



Advancing Health in America



Fall 2024 Age-Friendly Health Systems Action Community: **An Invitation to Join Us**

September 2024 – April 2025

Facilitated by the American Hospital Association

This content was created especially for:



An initiative of The John A. Hartford Foundation and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) in partnership with the American Hospital Association (AHA) and the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA).

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What Is an Age-Friendly Health System?

Three factors that impact the care of older adults in the United States today are occurring simultaneously, and together the factors make a compelling case for hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations to better support the needs of older adults and caregivers.

- **Demography:** The number of adults over the age of 65 is projected to double over the next 25 years.¹
- **Complexity:** Approximately 80% of older adults have at least one chronic disease, and 77% have at least two.² Many health care organizations are not well equipped to deal with the social complexity many older adults face.³
- **Disproportionate harm:** Older adults have higher rates of health care utilization as compared to other age groups and experience higher rates of health care-related harm, delay and discoordination of care. One consequence of this is a rate of ED utilization that is four times that of younger populations.⁴

Health care organizations frequently are not prepared for this complexity, and older adults suffer a disproportionate amount of harm while in the care of the organization. To address these challenges, in 2017 the John A. Hartford Foundation and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI), in partnership with the American Hospital Association (AHA) and the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), set a bold vision to build a social movement so that all care with older adults is age-friendly care, which:

- follows an essential set of evidence-based practices (known as the 4Ms);
- causes no harm; and
- aligns with “What Matters” to the older adult and their family and caregivers.

The [4Ms Framework](#) — What Matters, Medication, Mentation and Mobility — makes care of older adults, which can be complex, more manageable. The 4Ms identify the core issues that should drive all health care and decision making for older adult patients. The 4Ms organize care and focus on the older adult’s wellness and strengths rather than solely on disease. They are relevant regardless of an older adult’s individual disease(s). They apply regardless of the number of functional problems an older adult may have, or that person’s cultural, ethnic or religious background.

The 4Ms are a framework, not a program, to guide all care of older adults wherever and whenever they touch your organization’s care and services. The intention is to incorporate the 4Ms into existing care, rather than layering them on top, to organize the efficient delivery of effective care.

Since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has put an increased burden on older adults, families and health care teams. Especially during this challenging time, we have found that the 4Ms can reduce burden on care teams by providing an organizing framework to focus on the most critical care for older adults.



What Matters

Know and align care with each older adult’s specific health outcome goals and care preferences including, but not limited to, end-of-life care, and across settings of care.

Medication

If medication is necessary, use Age-Friendly medication that does not interfere with What Matters to the older adult, Mobility, or Mentation across settings of care.

Mentation

Prevent, identify, treat, and manage dementia, depression, and delirium across settings of care.

Mobility

Ensure that older adults move safely every day in order to maintain function and do What Matters.

Age-Friendly Health Systems practice the 4Ms in every interaction with older adults. IHI, a partner of the AHA, recognizes care locations, such as hospitals, practices, retail clinics and nursing homes, as age friendly when they share a description of how they assess, document and act on each of the 4Ms.

What Is an Age-Friendly Health Systems Action Community and How Can We Join?

An Action Community is a network of teams across different health care organizations that come together to accelerate their own adoption of the 4Ms. Guided by expert faculty and an “all-teach, all-learn” model, teams participate in monthly webinars and attend an in-person or virtual meeting with the goal of learning, testing and sharing strategies to improve care for older adults. The Action Community is designed as an on-ramp for hospital-based teams (e.g., emergency departments, intensive care units, general wards, medical-surgical units), ambulatory care teams (e.g., primary care, specialty care) and nursing home teams (e.g., post-acute and longterm care) to test and adopt age-friendly care.

If you are **ready to enroll** in the 2024-2025 AHA Action Community, please complete the registration form using this [link](#).

To participate in the Action Community, interested teams will be asked to:

- Identify a clinical care setting and patient population to test the 4Ms.
- Bring together an interdisciplinary team. Please consider engaging a diverse team that reflects your older adult community, including an older adult on the team, and enlisting an individual with prior experience using quality improvement methodology.
- Identify a leader with authority over the selected care setting or population who can support the team’s activities and progress, and participate in 30-minute quarterly leadership calls.

Learn More about the Action Community! Join one of the informational webinars for a high-level overview of the Age-Friendly Health Systems movement, discussion about how to engage in the Action Community and insights from hospitals about their age-friendly journey.	
June Informational Webinar	June 13, 2024 11 am CT 12 pm ET Register Here
AHA Podcast	July 2024 Listen Here
August Informational Webinar	August 7, 2024 12 pm CT / 1 pm ET Register here

What Happens During an Action Community?

Monthly Team Webinars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Team Webinars are 60-minute webinars focused on understanding the steps for testing and implementing age-friendly care in your setting and illustrating 4Ms care in action through examples. – Purpose: Teams can describe how the 4Ms will be adapted and implemented in their setting and count the number of older adults whose care includes all 4Ms.
Monthly Topical Peer Coaching Webinars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Topical Peer Coaching Webinars provide an opportunity for participants to learn from one another and share ideas, successes and challenges related to a specific topic or setting (e.g., optimizing the EHR, developing measurement systems). – Purpose: Through peer-to-peer sharing, teams identify specific ideas they can test and ways to address challenges.
In-Person Convening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – This convening with health care organizations from around the country focuses on all-teach, all-learn approaches to accelerate your 4Ms adoption. Additional details about the meeting will be provided soon after enrollment in the Action Community – Purpose: Teams will come together across the Action Community to share ideas, build relationships and learn approaches for sustainability and spread.
Ongoing Testing of Age-Friendly Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Informed by the Monthly Team Webinars and the Guide to Using the 4Ms in the Care of Older Adults, participants will test and begin to implement specific key actions in their setting.
Recognition as an Age-Friendly Health System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Action Community participants work toward two levels of recognition as an Age-Friendly Health System. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recognition as an Age-Friendly Health System – Participant: Visit IHI for the description worksheet that best corresponds to your site of care. Determine how you will practice the 4Ms in your clinical care setting and submit a 4Ms care description at afhs@ihi.org. You will receive feedback from an IHI improvement advisor on whether the description meets the minimum definition of an Age-Friendly Health System. 2. Recognition as an Age-Friendly Health System – Committed to Care Excellence: Once your description is approved by IHI, to be recognized as Committed to Care Excellence, count the number of older adults that receive 4Ms care in your setting according to your description. You will be recognized at this level after submitting three months of counts.

What Are the Benefits of Participating?

- **Improved care for older adults through the organization and delivery of evidence-based care.** At the end of the seven-month Action Community, participating organizations will have implemented specific changes of the Age-Friendly Health Systems 4Ms Framework in their unit, clinic, emergency department or program.
- **Recognition by the AHA, IHI and the John A. Hartford Foundation as an Age Friendly Health System.** By submitting a description of how you are operationalizing the 4Ms in your setting, you will be celebrated as achieving Level 1 Recognition – Participant status. The next recognition level is achieved by submitting monthly counts of the older adults reached by 4Ms care in your setting to be recognized and celebrated on [AHA's](#) and [IHI's](#) websites, in press releases and in other venues as being an Age-Friendly Health System – Committed to Care Excellence.
- **All-teach, all-learn model.** By participating in the Action Community, you will have the opportunity to build relationships and learn from expert faculty, as well as from peers around the country who have found innovative solutions to similar challenges and obstacles that your health care organization may face. In addition, you will have opportunities to share your organization's learning and celebrate its progress with the movement.

What Is the Cost to Participate?

There is no fee to participate in the Age-Friendly Health Systems Action Community. A health system, hospital or practice in the U.S. can enroll as many sites or teams to participate as it would like. Many organizations that have participated in previous Action Communities will join and focus on spreading the 4Ms to additional care locations in their health system or organization.

The cost of participation includes the time your team will allocate to engage in Action Community activities, such as participating on monthly webinars, attending an in-person or virtual meeting, testing specific changes in daily work, and asking questions and sharing progress in between program activities. To be recognized as an Age-Friendly Health System, your organization must submit a description of how it is operationalizing the 4Ms.

The Age-Friendly Health Systems 4Ms is a framework for the delivery of improved, evidence-based care, and it is not a program or model to be layered on top of existing care. Given that, the 4Ms Framework guides

how existing resources are used and does not necessarily require new resources. IHI developed [The Business Case for Becoming an Age-Friendly Health System](#) to help organizations understand the potential financial benefits of becoming an Age-Friendly Health System.

What Data Submission Is Required to Participate?

To participate in the Action Community and be recognized as an Age-Friendly Health System, you will share with IHI how you plan to put the 4Ms into practice. Completion of this initial step will result in your organization being recognized as an Age-Friendly Health System – Participant. Once your description of putting the 4Ms into practice is reviewed by IHI for alignment with becoming an Age-Friendly Health System, you will be invited to share a count of older adults whose care includes the 4Ms each month, for three months. Completion of this step will result in your organization being recognized as an Age-Friendly Health System – Committed to Care Excellence. A worksheet version of the description can be found on page 22 in the [Guide to Using the 4Ms in the Care of Older Adults](#).

During the Action Community, you will learn how to set up a measurement dashboard to study the impact of adopting the 4Ms in your setting. This is an important step in putting the 4Ms into practice and is critical for sustaining and scaling up your age-friendly efforts. **However, your team will not be required to report this data to IHI.**

Partners

Age-Friendly Health Systems is an initiative of the John A. Hartford Foundation and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) in partnership with the American Hospital Association (AHA) and the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA).

The Action Community also draws on the expertise of the Advisory Group and experts in the 4Ms, testing and scale-up methodology, and organizational psychology. A full list of advisors can be found on www.ihi.org/AgeFriendly.

AHA Team

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Questions?

If you are ready to enroll in the 2024-2025 AHA Action Community, please complete the registration form using this [link](#).

Please do not hesitate to contact the AHA Age-Friendly Health Systems team by emailing ahaactioncommunity@aha.org. We look forward to working together to ensure that every older adult always receives age-friendly care.

References

- ¹ *The State of Aging and Health in America 2013*. Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Department of Health and Human Services; 2013. <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/pdf/State-Aging-Health-in-America-2013.pdf>
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- ⁴ Institute of Medicine Committee on the Future Health Care Workforce for Older Americans. *Retooling for an Aging America: Building the Health Care Workforce*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press; 2008. 2, Health Status and Health Care Service Utilization. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK215400/>