

LEGISLATIVE OUTREACH GUIDE

OVERVIEW

The use of space by multiple generations makes common sense, benefits young people and older adults, and can be an important solution in helping communities and organizations stretch their scarce resources. By constructing innovative facilities that allow for the sharing of resources, intergenerational shared site programming can both meet the needs of and improve outcomes for children, youth, and older adults. The current fiscal constraints faced by communities across the nation are forcing many to make tough decisions on the construction and rehabilitation of facilities and the delivery of critical services. Intergenerational shared sites act as a mechanism to optimize limited resources while helping to address the social implications of an increasingly age-segregated society where children often spend their days in school and/or childcare centers, while many elders socialize in age-isolated facilities.

While the number of shared sites across the U.S. is increasing, their benefits are not widely known to our policymakers. Elected officials have the potential to support legislative efforts to remove barriers that exist during the development of a shared site. In order to promote these facilities and intergenerational programs to your elected officials, Generations United is encouraging shared sites across the country to open your doors during August. In an effort to facilitate this process and present a national agenda, Generations United is hosting a webinar for organizations interested in participating and learning more about how to discuss the importance of these innovative facilities. This document will lay out the basic elements of planning a visit with Members of Congress and state elected officials. It also includes suggested talking points when discussing the benefits of shared sites with elected officials.

GOAL OF AUGUST 2011 LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT VISITS

GU is launching a grassroots campaign to raise the visibility of innovative intergenerational programs with elected officials. As a first step, we are asking you to open your doors and invite your Representatives, Senators, and local elected officials to your center during the month of August when they will be back in their home districts. Through this concerted and coordinated effort we hope to:

- Identify supportive legislators
- Promote the creation and expansion of shared sites
- Showcase award winning facilities

REMEMBER, the most ardent champions of any given issue often are a result of constituent outreach and firsthand experience!

WHAT ARE SHARED SITES?

Intergenerational shared sites are programs where older adults and young people receive services at the same site. Both generations interact during regularly scheduled intergenerational activities, as well as through informal encounters. Generations United uses the term “Intergenerational Shared Site”; others refer to these types of programs as co-located facilities, intergenerational care, intergenerational day care, or multigenerational centers. Intergenerational shared sites vary in structure, but are generally composed of two components; one that serves the needs of older adults and a second that serves children/youth. In addition, many facilities have designated “shared spaces” that provide additional opportunities for spontaneous intergenerational interaction.ⁱ *The following chart lists common program components:*ⁱⁱ



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SHARED SITES | MAKING THE CASE

BENEFITS OF INTERGENERATIONAL SHARED SITES

- Enhances quality of life for all participants
- Provides needed services to the community
- Increases cost savings & creates opportunities to share resources
- Enhances employee benefits for programs with on-site childcare
- Attracts additional funding sources and acts a positive public relations/marketing tool
- Improves attitudes about different age groups

BENEFITS FOR YOUTH/CHILDREN

Young people gain an enhanced perception of the elderly. They benefit from interpersonal relationships with persons from a different age group, who can provide guidance, wisdom and support and have the opportunity to share their unique skills and talents as well. Preschool children involved in intergenerational programs had higher personal/social developmental scores (by 11 months) than preschool children involved in non-intergenerational programs.

BENEFITS FOR OLDER ADULTS

Studies show that sharing activities with younger people promotes positive health gains for older adults such as burning more calories due to exercise, sustaining fewer falls, and a reduction in reliance on canes. Adults with dementia or other cognitive impairments experience more positive affect during interactions with children than they do during non-intergenerational activities and these changes last even after the activity ends.

WHO TO INVITE

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- The contacts for each Congressional office (last page of this document).
 - If no name is provided, call their office and ask for the contact information for your elected official's scheduler (name, phone number and email address).
- Customize the "letter template" below and tailor the details for your event.
- One Pager, provided by Generations United, on Shared Sites
- One pager of information about your Shared Site

WHEN SHOULD I SEND THE INVITATIONS

As soon as you know the specific details of your site visit, such as date/time/location, etc., send your invitation, since schedules tend to fill up quickly. It is important that elected officials receive an invitation from you – after all, you're their constituent.

HOW DO I SEND THE INVITATION

Mail to Congressional offices in Washington, DC is often delayed by several weeks, so our recommendation is to e-mail a letter of invitation to your Representative or Senator's office in Washington, and send a copy to the nearest district office within your state. All of this information and more can be found through the attached contact lists for Members of Congress.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOLLOW-UP

A few days after you send your invitation, follow up with the official's office to make sure they received your correspondence and see if there are any questions. You may want to encourage the office to let you know whether or not the official can attend by a certain date so you can include their participation in your future press releases. If you do this, be sure to explain that the elected official is always welcome at your facility, even if their schedule changes at the last minute and would allow them to participate. Additionally, if he/she isn't able to participate, ask if their spouse/family would like to participate or if a member of his/her staff might be able to tour the facility on behalf of the Senator/Representative. This is a way of still involving the official even if he/she personally can't attend.

As you learn which elected officials are planning to participate in your events, please let Generations United know so we can track those officials who are interested in shared sites in their communities.

PRESS

Once you receive confirmation that your elected official will be attending your site visit your organization should reach out to the press to let them know of the event. The policymaker's staff may also notify your local press of the event but it is a good idea for your organization to do so as well. If you would like assistance in writing a press release for your site visit, please reach out to Melissa Ness at mness@gu.org and we will provide a draft template for you to use.

LETTER TEMPLATE

Sample Invitation Letter to Elected Official

NOTE: Words in *blue* indicate text that should be changed to suit your projects needs.

[Month, Date, Year]

Organization

Address

City, State, Zip

The Honorable [First and Last Name]

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear Senator or Representative [Last Name]:

I am writing to invite you to participate in a site visit of the [Name of Shared Site] in [Town, State] on [Month, Date, Time]. The purpose of the site visit will be to highlight the innovative model of intergenerational programs and demonstrate how resources are best used in communities when they connect generations rather than separate them. Attached to this [email/letter] you will find additional information about this shared site and others here in [state].

[Brief paragraph on your organization's mission, accomplishments/awards, news story features about your organization, and your impact in the community.]

The site visit will include a brief tour of the facility as well as an opportunity to interact with the children and older adults in the program and participate in intergenerational activities. In addition, we have extended this invitation to [list the names and titles of any other elected officials you are inviting]. The event will be open to the press. If you are interested in participating, please contact [Contact Name] at [Phone Number] or [Email Address] for further information.

Sincerely,

[Name & Signature]

RESOURCES

- Questions? Email Melissa Ness at mness@gu.org
- Website: <http://www2.gu.org/OURWORK/PublicPolicy/SharedSpacesPolicy.aspx>

ⁱ Amy Goyer, Intergenerational Shared Site and Shared Resource Programs: Current Models. (Washington D.C. Generations United Background Paper: Project Share, 2001).

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

Click here to find out who your Members of Congress are: <http://www.ezpetition.net/congressorg/dbq/officials/>. Then call the phone number listed to ask for their scheduler's name and the best way to submit a scheduling request.

Contacts:

Rep. _____ Scheduler: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____
Fax: _____

Senator _____ Scheduler: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____
Fax: _____

Senator _____ Scheduler: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____
Fax: _____

Site Visit Planning Checklist:

- Decide on the date of your site visit
- Decide who will you invite
 - Senators, Representative(s), etc.
- Call legislator's office + ask for their scheduler's contact information
 - (name/phone/email/fax)
 - Ask their preferred method for receiving event requests
- When you submit event request: Follow up with scheduler end of the day to ensure they received it
 - Inform Melissa Ness when you've submitted the request
- After several weeks: Follow up with scheduler to see if they event has been approved
 - Inform Melissa Ness when an event has been confirmed