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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****The Council on Aging of Central Oregon Launches Critical Survey to Shape the Future of Senior Services**

*Survey seeks to identify gaps and improve support for older adults and caregivers in Central Oregon*

September 17th, 2024 – Bend, OR – The Council on Aging of Central Oregon (CoA) is excited to announce the launch of its Community Needs Assessment Survey. This crucial tool will help us identify the needs and service gaps affecting older adults, individuals with disabilities, and caregivers across our region. The survey, required under the Older Americans Act, will help inform CoA's strategic Area Plan, ensuring services are developed to meet the growing needs of seniors in Deschutes, Crook, Jefferson, and North Klamath counties.

The Area Plan is a comprehensive, four-year plan that outlines how CoA will address the needs of older adults, adults with disabilities, and caregivers within its region. It is developed through public participation, including input from surveys, public hearings, and advisory councils. The Area Plan outlines priorities for services like nutrition, information and referrals, social engagement, and caregiver support. The plan ensures

that CoA allocates resources efficiently, adheres to the Older Americans Act (OAA) guidelines, and advocates for essential services that support seniors' dignity, independence, and quality of life. This Area Plan, as well as those from similar organizations, will then be used to inform future federal funding and programmatic regulations.

Aging in Central Oregon presents unique challenges, including rising housing costs, healthcare access issues, a lack of public transportation, and increasing social isolation, especially in rural areas. Many live on fixed incomes and must make tough choices between necessities like housing, medication, and groceries. In addition, family caregivers face significant burdens, as many manage complex care for loved ones while struggling with financial and emotional stress.

The Area Plan will play a crucial role in understanding and prioritizing these challenges, enabling CoA to develop targeted solutions and advocate for the support needed in our community. To create this comprehensive and robust plan, CoA needs public input and participation in the Community Needs Assessment Survey. This feedback will help ensure OAA services are effectively tailored to meet local needs.

### **Survey Participation**

The survey seeks input from residents ages 55 and older, unpaid family and friend caregivers, Veterans, and adults with physical disabilities. Participants will be entered for a chance to win a variety of gift cards.

The survey is available online in English at [www.councilonaging.org/survey](http://www.councilonaging.org/survey) and in Spanish at <https://forms.gle/oHCiZDV1HekDFHbSA>. Paper copies will also be available at senior centers around Central Oregon. For those needing assistance, staff and volunteers are available to help complete the survey by calling 541-678-5483.

### **About the Council on Aging of Central Oregon**

Since 1975, the Council on Aging of Central Oregon (CoA) has served as the designated Area Agency on Aging for Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson counties, offering adults aged 60 and older and their loved ones a range of support services. CoA advocates for, empowers, and guides older adults and their loved ones to live with independence and well-being. To find out more about the Council on Aging of Central Oregon, visit [www.councilonaging.org](http://www.councilonaging.org) or call (541) 678-5483.

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