

NCOA/NISC SELF-ASSESSMENT and ACCREDITATION MANUAL

FACILITY AND OPERATIONS

PRINCIPLE

A senior center shall establish facilities that promote effective program operation and provide for the health, safety and comfort of participants, staff and community.

RATIONALE

A senior center's appearance has a significant impact on its ability to function as a community focal point for older adults. An appealing and easily identified facility will attract participants and the resources needed to deliver needed services and programs. A visible, accessible location is a major key to a senior center's success.

The building design needs to be coordinated with the activity and service needs of the community. Key to this is knowledge of the needs, interests and values of older adults in the community. Therefore, a broad cross-section of actual and potential participants should be consulted in all phases of facility development or modification. It is highly feasible that the population at a senior center will include participants from two (2) generations. It will be necessary to have environments that are comfortable for both generations. When designing a building, the ability to modify and expand in the future should be of prime importance.

Technical assistance is an invaluable part of modifying or constructing a facility. The senior center can benefit from input from architects, interior designers, gerontologists, occupational and physical therapists,

nutritionists, audiologists, psychologists and other experts who have experience in the field of aging and meet the needs of a diverse population. The focus should be on ways to devise spaces that are versatile and can be used for multiple purposes and to meet the needs of a diverse population.

Senior center design, equipment and furnishings should create a space that is accommodating and welcoming without looking institutional. Universal design should be part of the planning so that accommodations are present yet not obvious to the casual observer. Furnishings and equipment should be easily maintained and comfortable, as well as, provide accommodations to people with limited mobility. They should compensate for changes in levels of physical mobility and sensory losses while encouraging independence and minimizing dependence.

Signage is especially important. Well-placed, legible signage gives people the ability to make independent decisions and feel they have control over their environment. Not only should signage identify places in buildings, but also inform participants about daily scheduled events, upcoming events and other pertinent information. Professional signage reflects a well-thought out plan and respect for the individuals.

Designing a "green building" and reducing senior center's carbon footprint are concepts that need to be considered. The green building theory is the practice of increasing the efficiency with which a

building uses resources and also reducing the building's impact on the environment. Reducing one's carbon footprint is more difficult to visualize yet can be part of a facility's overall plan.

Proper management and maintenance of a building will result in a safe and secure

environment for staff and participants as well as a building that will age well. There should be written procedures for safety measurements. The staff should be trained in the proper procedure or process to handle emergencies. Procedures and agreements for use of facility should be in writing.

FACILITY and OPERATIONS STANDARDS CRITERIA

A. Location, Visibility and Accessibility

1. Selection of a site for a senior center shall be based on information from a variety of entities and individuals. The following factors should be considered:
 - a. Demographic information and projections
 - b. Proximity to other services and facilities
 - c. Convenience to transportation links and safe conditions for participants walking to site
 - d. Adequate parking
 - e. Avoidance of structural barriers and difficult terrain
 - f. Safety and security of participants
 - g. Ability to expand footprint of building
2. A senior center facility shall be visible and easily recognized as a community focal point for program and services.
3. The facility's external appearance should be attractive, well-maintained and appropriate to its use.
4. If the senior center is part of a larger complex, its location should be easily found.
5. Identification signs shall be attractive, visible and clearly indicate the purpose of the facility.

B. Building Design

1. Input on building design and space usage should be gathered from participants and future participants.
2. Consideration needs to be given to the age range of participants and the environments in which they are comfortable.
3. When designing or redesigning the facility, spaces within the building should be both single-use and multiple-use.
4. Moveable walls should allow the size of spaces to be changed.
5. Issues to consider when building or remodeling:

- a. Heating, cooling ventilating systems that are sector or room controlled;
 - b. Illumination levels that are adequate yet have multiple levels of adjustment;
 - c. Using natural light whenever possible;
 - d. Use of acoustical surfaces to retard the transmission of sound between spaces;
 - e. Amplification systems are available for large meeting spaces;
 - f. Planning ahead for technology needs in all areas; and/or
 - g. Planning for space that is regulated by government body, e.g., healthcare space, smoking areas.
4. Access to and movement within the facility should focus on a barrier-free environment and wherever possible, automatic doors should be the priority.
 5. Professionals familiar with the needs of an older population, from these occupations can provide valuable input in designing or redesigning a building:
 - a. Architects
 - b. Interior designers and decorators
 - c. Gerontologists
 - d. Occupational and physical therapists
 - e. Audiologists
 - f. Recreation specialists
 - g. Exercise physiologists
 - h. Information system analysts
 - i. Energy analysts
 6. Consider use of "green building" ideas and exploring ways to make the building energy efficient.
 7. Signage should be presented in a professional manner and have multiple usages, including:
 - a. Identification of spaces;
 - b. identification of exits;
 - c. Announcement of current activities;
 - d. Information on future activities; and
 - e. General and specific information about the senior center.
 8. Toilet facilities should be sufficient and easily accessible.

9. Adequate storage space should be considered.
10. Office space for paid and unpaid staff should be sufficient, encourage the interaction of the staff and participants and provide for good work flow.
11. The environment should provide for groups of all sizes to come together, including space for small group confidential meetings.
12. The future ability to expand or redesign the building should be considered.
13. Universal design solutions should be an integral part of the design of the building.

C. Interior Design and Furnishings

1. Furnishings should be selected for comfort, safety and ease of maintenance.
2. Furnishings and their placement should compensate for visual, mobility, and physical limitations.
3. Areas between furnishings and their arrangement shall promote socialization as well as observation of activities.
4. The choice of furnishings and their arrangement shall promote socialization as well as observation of activities.
5. Floor coverings should be appropriate for the activity.
6. The interior decorations should be:
 - a. Pleasing to the eye;
 - b. Representative of a variety of tastes;
 - c. Well-organized;
 - d. Replaced when worn or outdated;
 - e. Provide honor and acknowledgement to a wide age-range of participants.

D. Management and Maintenance

1. The safety of staff and participants shall take precedence in the management of the building.
2. All applicable federal, state and local building safety regulations should be followed.
3. Regular and on-going review of the building for risks or hazards that could create an

unsafe environment should be completed looking at these items:

- a. Loading and unloading areas;
 - b. Exterior lighting after sunset;
 - c. Street or parking lot crossing;
 - d. Paved exterior walkways; and
 - e. Areas where spills occur.
4. Procedures should be in-place for the safe egress of participants from the building.
 5. These procedures should be posted in each room or spaces and practiced on a regular basis.
 6. All staff should be familiar with safety procedures and equipment, including training in first aid and CPR.
 7. All safety equipment should be properly maintained.
 8. Maintenance and cleaning staff should be sufficient to maintain a clean, sanitary and safe facility.
 9. A regular schedule for maintenance and cleaning shall be maintained.
 10. The senior center should aspire to the highest levels of recycle, reduce and reuse.
 11. Explore the use of "green building" theories and reducing the carbon footprint of the senior center.
 12. The interior and exterior of the building shall be maintained to present a pleasing appearance.
 13. A sufficient budget for maintenance, replacement of furnishings and upkeep of the building shall be planned.
 14. Cleanliness will be maintained by regular disposal of trash and use of pest control methods.
 15. Written procedures and agreements should be in place if the senior center rents its space from another organization or if the senior center rents its own space to other groups. Items that should be considered:
 - a. Time of use;
 - b. Maintenance and responsibility;
 - c. Equipment use;
 - d. Security and safety;
 - e. Liability and insurance; and
 - f. Cost and reimbursement of expenses.

ITEMS FOR ON-SITE REVIEW NOTEBOOK

- Picture of senior center that includes outside signage.
- List of transportation options.
- Drawing that shows layout of senior center.
- Copy of safety procedures.
- Preventive maintenance schedule.
- Written procedure for rental to other groups or agreement for senior center to rent its space.

STANDARDS REQUIRED FOR ACCREDITATION

- Barrier-free access to the facility.
- Safety and maintenance procedures are in place.

These are a few of the web sites that were reviewed at the time of this update. However, be aware that web sites can change. Using Google or another search engine may find additional sites.

www.epa.gov/greenbuilding/pubs/whybuild.htm	EPA on Why Build Green
www.epa.gov/greenbuilding/pubs/about.htm	EPA Definition of Green Building
http://www.universaldesign.org/	Universal Design Alliance
http://www.carbonfootprint.com/	Carbon Footprint