Self-Help Guide
to Pre-Retirement Planning

for New York State Employees

sponsored by
NEW YORK STATE
Governor's Office of Employee Relations
and
Office of the State Comptroller

developed by
NEW YORK STATE OFFICE FOR THE AGING
Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor • Greg Olsen, Executive Deputy Director

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Updated as of
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This Guide is updated each year in January.
Pre-Retirement Planning for New York State Employees

We are pleased to offer you a *Self-Help Guide to Pre-Retirement Planning* tailored to meet your needs as a New York State employee. This *Guide* will assist you in planning for one of the most challenging periods in your life - retirement.

The *Self-Help Guide to Pre-Retirement Planning* has been developed by the New York State Office for the Aging as an extension to a highly successful series of “DIRECTIONS” Pre-Retirement Planning Programs conducted throughout the State since 1986. The *Guide* was written by specialists from the New York State Office for the Aging with assistance from the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations and includes material prepared by the New York State and Local Employees’ Retirement System, the Department of Civil Service Employee Benefits Division, the Social Security Administration, and Deferred Compensation.

The *Self-Help Guide to Pre-Retirement Planning* is funded by the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations and Office of the State Comptroller.

We are proud to offer this *Guide* to you as a resource to use in preparing for your retirement years, which are so full of potential. We are confident you will find the *Guide* to be informative, useful, and stimulating.

*We thank and acknowledge all the persons and organizations that have contributed information, expertise, guidance, and assistance in the development and updating of this Self-Help Guide.*
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE NO.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>RETIREMENT PLANNING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>LIFESTYLE CHANGES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>HEALTH AND WELLNESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>HOUSING OPTIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>EMPLOYMENT CONSIDERATIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>BUDGETING AND FINANCIAL PLANNING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>LEGAL AFFAIRS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>NYS DEFERRED COMPENSATION PLAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>NYS AND LOCAL EMPLOYEES’ RETIREMENT SYSTEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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You can enjoy a truly satisfying retirement life if you plan ahead for it. Informed, advance planning is essential to creating a satisfying retirement.

This *Self-Help Guide to Pre-Retirement Planning* (*the Guide*) is designed to help you with your pre-retirement planning. It will help motivate your personal pre-retirement planning and offer you tools to identify what you want and need in retirement. In addition, it will give you basic retirement information, help you to think about the important retirement questions, and identify other sources of information and assistance.

The *Guide*, tailored specifically for you, the New York State employee, includes sections on:

- Retirement Planning
- Lifestyle Planning
- Health and Wellness
- Housing Options
- Employment Considerations
- Budgeting and Financial Planning
- Deferred Compensation Plan
- Legal Affairs
- NYS & Local Employees’ Retirement System
- New York State Health Insurance
- Social Security and Medicare

Each of these sections will give basic information for your planning, as well as sources of additional information.

The *Guide* cannot answer all your individual questions, advise you to take any particular option or choice, or complete your personal pre-retirement planning. It will help you find the answers to your individual questions, to make choices, and to complete your planning for successful retirement life. The opportunity and challenge is yours! Your personal pre-retirement planning is a process and you are in charge of planning your future.

**THIS IS YOUR PLANNING TOOL**

It will be tempting to pick up this *Guide* and just turn first to the information you want most but, please do more than that. Each section is a necessary part of a pre-retirement plan. Take the time to work through each one. Be sure to read *Retirement Planning* and follow the suggestions included in that first section. Use the *Guide* not only to gather information, but to identify your needs, set your goals, and decide on your action steps in each of the planning areas.
Good and successful planning takes work and time. Here are some other suggestions for using the Guide:

- Take some uninterrupted time to work on each section of the Guide.
- Make notes on the pages. It’s yours to keep and personal notes will make it your planning tool.
- Keep paper and pencil handy to list your goals; make notes on your action steps.
- Collect other pieces of pre-retirement planning information such as newspaper/magazine articles, brochures/pamphlets, NYS Retirement System correspondence.
- Check the resource sheet in each section for ideas on where to get more information.
- Work alone, or with your spouse or partner, on the material in the Guide. It can be a valuable way to share your thoughts and ideas and create a plan that takes care of both you and your life-partner. You may want to work with friends or coworkers, especially those who are also planning to retire. If you work alone be sure to review your plans with those close to you because their reactions, ideas, and questions may help you find possible problems or gaps in your plan.
- Some material in the Guide may change as laws, policies, or programs change, so always review the chapters online to make sure you have the latest information. The Guide is always updated in January of each year.

Even if you are planning to retire very soon, using the Guide can still be helpful. You can probably expect to live at least 20 to 30 years in retirement. You could wait to see what happens in retirement. Or, you can create your future by beginning your planning right now.

This Self-Help Guide can become your primary planning tool as you prepare for retirement.

Use it well – and use it often.
Chapter 1
Retirement Planning

Overview

Chapter one will introduce you to the Guide by highlighting the essential idea that informed, advance planning is the key to a successful retirement.

THINKING ABOUT RETIREMENT

Most people look forward to retirement with a mix of excitement and anxiety. They feel excited about having the time to relax and to realize those “When I retire…” dreams. They may also feel anxious about whether they will be financially and emotionally ready to deal with the changes that retirement brings.

Focus on your feelings about retirement by writing your responses to these questions:

• As I look ahead to retirement, what do I feel excited about?
• Why?
• As I look ahead to retirement, what do I feel anxious about?
• Why?

It is easy to see why you may have mixed feelings about retirement. If you think back to the times in your life when you made important changes – when you got married, or changed jobs, or bought a house – didn’t you have mixed feelings? Retirement will be full of important changes that can be exciting and frightening at the same time.

How can you feel more confident and less fearful about your retirement? One helpful step is to stop and think about the retired people you know. You probably feel that some of them have successful retirements.

Think for a moment about those retired persons who are enjoying a successful retirement and answer the following questions:

• What is their retirement lifestyle like?
• Do they seem happy? Why?
• Why is their retirement successful?
• What did they do before retiring to get ready for retirement?
• How are they different from people you know who seem to have an unsuccessful retirement?
Look at the responses you have just written. What makes the difference? Why is it that some people are happy and satisfied with retirement and others are not? Probably the satisfied retiree has financial security, is still involved in meaningful activities, is having fun, has people to talk to or share with, and enjoys good health. The unhappy retiree may have real money problems, may seem bored with life, may be lonely, or may not be in the best of health.

PLANNING IS YOUR KEY TO SATISFACTION

Anticipating and planning for both the positives and the negatives of retirement can help you take advantage of the opportunities and deal with the challenges. There is a definite relationship between good pre-retirement planning and a successful, satisfying retirement life.

Pre-retirement planning is similar to the planning you have done for other big life changes. You must first know what is important to you, what you want and need. Then identify steps that will get you there and gather information to help you get to your goals. Next, take the actions needed to reach your goals. You need to check on your progress every so often and decide if any changes are needed.

The basic steps of your planning process then include:

- Self-Assessment
- Goal Setting
- Information Gathering
- Action
- Reviewing/Updating

Early planning lets us have some control over the ways change will affect our lives. This key to creating a satisfying retirement is not new and mysterious. It is a personal planning process that most of us have used before. For your transition to a retirement lifestyle, you will need to work out your plans in such areas as finances, legal affairs, insurance needs, health, housing, work, and leisure.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

This is the first step for good personal planning. It is extremely important, and it is often overlooked. The focus is on you and your answers to questions such as:

- What do I need to make me feel happy and satisfied?
- What do I want my life to be like?
- What personal and financial resources do I have?

These may seem like simple questions, yet it will take time and thoughtful work to figure out your answers.

As you work, remember that you are looking for your personal answers. If you compare your answers to those of others, you are likely to find differences. These differences are what make this step so important as the first step in personal planning. Your plans for retirement can only lead to real satisfaction if they are individually tailored to your needs and desires.

The results of your work on this self-assessment step provide you with a strong base for the personal goal-setting that is the second step.
GOAL SETTING

With a clear picture of your needs and desires you are ready to identify your personal goals – things you want to make happen in your life.

As you work on the sections of this Guide you should try to identify your goals. Keep these guidelines in mind as you do that. Your goals must be your own – based upon knowledge of your needs. They must be clear, specific, and realistic, and should be stated in positive terms that tell you how to reach them. Some samples of possible pre-retirement planning goals are:

“I will save an additional $15 each week for the next three years before my retirement by bringing my lunch to work.”

People who put their goals in writing are more likely to take the actions needed to carry them out. As you work through each section you will probably write down several goals. Later you can go back to decide which goals you will work on first and what specific actions you will need to take first.

INFORMATION GATHERING

For most of your goals, you will need additional information to know if each one is realistic and what specific actions you will need to take to reach them.

**SAMPLE GOAL:** “I will take courses in accounting over the next two years, so I can get the skills I’ll need to land a part-time accounting job when I retire.”

The person who wrote this goal did the necessary homework. What kind of information would someone with the same goal need? Probably, he or she would have to look into the job market in the general area he or she expects to live as a retiree to see if part-time accounting jobs are available.

Let’s assume that a check of the employment ads and or the local Job Service office showed clearly that part-time accounting jobs are available. Then the goal is realistic. More information is needed to find out where accounting courses can be taken. Checking out local colleges, business schools, or perhaps, correspondence courses could provide this information. Knowing where and when the accounting courses are given, as well as how much they will cost and how many courses are needed, will also help this person decide on a plan of action.

For most goals, you will need more information to see if the goal can be reached. Also, you have to know exactly what actions you need to take to reach the goal. Resource pages in each chapter will help you know where to go for more information. As you gather information, your goals will probably change somewhat. You may drop a goal because the information you collected has shown it to be totally unrealistic. Or, what is more likely, you will change and restate your goals based upon that information.

Once your goals are clarified, you will need to think through the steps you’ll need to take to reach them.
ACTION

This step might seem rather obvious, but your goal won’t be reached unless you make it happen. Often, this is the step where planning breaks down. This breakdown is usually linked to how well the first three steps have been done. If you haven’t taken the time to do a self-assessment that shows what you really need and want, you may end up with goals that look more like what others think you need. If your goals aren’t your goals, you will not be very motivated to do the work to reach them.

There can also be problems when a goal is either too vague or too ambitious and unrealistic. Unless you have made your goals clear and concrete, and unless you have done the necessary information gathering to make sure they are realistic, you won’t know how to take the actions to make them happen. You have to decide exactly WHAT you will do and BY WHEN. If we go back to the sample goal we looked at earlier, taking some accounting courses, action plans might include the following:

1. I will sign up for the two Accounting courses offered at the local community college by the registration deadline of September.

2. I will transfer money from my savings to my checking account to pay the tuition before September 1.

3. I will call the college next week to check on where I should park and if I can buy dinner at the cafeteria before my class.

Each action plan statement includes WHO will do WHAT and by WHEN. Being that specific will really help you to do something about it.

For each of your goals, you will need a list of each step necessary to reach that goal. When you add target dates to those action steps, you will have a clear understanding of how to accomplish this essential part of your plan.

REVIEWING AND UPDATING

Once you put your plan into action, it’s very important to regularly check on how things are going. Step back and check your progress. Decide if you want to change any of your goals by asking questions such as:

1. “Is my plan working?”
2. “Am I meeting my target dates?”
3. “Am I running into road blocks?”
4. “Have I changed my mind about my goal?” “Why?”

Keep track of the progress you are making by putting your action target dates on a calendar. Take a look at that calendar on a regular basis to check on how you are doing and to see if you need to change your plans or target dates.

Goals and plans will change somewhat. It would be unusual if they didn’t require updating from time to time. Personal planning is after all, a dynamic, human process – changing and changeable.
The planning process should be thought of as a circle that looks something like the Planning Worksheet on the next page.

Thinking of personal planning as a circular process in constant motion, with one step leading to another, can be more accurate than thinking of a list of steps.

Clearly, personal planning requires work and will take your time, thought, and action, but the rewards of doing it well are so worthwhile! In the case of your personal pre-retirement planning, your time, thought, and action can pay off in a most satisfying retirement lifestyle.
PLANNING WORKSHEET

Written goals help make a plan clearer to understand and easier to do. People who write down their goals are more likely to reach them. Before you retire, organize all the work you need to do by completing a copy of this outline for each of your goals.

GOALS: ____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

TARGET DATE:

RELATED WORK: Write down all the tasks or jobs that need to be done to reach your goals. Indicate WHO will do WHAT by WHEN, for each job you listed.

Example: I will file my income tax by April 1.

WHO WHAT WHEN

____________________________________________________________________

REVIEW PROGRESS & UPDATE: _______________________________________

NOTES:
RESOURCES

Retirement Planning

WEBSITES:

Note: If you search the web for sites dealing with "retirement planning" most of the results will deal with the financial planning aspects of retirement preparation. (See some suggested sites in the "Budgeting & Financial Planning" chapter of this Guide.)

PUBLICATIONS:


OTHER SOURCES:

Alliance for Retired Americans
815 16th Street, N.W. 4th floor
Washington, D.C. 20006
1-202-637-5399
https://retiredamericans.org/

Launched in January 2001 by a national coalition of AFL-CIO affiliated unions and community-based organizations, the Alliance works to protect the health and economic security of retired Americans. Retirees of AFL-CIO affiliated unions automatically become lifelong members with dues paid by their national unions.

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)
601 East Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20049
1-888-687-2277
www.aarp.org

AARP is a non-profit, non-partisan organization specifically designed to address the interests of people over 50. It serves its members through legislative representation, educational and community service programs, and direct membership benefits ranging from group insurance to travel discounts. Membership is $16.00 per year.

Civil Service Employees Association
CSEA Headquarters
143 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12210
1-800-342-4146
https://cseany.org/
Council 82 - NYS Law Enforcement Officers
Union AFSCME, AFL-CIO
63 Colvin Avenue
Albany, NY 12206
518-489-8424
www.council82.org

Gray Panthers NYC Office
244 Madison Ave. #396
New York, NY 10016
1-917-535-0457
www.graypanthersnyc.org
The Gray Panthers is an advocacy organization focusing on issues of aging Americans.

National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
1511 Third Ave., Ste. 914
Seattle, WA 98101
206-624-1221
www.napca.org

National Caucus & Center on Black Aging, Inc.
1220 L Street, NW, Ste. 800
Washington, D.C. 20005
202-637-8400
https://ncba-aging.org/

National Council on Aging
251 18th St. South Ste. 500
Arlington, VA 22202
571-527-3900
www.ncoa.org
The NCOA is involved in improving conditions and opportunities for older people.

National Indian Council on Aging
8500 Menaul Blvd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87112
505-292-2001
https://nicoa.org

National Institute on Aging
Building 31, Room 5C27
31 Center Drive, MSC 2292
Bethesda, MD 20892
1-800-222-2225
For information on Alzheimer’s Disease and related Dementias- Education & Referral Center
1-800-438-4380
www.nia.nih.gov

National Institute of Mental Health
6001 Executive Blvd.
Room 6200, MSC 9663
Bethesda, MD 20892
1-866-615-6464
www.nimh.nih.gov
Printed information on a wide variety of health & wellness issues is available from this source.

New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association, Inc. (NYSCOPBA)
102 Hackett Blvd., 2nd floor
Albany, NY 12209
518-427-1551
www.nyscopba.org

NYS Office for the Aging
2 Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12223-1251
https://aging.ny.gov/
1-844-697-6321
Information concerning services and programs for older adults in the State are available by contacting this office.

New York State Retirees – PEF
Membership Benefits Division
P.O. Box 12414
1168-70 Troy-Schenectady Rd.
Albany, NY 12212-2414
1-800-342-4306
www.pef.org

Retired Public Employees Association, Inc.
165 Jordan Rd.
Troy, NY 12180
1-800-726-7732
https://rpea.org/

VA – US Department of Veteran’s Affairs
1-844-698-2311
https://www.va.gov/
There are over 50 regional offices nationwide to provide information related to veterans. The Administration can also put you in touch with a veteran’s benefits counselor.
LOCAL OFFICES FOR THE AGING
IN NEW YORK STATE

LISTED BY COUNTY
For information concerning services and programs for older adults in specific counties.

Albany Co. Department for Aging
162 Washington Ave.
Albany, NY 12210
518-447-7198

Allegany Co. Office for the Aging
6085 Route 19N
Belmont, NY 14813
585-268-9390

Broome Co. Office for the Aging
Broome County Office Bldg.
60 Hawley Street, 4th Floor
P.O. Box 1766
Binghamton, NY 13902
607-778-2411

Cattaraugus Co. Dept. for the Aging
One Leo Moss Drive, Suite 7610
Olean, NY 14760-1101
716-373-8032

Cayuga Co. Office for the Aging
160 Genesee Street
Auburn, NY 13021
315-253-1226

Chautauqua Co. Office for the Aging
7 North Erie Street
Mayville, NY 14757-1027
716-753-4471

Chemung Co. Dept. of Aging & Long Term Care
425 Pennsylvania Avenue
P.O. Box 588
Elmira, NY 14902
607-737-5520

Chenango Co. Area Agency on Aging
County Office Bldg., 5 Court Street
Norwich, NY 13815
607-337-1770

Clinton Co. Office for the Aging
135 Margaret Street, Suite 105
Plattsburgh, NY 12901
518-565-4620

Columbia Co. Office for the Aging
325 Columbia Street
Hudson, NY 12534
518-828-4258

Cortland Co. Area Agency on Aging
60 Central Avenue
Cortland, NY 13045
607-753-5060

Delaware Co. Office for the Aging
97 Main Street, Suite 2
Delhi, NY 13753
607-832-5750

Dutchess Co. Office for the Aging
114 Delafield Street
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601
845-486-2555

Erie Co. Dept. of Senior Services
95 Franklin Street, Room 1329
Buffalo, NY 14202
716-858-8526

Essex Co. Office for the Aging
100 Court Street
PO Box 217
Elizabethtown, NY 12932
518-873-3695
Franklin Co. Office for the Aging  
355 West Main Street, Suite 447  
Malone, NY 12953  
518-481-1526

Fulton Co. Office for the Aging  
19 N. William St  
Johnstown, NY 12095  
518-736-5650

Genesee Co. Office for the Aging  
Batavia-Genesee Senior Center  
2 Bank Street  
Batavia, NY 14020  
585-343-1611

Greene Co. Dept. for the Aging  
411 Main Street  
Catskill, NY 12414  
518-719-3555

Hamilton Co.  *See Warren/Hamilton

Herkimer Co. Office for the Aging  
109 Mary Street, Ste. 1101  
Herkimer, NY 13350  
315-867-1121

Jefferson Co. Office for the Aging  
175 Arsenal Street, 2nd Fl.  
Watertown, NY 13601  
315-785-3191

Lewis Co. Office for the Aging  
7660 N. State Street  
Lowville, NY 13367  
315-376-5313

Livingston Co. Office for the Aging  
3 Murray Hill Dr.  
Mt. Morris, NY 14510  
518-243-7520

Madison Co. Office for the Aging  
138 Dominick Bruno Blvd.  
Canastota, NY 13032  
315-697-5700

Monroe Co. Office for the Aging  
435 East Henrietta Rd.  
3rd floor, West (Faith wing)  
Rochester, NY 14620  
585-753-6280

Montgomery Co. Office for the Aging, Inc.  
135 Guy Park Ave  
Amsterdam, NY 12010  
518-843-2300 Ext 229

Nassau Co. Office for the Aging  
60 Charles Lindbergh Blvd., Ste. 260  
Uniondale, NY 11553  
516-227-8900

New York City Dept. for the Aging  
2 Lafayette Street –7th Floor  
New York, NY 10007  
Within the 5 boroughs of NYC- 311  
Outside of boroughs: 212-639-9675

Niagara Co. Office for the Aging  
111 Main Street, Suite 101  
Lockport, NY 14094  
716-438-4020

Oneida Co. Office for the Aging/Continuing Care  
120 Airline Street, Ste. 201  
Oriskany, NY 13424  
315-798-5456

Onondaga Co. Dept. of Aging &Youth  
Civic Center– 10th Floor  
421 Montgomery St.  
Syracuse, NY 13202  
315-435-2362

Ontario Co. Office for the Aging  
3019 County Complex Dr.  
Canandaigua, NY 14424  
585-396-4040

Orange Co. Office for the Aging  
40 Matthews Street  
3rd Floor - Suite 305  
Goshen, NY 10924  
845-615-3700
Orleans Co. Office for the Aging
14016 Route 31 West
Albion, NY 14411
585-589-3191

Oswego Co. Office for the Aging
County Office Complex
70 Bunner Street, PO Box 3080
Oswego, NY 13126
315-349-3484

Otsego Co. Office for the Aging
Meadows Office Complex, Suite 5
140 Co Hwy 33W
Cooperstown, NY 13326
607-547-4232

Putnam Co. Office for Senior Resources
110 Old Route 6, Bldg. A
Carmel, NY 10512
845-808-1700 ext. 47105

Rensselaer Co. Unified Family Services
1600 Seventh Ave.
Troy, NY 12180
518-270-2730

Rockland Co. Office for the Aging
Robert L. Yeager Health Center, Bldg. B
50 Sanitorium Road
Pomona, NY 10970
845-364-2110

St. Lawrence Co. Office for the Aging
80 State Highway 310, Suite 7
Canton, NY 13617
315-386-4730

Saratoga Co. Office for the Aging
152 West High Street
Ballston Spa, NY 12020-3528
518-884-4100

Schenectady Co. Dept of Senior and
Long Term Services
107 Nott Terrace, Ste. 202
Schenectady, NY 12308
518-382-8481 ext. 9-313

Schoharie Co. Office for the Aging
113 Park Place, Ste. 3
Schoharie, NY 12157
518-295-2001

Schuyler Co. Office for the Aging
323 Owego Street, Ste. 165
Montour Falls, NY 14865
607-535-7108

Seneca Co. Office for the Aging
2465 Bonadent Dr., Ste. 4
Waterloo, NY 13165-1681
315-539-1765

Steuben Co. Office for the Aging
3 E. Pulteney Square
Bath, NY 14810
607-664-2298

Suffolk Co. Office for the Aging
100 Veterans Memorial Highway
PO Box 6100
Hauppauge, NY 11788-0099
631-853-8200

Sullivan Co. Office for the Aging
Sullivan County Government Center
100 North Street P.O. Box 5012
Monticello, NY 12701
845-807-0241

Tioga Opportunities, Inc.
Dept. of Aging Services
9 Sheldon Guile Blvd
Owego, NY 13827
607-687-4120
Tompkins Co. Office for the Aging  
214 W. Martin Luther King Jr./State St.  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
607-274-5482

Ulster Co. Office for the Aging  
1003 Development Court  
Kingston, NY 12401  
845-340-3456

Warren/Hamilton Counties Offices for the Aging  
Human Services Building  
1340 State Route 9  
Lake George, NY 12845  
518-761-6347

Washington Co. Office for the Aging & Disability Resource Center  
383 Broadway  
Fort Edward, NY 12828  
518-746-2420

Wayne Co. Office for the Aging & Youth  
1519 Nye Rd., Ste. 300  
Lyons, NY 14489  
315-946-5624

Westchester Co. Dept. of Senior Programs & Services  
9 South First Ave., 10th Fl.  
Mt. Vernon, NY 10550  
914-813-6400

Wyoming Co. Office for the Aging  
8 Perry Avenue  
Warsaw, NY 14569  
585-786-8833

Yates Co. Area Agency on Aging  
417 Liberty Street, Ste. 1116  
Penn Yan, NY 14527  
315-536-5515

St. Regis Mohawk Office for the Aging  
29 Business Park Road  
Hogansburg, NY 13655  
518-358-2963  
Mailing:  
412 State Route 37 Akwesasne, NY13655

Seneca Nation of Indians Office for the Aging  
28 Thomas Indian School Drive  
Irving, NY 14081  
716-532-5778

NYS Office for the Aging  
2 Empire State Plaza  
Albany, NY 12223-1251  
1-844-697-6321  
https://aging.ny.gov/

Association on Aging in New York  
272 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12204  
518-449-7080  
www.agingny.org

OTHER STATES’ OFFICES FOR THE AGING:

Connecticut State Department of Aging and Disability Services  
55 Farmington Ave, 12th Fl.  
Hartford, CT 06105  
860-424-5055  
www.ct.gov/agingservices

Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs  
1 Ashburton Place, 5th Fl.  
Boston, MA. 02108  
1-800-243-4636  

There is a state-level unit on Aging in every state. Call the Eldercare Locator toll free at 1-800-677-1116 or visit https://eldercare.acl.gov if you need to obtain further information on a state not listed here.