

**Screening Ohio Seniors End Report**  
**Grant period March 2008 through September 30, 2008**

**Funded by the Older Ohioan Behavioral Health Network**

The Screening Ohio Seniors project emerged from the collaborative efforts of many organizations in Medina County who serve the older adult population in Medina County. The community partners directly involved in this effort included Kathe Shook of Catholic Charities, Sandy Calvert of The HANDS Foundation, Joyce Giles of The Medina General Hospital, Nancy Likens of the Wadsworth Center for Older Adults, and Cindy McQuown of Cornerstone Wellness, Inc. The Medina ADAMH board was instrumental in guiding the grant development process. Sandy Calvert served as the grant coordinator for this project. These five organizations, with the support of the community of providers for older adults, worked closely to examine the current state of older adults and substance use problems in Medina County. Work proceeded to develop a tool to help identify risk factors in older adults that could help caregivers and service providers better identify those who may need further intervention. The aim during this grant cycle was to increase awareness of the scope of the concern that currently existed in Medina's older adult population regarding substance and medication risks. Additionally, this project afforded an opportunity to gather baseline data on older adults in Medina, for the sake of comparison to national trends in older adults regarding medication and substance use risk. Finally, this project established the beginning for community efforts to better define a clinical pathway of intervention for older adults who show risk signs for medication or substance related problems.

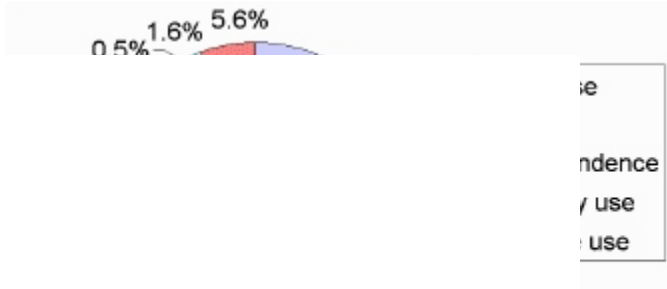
The original proposal submitted in October 2007 was to collect 1200 completed surveys from older adults in Medina County. Funding for the grant only became available in March 2008 therefore the total number of surveys completed was 784, with 34% aged 80 and older. Men represented 26.2% of the total sample, with women representing 73.8%. Only 2.8% were repeat completers of the survey. The sample reflected 34% from the Wadsworth area, 30% from the Medina city area, and 16% from the Brunswick area. Smaller percentages were seen from the remaining towns in Medina county, at 2% or under for Seville, Lodi, Spencer, and Chippewa Lake. Thirty four percent of the survey participants reported an income within the \$10,000 to 19,000 ranges. Twenty-seven percent reported that they had two doctors providing their care.

Preliminary screening data from the mini-grant was presented at the annual Senior Summit held in July 2008 at Medina General Hospital. More than seventy people from different disciplines attended; law enforcement, ministerial, government officials, hospital administrators, and senior nonprofits and for profits. Barbara Riley, Executive Director of the Ohio Department of Aging provided an overview of aging issues in Ohio. Frank Fleischer director of the Older Ohioans Behavioral Health Network was in attendance also. The various disciplines at the Senior Summit suggested valuable suggestions to modify the screening tool to better capture information about medication use. Open-ended items were changed to a forced choice number to better capture responses and reduce missing data.

The screening tool gathered information on areas of potential risk for older adults regarding their medication, their life experiences, and their alcohol use. The current literature suggests that there are unique vulnerabilities for older adults in terms of the number, types, and combinations of medications they take, their experiences of loss, and their alcohol consumption. These vulnerabilities are exacerbated by the lack of identification of substance use problems in this population. This project showed the Medina older adults report use of 4.54 prescribed medicines a day and 2 over the counter medicines each day, on average. The reported use of prescribed medicine for sleep and nervousness average was less than one per day.

Reports of loss experienced by older adults during the past two years, has been found to be related to the incidence of depression and also alcohol use in older adults examined. The largest loss experienced by the Medina County group was in the area of health problems, which represented about 32% of the survey participants. Nearly 35% of respondents experienced the death of a close family member, their spouse, or a close friend in the past two years. About 18% of those who reported daily alcohol use and almost 13% of those who reported weekly alcohol use, reported that they had increased their alcohol use in response to experiencing a loss. Nearly 21% of those who reported alcohol use, reported that they had increased their alcohol use after experiencing a loss in their lives and 12% reported to making up rules to manage their alcohol use. Both of these behaviors could suggest problem drinking patterns.

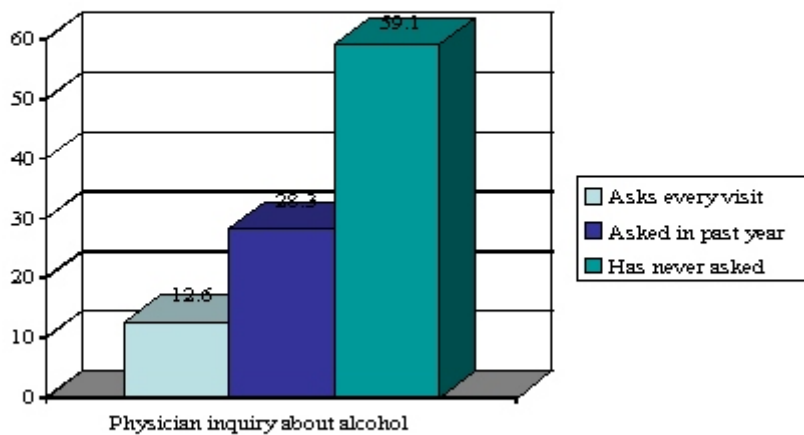
Alcohol consumption in the Medina group is slightly under the national averages, with 29% of the Medina group reporting alcohol use, while the National Household survey showed that 32.7% of older adults report alcohol use. In the 708 participants who responded to this item, 7.2% reported daily alcohol use, 8.5% reported weekly alcohol consumption and 13.5% reported monthly alcohol consumption. Nearly 71% reported no alcohol use at all.



National Household survey

Medina County group

### Asking about alcohol



Participants report that their physicians inquire about their medication and their alcohol consumption very differently. Nearly 69% reported that their physician asks about the medicines they are taking at every visit

compared to 59% reporting that their physician never asks about their alcohol consumption. This observation is of concern given the number of older adults who may be engaging in harmful patterns of alcohol use, or have potential for harm from drug/alcohol interactions. In the chart below, the percentages are illustrated for those surveyed who reported alcohol use. Well over half of those reporting current alcohol use also report that their physician has not asked about their alcohol use at all.

Of those reporting daily use of alcohol, 94% have never considered talking to someone about help for their drinking and 97% of the weekly drinkers said the same. In response to whether a doctor or nurse had ever said they were concerned for their drinking, 94% of the daily drinkers responded that none had expressed concern and 100% of the weekly drinkers reported none had expressed concern. The ability to detect an older adults risk for problems with alcohol will remain hidden: if neither the patient sees a need to ask, nor the physician is in the practice of not understanding the importance of asking, and by not asking, also not aware of older adults who should be told of the concern their alcohol use poses to their health.

In conclusion, this project has assisted in gathering initial data regarding prescribed and over the counter medication use and alcohol use patterns in Medina County older adults. It was useful in raising the awareness of Medina County providers to the issue of medication and substance use concerns in this vulnerable population as well as introducing a method to begin to screen for warning signs in this age group that merit further investigation. Thirty agencies participated in the professional training for Medina County and more than twenty-two different Medina county agencies implemented the screening tool with their older adult clients. The screening tool was also presented at the State of Ohio Court Investigator Training, where over 160 court investigators, learned how to use the screening tool. The lessons learned from this project, as well as the screening tool, will be the topic of a presentation at this year's All Ohio Counselor's Conference in November. The entire project has helped Medina County move to the next step of further defining a set of steps for providers to follow, to better intervene with older adults at risk for medication and substance use concerns. Our efforts have been furthered by the Older Ohioans Behavioral Health Network grant for 2009. Revisions are being made to the screening tool, to screen for functionality and depression. A county wide focus group is scheduled to take place on January 27, 2009, to engage key

community participants in further development of the clinical pathway to intervene with older adults who show indications of substance use, mental health, or functioning concerns.