



# Just the Facts:

## Senior Services Levies

### What are senior services levies?

Senior services levies are local property tax levies based on the fair market value of real estate. They support services and facilities for older adults. Levies are implemented through voter approval of a ballot issue and may be in effect for up to five years. The levy must then be renewed as a ballot initiative.

### Why do counties need local senior services levies?

With declining federal and state funds and a rapidly increasing population of older adults, senior services levies are critical to support programs and services for older adults in local communities.

### What types of programs and services for older adults do levy funds support?

Twenty percent of levy money supports the operation of senior centers. The remaining 80% supports home and community-based services for older adults, such as home delivered meals, senior transportation, and homemakers. One third of the programs are case managed with an average per client monthly service plan of \$251.00

### What does the general public think of senior services levies?

Approximately 98% of senior services levies are approved by voters. Senior services levies have a high approval rate, with margins of passage usually 60% or higher.

### How many Ohio counties have senior services levies?

Sixty-two counties have levies that cumulatively generate more than 100 million dollars annually.

### How much do property tax levies, such as a senior services levy, cost the average homeowner?

The average 0.75 mill property tax levy costs the owner of a \$100,000 market value home approximately \$25 to \$30 each year. Senior services levies tend to be smaller than other property tax levies. School levies and levies for programs such as mental health or MR/DD are typically between four and eight mills.

### How much do counties receive through senior services levies?

More than half of the levy money collected (\$56.5 million) supports senior services in just four counties (Butler, Clermont, Franklin, and Hamilton). Senior services levies are generally relatively small, both in mills assessed and in the amount of funds collected. The millage ranges from 0.09 to 2.0.

### Do senior services levies of the same millage generate the same amount of money in different counties?

No. Senior services levies of the same millage raise different amounts in different counties. For example, in 2002 voters in both Noble and Wood Counties approved senior services levies of 0.4 mill. The levy in Noble County raised \$52,000 annually. The levy in Wood County raised \$1,665,000 annually. Because a senior services levy is a property tax levy, the amount raised varies based on the fair market value of real estate. Large, metropolitan counties tend to raise more money through senior services levies than small, rural counties.

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## How do counties administer the income generated by senior services levies?

Four common models for the administration of levy supported programs are:

- Single/several recipient multi-purpose senior center: The senior center(s) that will benefit from the levy are named in the ballot. Typically, the senior center recipient is the major aging-specific provider for meals, transportation, home repair, and outreach services.
- County government distribution to numerous recipients: The county government will award grants to direct service organizations. The service providing organization must apply annually to a committee established by the county commissioners.
- Independent council on aging: Councils on aging focus solely on the development, coordination, and/or operation of services for older adults. Some councils use funds for special purpose grants, provide case management services with the funds buying services from numerous vendors, provide some services directly, and/or assist with start up and operating local senior clubs and interest groups.
- Area Agency on Aging managed system: Similar to the council on aging model, this system uses the Area Agency's experience and expertise to administer an overall program with local organizations and businesses as service providers.

## Should Ohio rely on local levies to meet community-based long-term care service needs?

Ohio is fortunate to meet a good portion of its community-based care through PASSPORT, a Medicaid waiver program. Fully funding PASSPORT not only assists Ohio's frailest and poorest older adults, but also brings federal matching funds to Ohio. Nevertheless, many who need the type of care that PASSPORT provides are ineligible because of strict income and asset limits. While some levy programs meet the needs of these near-Medicaid-eligible older adults (keeping them in the community and out of more costly nursing homes) levy dollars for these programs are stretched thin and many programs have waiting lists; so, levies alone cannot fill the long-term care needs of this population. Furthermore, some communities struggle to support small levies and some have no senior levy.