COLLAGE, The Art & Science of Healthy Aging®

A membership consortium of aging services organizations, including continuing care communities, moderate-income and federally subsidized housing, and home care and community-based agencies using a holistic, evidence-based assessment tool and person-centered process to advance healthy aging and improve outcomes of older adults living independently.

COLLAGE
The Art & Science of Healthy Aging

Improving the lives of older adults aging in place

Supporting independence, flexibility and choice

Q and A

What is COLLAGE, The Art & Science of Healthy Aging®?

COLLAGE is a consortium of aging services organizations working to advance healthy aging and improve outcomes of older adults living independently. Members of the consortium – continuing care communities, moderate-income and federally subsidized housing programs, and home care and community-based agencies – use a unique, holistic, Web- and evidence-based assessment tool and person-centered process to improve quality of life and successful aging. As of January, 2011, there are over 60 non-profit sites in 22 states that participate in the membership consortium.

How does COLLAGE work? What does it do?

COLLAGE gives organizations the tools to partner with older people in their quest to age successfully. Through the COLLAGE assessment system, organizations have the opportunity to measure, track and improve healthy aging outcomes. Valid and reliable assessment data leads to: 1) the development of personalized healthy aging plans for individuals, and 2) a methodology to target the right programs and services to best match needs

"COLLAGE ... has standardized a critical function for us—the assessment, the data gathering, and the ability to turn that into good decisions. We were an organization that had 18 different assessment tools in our home care agency—now we have one."

—David Gehm, CEO and President, Lutheran Homes of Michigan

for a campus or community. This two level approach enables individuals to take charge of their own healthy aging and allows organizations to focus aging support resources appropriately for their community.

Measuring outcomes is critical; without them, communities don't know whether their programs are having the intended impact on residents and community. COLLAGE health and wellness data is the engine that drives all wellness program operations to help maintain and promote independence among older adults.

What is special about the membership consortium?

COLLAGE offers consortium members the opportunity to use a tested, high-quality assessment system and to develop a data infrastructure, together. That doesn't happen very often and it's difficult for organizations to do it on their own. Taking part in COLLAGE means you have the opportunity to share data and learn from one another -- something that is in sync with LeadingAge (formerly AAHSA) and the mission of sharing information so the whole field can improve.

How does the COLLAGE program help individuals?

A designated staff person, often called the

wellness or health coach, meets with a resident (or client) for a one-on-one conversation about the person's interests, needs, experiences, preferences and challenges. Together the coach and resident create a meaningful, person-centered Healthy Aging Wellness Plan aimed at improving the person's health and quality of life.

The COLLAGE conversation opens up ways to enrich residents' lives both within and outside the community, which the resident may not be aware of. COLLAGE may address a wide range of issues affecting health, including preventive health maintenance; yoga, balance or exercise training; nutrition; chronic fatigue; shower/bathing assistance; social connections, volunteerism, etc. Armed with a deeper knowledge of resident needs and interests, your community is in a better position to develop programs, services and interventions that will improve quality of life.

Who developed the program?
Initiated in 2003, COLLAGE is a joint venture between Kendal Outreach, LLC (www.kendaloutreach.org), a subsidiary of The Kendal Corporation, a system of communities and services for older adults, and the Institute for Aging Research at Hebrew SeniorLife

"I'm excited to be able to develop targeted programs and resources that will best meet the needs that we've uncovered.... My hat's off to you. COLLAGE is an incredible product with a dedicated team of professionals supporting it."

—Kathryn Kelly, Wellness Coach, Orchard Cove, Canton, MA

(www.hebrewseniorlife.org), in Massachusetts. Both organizations collaborate with interRAI (www.interrai.org), an international group committed to improving health care for older people and people with disabilities.

How were the COLLAGE assessment tools developed?
Members of the COLLAGE consortium use a suite of evidence-based,

scientifically grounded assessment instruments developed by interRAI (interrai.org), a collaborative network of clinicians, researchers, and policy makers in over 30 countries. interRAI's core organizational goal is the promotion of evidence-based clinical practice and policy decisions.

The Community Health Assessment or CHA for short is a core COLLAGE tool and covers 13 health/clinical-related areas including: cognition, communication and vision, emotional, diseases, medications, environment, health conditions, continence, function/vitality, psychosocial, nutrition, social relationships and preventive health.

The COLLAGE Wellness Assessment covers nine core areas including: exercise and physical fitness, nutrition, social relationships, emotional, spiritual, practices affecting health/well-being, recreation, sleep, and goals for wellness service planning. This assessment system was developed by COLLAGE members and interRAI researchers in 2007.

Several states have mandated the use of the interRAI Community Health Assessment as agencies are encouraged to redesign Medicaid-related services, streamline operations, improve healthy aging outcomes and save money. The Community Health Assessment system and its utility in tracking and measuring health and wellness is becoming known

to a growing national pool of professionals in the long term care industry.

We hear many stories coming from aging services organizations about quality wellness programs that they've developed—isn't that enough?
For many years providers have used stories or anecdotes to demonstrate the need for funding older adult projects or to prove organizational viability. Stories certainly can make a compelling case for programmatic merit, but they don't demonstrate quality. To show that something really works, a provider must have solid outcomes-based program measures. Without this, communities will never know whether anecdotes really represent what's going on across their entire membership.

How do the principles of LeadingAge's Quality First and COLLAGE intersect?
COLLAGE embraces all of the principles of Quality First that LeadingAge (formerly AAHSA) has promoted over the past several years. It focuses on using scientifically derived, standardized instruments to collect information so that informed, evidence-based decisions can be made by individual organizations, and accurate comparisons can be shared across organizations. Comparing data over time allows organizations to really understand where they are improving and where they need to dedicate additional resources. There is no way to get to quality without engaging in the kind of work that COLLAGE enables organizations to do.

How would you make the business case for COLLAGE?
Making the business case for COLLAGE can be challenging, particularly in times of economic downturn when the question of where to spend limited resources is very high on everyone's priority list. With evidence-based work -- and if you think about the health sector in general where there is a tremendous focus on data in hospitals, in primary care, and in all of the various acute care settings – you need a tool like COLLAGE to really understand the characteristics of the people you are serving, their health needs, and ways to intervene to improve their current

"Our acute care statistics speak for themselves: since utilizing COLLAGE, hospitalizations dropped across two years from 173 to 137; pain as a reason for hospital admission dropped from 11 to 4. This is very significant."

—Karri Sears, Director of Wellness, Alexian Village of Milwaukee

health conditions and actually mitigate some of the problems that may be more costly down the line. The most important thing for a Chief Financial Officer or Executive Director to think about is the return on investment. COLLAGE helps you to apply better practice, get better information to clients and their families, see how your organization is doing over time, and know how your organization compares to others in your field.

What is the COLLAGE national data repository?
The national data repository, housed at the Institute for Aging Research at Hebrew SeniorLife in Boston, currently stores over 20,000 assessment records representing over 8,500 clients (as of March, 2011). The repository was established to inform public policy, benchmark quality healthy aging programs around the country, and enable the development of model practices to improve healthy aging outcomes.

Does COLLAGE provide training, ongoing education or helpdesk services?
Yes. All training is provided via online webinars and is included in the consortium fee. In addition, a helpdesk is available for software- and assessment-related questions during normal business hours.

Is there software available to automate COLLAGE data collection?

Yes. Access to a common software program for an unlimited number of coaches (users) is available as part of your consortium membership. It is a Web- or browser-based application with all data for all COLLAGE members stored on a single server. The COLLAGE software was developed and is supported by our technology vendor, the Center for Information Management, Inc., in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

"I felt so free when I was done with my conversation—it was as if everything was laid out on the table and I had someone there willing to help me with things of concern. I left there feeling so free and unburdened. It was a great experience. Everyone should do it."

—Resident, Westminster Canterbury Richmond, Richmond, VA

What functions does the Web-based software support?

The software allows staff to maintain profiles of older adults, record all COLLAGE assessments, create Healthy Aging Plans linked to assessment information, as well as options to track member-specific levels of care, participation in programs, and service use. A wide range of standard reports are included, both for individuals and as group profiles, as well as a robust ad hoc query and report generation tool for customized reports.

Can laptop computers be used to record assessments in private residences?

Assessments can be entered on any computer with Internet access at any time using the standard software. However, when Internet access in not available, there is a mobile edition of the COLLAGE software that allows coaches to download resident information and complete assessments and plans in an "off-line" mode. When they return to the office, they can easily synchronize their laptop with the central server and consolidate their off-line information with all other information for the person interviewed.

Is any integration available to link to our other data systems?

COLLAGE offers a Web service interface to support submission of resident information from external data systems as an option for an additional one-time fee of $500 (good at least through March 31, 2011). This avoids duplicate entry of resident demographic information into two systems.

Is COLLAGE data encrypted when transmitted over the Internet?

All connections to the COLLAGE data server use 128-bit SSL encryption enforced by a VeriSign certificate.

How is security handled in COLLAGE?

Each COLLAGE coach is assigned a unique user account and password on the COLLAGE server that is linked to their specific member organization. These accounts strictly control access so users can only see data for residents belonging to their organization. User accounts are also assigned specific privileges by administrators at the member organization that can, when desired, appropriately limit access to data in the COLLAGE system based on work responsibilities. Transactions are logged by the COLLAGE system by user account for audit purposes.

What are the suggested steps to join the COLLAGE consortium?

The following steps will help you get started with the COLLAGE experience. The order is not critical and each organization may wish to develop its own evaluation process with an emphasis on one area over another.

1. Involve key management, executives and front line staff as well as your residents or clients early in evaluating whether COLLAGE will add value to your organization.

2. Participate in at least one free, one-hour introductory COLLAGE webinar. Go to http://collageaging.org/Site/Mbrship/IntroWebcasts.aspx for more information.
3. Review the Community Health Assessment and Wellness Assessment forms.
4. Speak with consortium members to better understand program logistics, challenges, resource requirements, and operational strategies for success.
5. Review and complete the Trial Period Operating Agreement and enclose a $500 non-refundable deposit.
6. Once COLLAGE has a signed Trial Period Operating Agreement on file, COLLAGE staff will work with you on several core areas, including:
   a. securing executive and management buy-in
   b. selecting assessment coaches and projecting staffing patterns
   c. creating a deployment plan including how to communicate to the community about COLLAGE
   d. designing a process to recruit residents
   e. preparing for software implementation
   f. managing and overseeing the program
   g. using assessment data for program and service development, and improving healthy aging outcomes
7. Participate in three two-hour webinar training sessions on use of assessment tools and software.
8. Complete the Consortium and Business Associate Agreements.
9. Within 45 days of completion of the three training session, forward balance of first year fee.
10. Welcome to COLLAGE!

"COLLAGE focuses on an evidence-base, collecting good information, using good data to make better decisions, and gathering data and sharing data across organizations so that people really understand where they are improving and where they still need to do the work. There is no way to get to quality without engaging in the kind of work that COLLAGE allows organizations to do."

—Robyn Stone, Executive Director, Institute for the Future of Aging Services Washington, D.C.

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