

UW's Wyoming Center on Aging Receives \$3.75 Million Grant to Address Needs in State

February 10, 2020 – The Wyoming Center on Aging (WyCOA), located at the University of Wyoming, recently received a \$3.75 million grant that will strengthen and enhance partnerships to help address the needs of Wyoming's aging population and practicing health professionals.

The Health Resources and Services Administration awarded the funds through its Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP). This is the second award of this type for WyCOA.

The purpose of the Wyoming GWEP (WyGWEP) is to collaborate with partner organizations to improve the health and wellbeing of Wyoming's older adults by developing a workforce that embraces age-friendly healthcare, better population health and more cost-effective healthcare.

"This will be accomplished by maximizing patient and family engagement in the care of older adults and by integrating age-friendly practices into primary care," says Christine L McKibbin, WyCOA project director and UW psychology professor.

The Wyoming Department of Health Aging Division predicts that -- from 2016 to 2030 -- the number of Wyoming residents aged 65 or older is expected to grow from approximately 90,000 to 138,000, a 56 percent increase. Wyoming's entire population is expected to increase by less than 12 percent during that time; meaning the majority of growth will come from the senior citizen population.

"The University of Wyoming has expressed a commitment to respond to the challenges of this rapidly aging population," McKibbin, says. "Our age-friendly programs will take a comprehensive approach to providing healthcare to Wyoming's aging population."

The goals of the program include:

- Implementing training to increase rates of advance care planning and chronic care management.
- Training healthcare providers to assess and address the needs of older adults.
- To enhance the skills of older adults and caregivers to manage chronic disease and dementia.
- To build partnerships with community-based organizations to address gaps in healthcare communities while also addressing social determinants of health.

"It is said that Wyoming is one big town with really long streets, and it will be the partnerships we build within communities that will help our aging population the most," McKibbin says.

WyGWEP key partners include the Wyoming Department of Health Aging Division, Cheyenne Regional Medical Center, Iverson Medical Group and Eastern Shoshone Tribal Health.

To learn more about the WyGWEP partnership and the work of UW's WyCOA, visit www.uwyo.edu/wycoa.

