences of BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and rural residents
- Gather stories regarding how federal cuts to Medicaid, SNAP, and other programs increase pressure on older adults.
- CART Participation – In need of new participants and representation from different stakeholders (e.g. insurers, transportation providers, etc.)

5th Annual RASE Community Update October 6, 2025
Urban League of Rochester - Successor organization to the Commisison on RASE