TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

Background
Program Summary
Activities over past year
Program's success and challenges
Changes in objectives
Indicators of Progress or Success
Report on resident, training and status of outreach
Report on success, challenges and data
Plan for diverse funding and sustainability for its enhanced services
Next Steps and Sustainability
Ensure financial sustainability program
Strategic plan
Casa Iris

Casa Iris is a non-profit senior housing facility founded in 1997 under the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Department's section 8, 202 PRAC which provides housing for the nation's senior population, 62 years and older.

Casa Iris is under the ownership of the National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA), the leading national organization working to improve the lives of Hispanic older adults, their families and caregivers.

For NHCOA, the highest priority is to create a space where seniors can age with dignity, receiving quality services that allow senior to live independently for as long as possible. In order to achieve this goal NHCOA works with different organizations who provide various resources.
Casa Iris receives support from community volunteers, local business owners, DC government, Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Also, from other non-profit organizations, foundations and corporations who help create a decent living environment for our seniors. Casa Iris has 60 tenants, 75% are Hispanic and 100% are low income seniors; therefore, assistance is crucial to maintain the facility and provide necessary services to the housing residents and its local senior community members.

Currently the facility has a waiting list of over 50 prospective tenants. Members of the DC community also participate in some of the activities organized by the Casa Iris service coordinator. These activities aim to create an atmosphere that not only keeps our seniors and their visitors motivated, but also allows them to create a close knit community.
Program Summary

With support from the Weinberg Foundation, Casa Iris Housing of DC placed a Service Coordinator to serve older adults in the Columbia Heights neighborhood in Washington, D.C. The coordinator and the outreach program helped to assist all of Casa Iris’ residents and to create a volunteer outreach system for older adults living in the D.C. community.

Below are the activities implemented during this year:

Health Meetings: “Healthy Body, Healthy Mind”

Casa Iris has monthly events about senior health. The objective of the health meetings is to promote healthy behavior among seniors. Often, these occur on two different days of the week and there is a questionnaire at the end of the sessions so seniors can integrate the information and provide knowledge to agencies about their needs, as well as share their comments.

Usually the health events focus on physical health (diabetes, arthritis, heart diseases), healthcare plans (Medicare, Medicaid, private plans, and how to take the best benefit), or emotional health (depression, memory loss, dementia/Alzheimer awareness). The health meetings are usually provided by NHCRA employees, the service coordinator, or other organizations based in the local area.
Computer Classes: "Making Technology Friendly"

A group of volunteers from a nearby school have joined Casa Iris to teach older adults how to use the mouse, the screen, the web, and to access videos, emails, and Facebook.

The objective of the computer program is to enhance the knowledge about technology among.

The internet permits older adults to research and increase their knowledge on different topics, for example, Health, Science, Geography, animals, History and Arts. It also helps with establishing communication with friends and relatives.

Casa Iris has 16 to 24 participants in its Community Room every Monday; they use the eight computers in groups of two or three people per session.

Casa Iris will try to have more computers and space in the future, to fulfill the demand, with the goal of providing each resident with a computer for their personal use in their homes.
One of the greatest barriers that Hispanic older adults face is language. The majority of Casa Iris residents are Hispanic and they have little to no knowledge of the English language. The classes are held every Monday from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm with a volunteer team.

English classes focus on literature and help with their citizenship applications. English speaking residents may use the computers and have a good time helping their fellow classmates, through conversation applied to their daily living.

Casa Iris has around 20 to 30 participants, including Casa Iris residents, and local community members, those on the wait list, which creates a pleasant social environment in addition to the English class experience.
Gardening: “A Seed of Hope”

Casa Iris under the service coordination programming provides assistance to the seniors to plant and grow fruits, spices, vegetables, and flowers. This activity provides seniors the opportunity to spend their time in a relaxed and rewarding way.

All the seniors (46) participate in this activity; each one receives a small space to grow their plants, and there is a community space where they share their techniques, flavors, and passion for gardening with other tenants or visitors from the local community.

The gardening activities take place between eight to nine months of the year. The tools are provided by the Weinberg Foundation, volunteers, seniors, staff, and the DC Office of Latino Affairs (OLA).
Birthday Celebrations: “Celebrating life”

Every last Friday of the month, there is a Birthday Celebration for all the residents who had Birthdays during the month. Volunteers and Casa Iris residents bring snacks for the celebration. There is always a cake and drinks to celebrate.

As part of the activity, some of the residents sing and play guitar for the enjoyment of all. More than 30 participants are always present in this activity.

The objective of this activity is to stimulate the mind by promoting conversation, through a social activity, and engaging in singing.

Chess Game: “Let’s play”
The objective of the Chess Game program is to stimulate the mind. This game keeps the mind active while thinking about one’s next move. The group meets up once a week and eight to 10 people participate in this program, both from inside and outside of Casa Iris.

![Chess Game Participants](image)

**Movie Friday**

Every Friday at 3:00 pm, seniors get together at the community room to enjoy a movie or documentary.

The older adults choose what they will watch together. This service is provided by the service coordinator to ensure that the seniors are having a good time and enjoying their time. About 25 people participate.

The objective of the activity is to increase solidarity and friendship among participants. On many occasions, participants bring food to share.
Trips to local events

The purpose of this program is for the seniors to exercise, experience new activities and learn about History. Some of the places that they have visited are museums, the Cherry Blossom Festival, the Botanical Garden, and some churches.

Food Delivery

The Service Coordinator has worked hard to ensure that there is enough food and that the participants are not hungry. As part of this accomplishment:
Casa Iris has created a partnership with the Capital Area Food Bank (CAFB), to provide packets for tenants every 15th of the month. Some of the items distributed include fruits, vegetables and grains.

The service is provided for 40 tenants and for 40 senior visitors from the local community not living at Casa Iris, for a total of 80 participants. The service coordinator goes to the apartments to make sure the seniors receive the food. A personal visit is important, because some of them are ill, tired, or just need extra care.

The DC Office of Latino Affairs (OLA) provides fruits and vegetables for the seniors, which are distributed every second Tuesday and Thursday of every month. The service coordinator picks up the fruits and vegetables and is the one in charge of distributing them among participants.

Casa Iris has created a partnership with Next Step Public Charter School to provide elaborated food, as well as already cooked food. Every three weeks, the school provides fruits, rice, beans, meat, chicken, pasta, and milk. The service coordinator picks up the food from the school and brings it to Casa Iris to distribute it to the participants.
**Program’s Success and Challenges**

The program had some successful accomplishments and some challenges in developing the activities. Some of the accomplishments include:

- The activities supported by the services coordinator have promoted more participation and involvement of the residents at Casa Iris
- Founding from the Weinberg Foundation have allowed Casa Iris to establish new activities.
- Through this program, Casa Iris has made important strides in increasing nutritional services.
- For the first time Casa Iris has established a team of volunteers.

Some of the challenges in the development of the programs include:

- Lack of transportation to events and to pick up food and resources.
- Loss of communication because of the language barriers.
- The need for more resources, including a projector and projector screen, more chessboards, tools for gardening, and more computers.
- Getting the commitment of outside seniors to join the programs, mostly due to the lack of transportation.

**Changes in objectives**

During the past year, there were many things accomplished with the establishing of the service coordinator.

The first objective of the program was to offer case management and coordination services for the 40 Casa Iris residents. This objective was achieved by the service coordinator through providing activities to eliminate social isolation.

The second objective of the program was managing community outreach through *promotores* or volunteer community health educators. Instead of creating a *promotores* program, Casa Iris established a volunteer program to conduct outreach in the local community.
Indicators of Progress or Success

Report on resident training and status of outreach

During this year, there was greater senior participation at Casa Iris. At the beginning of the year many of them had high levels of social isolation, but as the year progressed these levels decreased significantly and they have participated in many, if not all, of the activities at Casa Iris.

There is still a struggle in doing outreach to low-income Spanish speaking older adults in the neighborhood surrounding Casa Iris. The levels of isolation prevalent among Hispanic seniors makes it difficult to identify seniors living with family and friends in the local area.

Report on success, challenges, and data

The number of seniors at Casa Iris participating in the programs has increased. As a result, the social isolation of the participants has decreased. With more participation, there has been a demand to increase the number of programs and activities at Casa Iris. Some of the activities that have been requested by seniors include an exercise class, more arts and craft activities.

There has also been an increase in nutritional programs and food delivery to Casa Iris. The service coordinator has been hard at work to get the best for the older adults at Casa Iris and the community. We are very proud of this accomplishment because hunger has consistently come up as a challenge for this community.

The partnership with Next Step Public Charter School and DC Office of Latino Affairs has resulted in more food for distribution to the seniors. In addition, the service coordinator has recruited, and is managing, volunteers working at Casa Iris.

While the numbers of participants in Casa Iris has increased, there have been some struggles to increase the number of participants from outside Casa Iris. The lack of transportation to and from Casa Iris has made it difficult for many seniors to enjoy the activities at Casa Iris. There has been a loss of communication when scheduling activities due to language barriers and misinterpretation when communicating with outside entities. The programs already established will be more successful and impactful if more resources are available. Moreover, more resources can result in new programs.
**Recommendations:**

NHCOA’s priority is to design two new programs that will aid in the training of caregivers of our Casa Iris seniors.

- The first is directed toward family members and caregivers. It will grant the necessary tools caregivers need to guarantee the safety and wellbeing of our seniors in a responsible, efficient and sensible manner.

- The second is to create a strong volunteer program to spend some time with our Casa Iris seniors. This includes creating a recruitment and training volunteer program, allowing them to more accurately develop activities that allow older adults to learn, share their knowledge, feel included and most importantly feel loved and respected.

- Increase the promotion of activities to have a higher number of participants from the local community outside of Casa Iris.

- Keep building the partnership between Casa Iris, Next Step and OLA to bring more nutritional programs.

- Provide more support to the service coordinator to decrease the language barriers and improve communication with outside entities.

- Look for ways to increase resources and budget for Casa Iris to develop more programs for the seniors.

As a follow-up, NHCOA will be in constant communication with Casa Iris to make sure that the programs are being met and provide support when needed.

**Plan for diversifying funding and sustainability of services**

Casa Iris continues to look for ways to increase the funding and sustainability of the programs and services. This includes maintaining active communication with Casa Iris partners. Some of our new key partnerships include the DC Office of Latino Affairs (OLA), Lauriol Plaza Restaurant, AT&T, and La Chiquita. Looking to expand resources and funding, NHCOA has partnered with Herbalife to enhance the nutritional program at Casa Iris.
Next Steps and Sustainability

Financial sustainability

For the next year, NHCOA has already ensured a partnership with Herbalife and Aetna Foundation to expand the nutritional program at Casa Iris. With both of these partnerships, Casa Iris will have more nutritional resources and nutrition meetings to ensure that seniors are well informed on how to eat healthy and maintain good nutrition. In addition, Casa Iris is reaching out to friends who are business owners interested in being sponsors of Casa Iris in the coming years.

Strategic plan

Attached you will find a copy of NHCOA’s business plan.