

Bias is Getting Old: Challenging age bias together to build healthier communities and economies

Join the Tri-State Learning Collaborative on Aging virtually on April 20th for one of the most important conversations you are likely to have this year!

We all believe our states should be great places to grow up, work, and grow old – places with healthy economies and vibrant communities that work for everyone. Most of us are using our creativity and confidence to make systemic changes within our spheres of influence to support this vision. Yet, we have been challenged to make broad progress in redesigning our systems of transportation, housing, care and community development. We believe ageism plays a big part in the reason why.

Ageism is not only bad for our personal and collective health, it also results in less support for the systemic changes needed to support us all as we age. In order to build healthier communities and economies, it's time for us to tackle the issue of ageism head-on, and we have to start this work with ourselves and our own organizations and industries.

“People say things like, “If I get like that, just take me out behind the barn and shoot me”... But behind the words is an assumption that we can't write off. Like the grim jokes, it expresses a judgment over which lives are worth living. Like other kinds of prejudice, ageism doesn't have to be something we are aware of to work on us. It gets perpetuated by the choices we make even if we think it's not a factor.”

Reporter Greg Kesich, January 31, 2021, Portland Press Herald

We all form subconscious negative ideas about people based on age. Thankfully, research has shown just being aware of our subconscious biases makes us less likely to act on them and more likely to treat people fairly, including ourselves, especially when coupled with examples of the impact of bias.

In the morning session, we will explore what age-related bias is, how it impacts us, how we can talk about it, and what we can do to counteract it. In the afternoon, we'll break into smaller groups to talk about how age-bias plays out in healthcare settings, workplaces, communities, and even our conversations about diversity, equity, inclusion and justice. In these small groups, we'll share tips and tools that people can use to address age bias wherever they encounter it. To be clear, we don't have all the answers! In these conversations, we'll be learning and building a plan of action together!

We hope you can join us for the whole day, but we've created the morning and afternoon sessions to stand alone. You'll still get a lot out of the conversation if you can only come to one.

[Click here to see our working agenda.](#)

Morning Session

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| 8:45 | Participants join |
| 9:00-9:10 | Welcome to a day of shared learning and action planning!
Jess Maurer, Executive Director, Maine Council on Aging |
| 9:10-9:35 | “Reframing Aging” – a Primer & Place to Start
Janine Vandenburg, Director Changing the Narrative in Colorado |

- 9:35-9:45 Question & Answer
- 9:45-10:00 Wellness Break
- 10:00 Keynote: Let's Get Vulnerable: Exploring and Overcoming Our Own Age-Related Biases
Erin Yelland, Professor of Applied Human Sciences, Kansas State University
Introduction by Premium Event Sponsor, UnitedHealthcare
- This keynote presentation will introduce interpersonal age-related biases and how they influence how we think, feel, and act toward ourselves and others. Be prepared to lay it all out there, call yourself out, and decide if and/or how you want to grow.
- 10:35-10:45 Question & Answer
- 10:45-11:25 Breakout Discussions
- 11:25 The Importance of Age Positivity
Becca Levy, Prof. of Public Health and Psychology, Yale School of Medicine
- 11:45 Reflection: How will we work on our own bias?
Jess Maurer, Executive Director, Maine Council on Aging
- 12:00 Closing

Afternoon Session

- 1:00 Welcome (back) to our group work together
Jess Maurer, Executive Director, Maine Council on Aging
- Participants can choose to go to different tracks in session A and session B, or stay in one track. A description of each session follows. These are interactive sessions, with a mix of presentation and engagement. Come prepared to share your knowledge, resources, and ideas.
- 1:15-2:15 Choose "A" Session to Attend

Healthcare Session A

Sponsored by [Center on Aging and Community Living](#)

Presenters:

Ruta Kadonoff, Vice President for Programs, Maine Health Access Foundation (facilitator)

Rani Snyder, Vice President, Program, The John A. Hartford Foundation

This session will explore how age-bias manifests in the provision of healthcare, the impact it has on older patients, and tools providers can use to keep their bias in check. The focus of the presentation will be on how the framework of age friendly health systems can be used to reduce ageism in healthcare.

Workforce Session A

Sponsored by

Presenters:

Don Harden, Vice-Chair, Maine Council on Aging (facilitator)

Janine Vandenburg, Director Changing the Narrative in Colorado

In the face of severe workforce shortages, and despite having an abundance of older people who can work, this session will explore why policymakers and employers have not embraced the older worker as a solution to our workforce challenges, and what we can do to address age-bias in employment.

Community Session A

Sponsored by [Town & Country Federal Credit Union](#)

Presenters:

Martha Tecca, President and Interim Executive Director, Community Care of Lyme

Elizabeth Gattine, Senior Policy Associate, Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine

How is ageism showing up within your “aging in community” (i.e. age friendly, aging in place, village, volunteer driver, senior center...) work? Have you engaged your advisory committee, board, staff and volunteers in a conversation about age bias? Do you “other” in your communications or play into stereotypes that perpetuate ageism? This session will explore what community initiatives can do to combat ageism within their work.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice Session A

Sponsored by [Southern Maine Agency on Aging](#)

Presenters: coming soon

So many organizations in our region are taking on the issues of diversity, equity, inclusion and justice, but few of these conversations include ageism or its impact as a topic of inquiry. Unlike other sessions, this session is an exploration of what these terms mean to older people and how we can begin to build a framework for talking about ageism through this lens and incorporating it into the important work being done on DEIJ in our region.

2:15-2:30 Wellness Break

2:30-3:30 Choose “B” Session to Attend

Healthcare Session B

Sponsored by [Alzheimer's Association](#)

Presenters:

Ruta Kadonoff, Vice President for Programs, Maine Health Access Foundation

Marilyn Gugliucci, Professor & Director, Geriatrics, University of New England

This session will explore how our own age-bias is impacting our care and the care we offer to our older relatives and friends? Older people are less likely to seek care for what they believe is “normal aging problems” and have poorer health outcomes if they hold negative stereotypes about aging. Conversely, those who live in age positive environments have better health outcomes. This session will explore how we can address these issues and become more assertive in the face of age-bias care by our care providers.

Workforce Session B

Sponsored by [SeniorsPlus](#)

Presenters:

Don Harden, Vice-Chair, Maine Council on Aging (facilitator)

Janine Vandenburg, Director Changing the Narrative in Colorado

Our own beliefs about our abilities to compete and thrive in new work environments, to learn new skills, and to be a valuable asset to employers may keep us from actively pursuing jobs that would help our economy and our personal financial security later in life. This session will explore how we can overcome our own bias to remain productive in the economy.

Community Session B

Presenters:

Sponsored by [Bangor Savings Bank](#)

Nate Rudy, Town Manager, Town of Gray, Maine (moderator)

Sylvia von Aulock, Executive Director, Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission

Julie Fralich, Community Member, Maine Council on Aging

How is ageism playing out in your community related to planning and funding initiatives that support healthy aging? This session will explore municipal decision making and the opportunities residents have to engage municipal decision makers in conversations about implicit age bias to move them from “aging challenges are an individual’s responsibility to solve” to understanding the challenges we face as we age are collective and beyond our individual ability to solve.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice Session B

Sponsored by

Presenters:

Jennifer Rabalais, Co-Director, Center on Aging and Community Living, University of New Hampshire

This session will explore how our implicit biases about the sameness of older people in our region stand in the way of serving all older people and welcoming everyone to the table. From our own beliefs about older people being bad at using technology, to thinking about them all needing services in the same way, our own thinking may be stopping us from building services that work for all older people in our region. This session will explore how we can begin to address all bias within our organizations to ensure we really are serving everyone.

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| 3:30 | Reconvene and Report Back: Actions + Ahas |
| 3:50 | Reflection: How will we combat bias together?
Jess Maurer, Executive Director, Maine Council on Aging |
| 4:00 | Closing |