

# ICAA Call to Action: Reclaim wellness for older people



*Wellness is derived from our ability to understand, accept and act upon our capacity to lead a purpose-filled and engaged life. In doing so, we can embrace our potential (physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, social, environmental, vocational) to pursue and optimize life's possibilities.*

Source: International Council on Active Aging

The wellness dimensions	
<b>ICAA Call to Action:</b> Reclaim health and well-being for older people by integrating wellness throughout all organizational strategies and operations.	
Wellness dimension	Descriptions
Emotional	managing and directing feelings; coping with challenges; behaving in trustworthy and respectful ways
Environmental	integrating wellness into physical environments and nature; eco-friendly products, services, processes and designs
Intellectual, cognitive	engaging in creative pursuits and intellectually stimulating activities; problem solving and reasoning
Physical	choosing lifestyle habits for health and functional ability, e.g., adequate nutrition, sleep and exercise; limiting stress, alcohol intake; accessing health care
Professional, vocational	maintaining or improving skills, abilities and attitudes that help self or others; being productive
Social	interacting with others for mutual benefit; awareness of the larger community and participation within it
Spiritual	living with a meaning/purpose in life; exploring beliefs and values that create personal peace and understanding

# ICAA CALL TO ACTION

**ICAA Call to Action:** Reclaim health and well-being for older people by integrating wellness throughout all organizational strategies and operations.

Organizations are using the massive disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to reinvent their services, programs and properties. Business leaders are keenly aware that operations can never return to the past, and older adults are experiencing a renewed sense of hope and discovery. A strong commitment to the thoughtful and comprehensive integration of a wellness philosophy is a proven method to meet the expectations of current and future clients, improve the perception of senior living and senior services, and counteract the dual pandemics of mental stress and physical deconditioning that surfaced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The value of wellness has not changed, only the methods for delivering it: in-person, online, high touch and touchless. To rise above the feelings of loss and fear experienced during the pandemic, International Council on Active Aging calls on all its members, associates and society at large to join the cause and implement the Call to Action.



# KEY MESSAGES

**Reclaim emotional and mental health.** Wellness is an antidote to the feelings of anxiety, loneliness and grief that harried many people during the social isolation and personal losses related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Wellness offers support groups, counseling and physically safe gatherings for spiritual, intellectual, cultural and social interactions, all of which lessen loneliness and build resilience.<sup>1,2</sup>

**Reclaim functional ability.** Healthy aging means having the functional ability that enables well-being at older ages (World Health Organization). The wellness dimensions frame the cognitive, physical, social and psychological abilities for functioning in everyday life, whether daily life entails a walk to the bank, managing personal finances, conversing with a coworker, completing self-care activities or setting up a video call with family members.<sup>3,4,5</sup>

**Reclaim the potential of aging.** Negative, ageist stereotypes can afflict older adults, resulting in social isolation, poor mental health and reduced physical health. Wellness opportunities and programs have a purpose well beyond entertainment. Wellness brings together younger and older generations, promotes volunteering and lifelong learning, showcases highly skilled artists, educators and businesspeople—all of these reclaim older adults as valuable contributors to society.<sup>6</sup>

**Reclaim business health.** Counteract misunderstandings about the value proposition of senior living and senior services by showcasing how wellness guides a lifestyle of personal growth, effective health behaviors and safe, personalized care. Wellness culture and opportunities align with many organizational performance metrics by attracting and retaining customers/residents, generating referrals, reducing risks, delaying care needs and delivering the brand promise. Well-designed workforce wellness programs are a recruitment and retention benefit.<sup>7-10</sup>

The Decade of Healthy Aging 2020-2030 has begun, and the wellness philosophy—brought to life through a wellness culture—is the guidepost to achieve the decade’s goals. Wellness is the pathway to healthy aging, “the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability[ies]...that enable all people to be and do what they have reason to value.”<sup>3</sup>

Personal choices combined with an organization’s thoughtful offerings empower older adults to experience their best possible lives. **Join with ICAA and your colleagues to share, support and implement the ICAA Call to Action: Reclaim wellness for older people.**

### References

1. Ishikawa, R. Z. (2020). I may never see the ocean again: Loss and grief among older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 12(S1), S85-S86. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/tra0000695>
2. Saltzman, L. Y., Hansel, T. C., & Bordnick, P. S. (2020). Loneliness, isolation, and social support factors in post-COVID-19 mental health. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 12(S1), S55-S57. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/tra0000703>
3. World Health Organization. (2020). Ageing: Healthy ageing and functional ability. <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/news/q-a-detail/ageing-healthy-ageing-and-functional-ability>
4. Trinity Valley Community College. (n.d.) Functional ability concept definition. Health Care Concepts 1, Course RNSG 1430.
5. Memel, D. (2008). Assessing functional ability is important. *British Journal of General Practice* 2008; 58 (557), 835-836. <https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp08X376159>
6. World Health Organization. (2021). Global report on ageism. <https://www.who.int/publications/item/9789240016866>
7. International Council on Active Aging. (2017). ICAA/ProMatura Wellness Benchmarks: The National Benchmarks Report, 2017. <https://www.icaa.cc/business/benchmarks.htm>
8. Ryan, P. (2018). The business case for wellness programs in senior living. International Council on Active Aging. [https://www.icaa.cc/listing.php?type=white\\_papers](https://www.icaa.cc/listing.php?type=white_papers)
9. Mather Institute. (2021). The Age Well Study, Year 3 Report, Investigating factors associated with happiness & life satisfaction in residents of Life Plan Communities. <https://www.matherinstitute.com/agewellstudy/>
10. Mullaney, T. (n.d.). Wellness Program Gets Personal to Retain Senior Living Workers. Senior Housing News. <http://innovation.seniorhousingnews.com/wellness-program-gets-personal-to-retain-senior-living-workers/>

# IMPLEMENT THE CALL TO ACTION

Wellness, through all the dimensions, is valuable to organizations because it can improve the health and well-being of older adults and help the organization stay relevant in a changing industry. Now is the time to reimagine a new way of life, a refreshed workplace and an updated business model. How? A wellness culture is the foundation because wellness envelops virtually all the services an organization provides older adults. Simply add the attitude that older people are uniquely capable.

## Step 1.



**Define wellness and wellness culture.** Wellness is derived from our ability to understand, accept and act upon our capacity to lead a purpose-filled and engaged life. In doing so, we can embrace our potential (physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, social, environmental, vocational) to pursue and optimize life's possibilities. A culture of wellness involves all leaders and staff, in every role and department, in providing services and experiences that enable older adults to participate in life-affirming choices that include the dimensions of wellness.

**Tools:** Find the basics at “What is wellness?” and in the “Foundations of Wellness” course.

Visit: <https://www.icaa.cc/>

## Step 2.



**Gather allies to optimize wellness culture.** Department walls broke down during the pandemic; prevent them from rebuilding by forming a wellness strategy group. Include colleagues at the highest levels in the organization and at entry-level positions to discover what is important for wellness and the business.

**Tool:** The “ICAA State of Wellness Survey” lists jobs titles that need to be educated about wellness and the most important areas for forming a wellness culture.

Download at: [https://www.icaa.cc/listing.php?type=industry\\_research](https://www.icaa.cc/listing.php?type=industry_research)

## Step 3.



**Assess what is already in place and what needs to be done.** Toss away old structures and audit wellness in all areas of operations. Now is a good time to see how individual staff members, leaders and clients/residents view the state of wellness.

**Tool:** In the “ICAA blueprint for a wellness-based community” find the strategies and action steps, then use the assessment form to determine what is in place and what can be improved.

Download at: [https://www.icaa.cc/business/wellness\\_blueprint.htm](https://www.icaa.cc/business/wellness_blueprint.htm)

## Step 4.

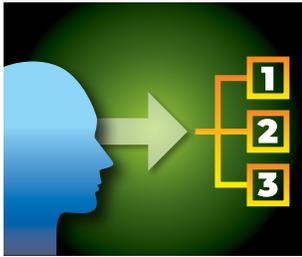


**Evaluate new options and delivery methods.** Think out of the box. The past is no longer relevant because of structural changes that will remain post-pandemic and because younger-older adults have high expectations and needs different from those in the past.

**Tool:** Changes to the idea of community, services, programs and physical plant are offered in “Future-proof your senior living community.” Many ideas apply to all types of organizations (and individuals).

Download at: [https://www.icaa.cc//listing.php?type=white\\_papers](https://www.icaa.cc//listing.php?type=white_papers)

## Step 5.



**Prioritize the most important places to add or improve.** Map short-term and mid-term action items, who is responsible and when the action should be completed.

**Tool:** “ICAA State of Wellness” survey lists areas of importance in creating the wellness culture.

Download at: [https://www.icaa.cc/store\\_detail.php?id=7397](https://www.icaa.cc/store_detail.php?id=7397)

## RESOURCES

### Creating a blueprint for a wellness-based community

International Council on Active Aging  
[https://www.icaa.cc/business/wellness\\_blueprint.htm](https://www.icaa.cc/business/wellness_blueprint.htm)

### Creating a path towards the ‘next normal’ in senior living

ICAA, Research, white papers  
[https://www.icaa.cc//listing.php?type=white\\_papers](https://www.icaa.cc//listing.php?type=white_papers)

### Decade of Healthy Aging 2020-2030

<https://www.who.int/initiatives/decade-of-healthy-ageing>

### Framing the return on investment (ROI) in wellness staff

ICAA, white paper  
[www.icaa.cc//listing.php?type=white\\_papers](http://www.icaa.cc//listing.php?type=white_papers)

### ICAA/ProMatura Wellness Benchmarks

**The National Benchmarks Report, 2017**  
<https://www.icaa.cc/business/benchmarks.htm>

### The business case for wellness programs in senior living

ICAA, Research, white papers  
[https://www.icaa.cc//listing.php?type=white\\_papers](https://www.icaa.cc//listing.php?type=white_papers)

### The future of technology for active aging

ICAA, Research, white papers  
<https://www.icaa.cc/conferenceandevents/forums/forumreports.htm>



**International Council on Active Aging®**  
603-1112 West Pender Street  
Vancouver, BC, V6E 2S1  
Toll-free: 866-335-9777 Tel: 604-734-4466  
[www.icaa.cc](http://www.icaa.cc)