

Grades 7 – 12 (Secondary Education) Partnerships Toolkit

This toolkit is meant to bridge the connection between students, educators, and aging services providers. The goal is to share gerontology focused education and career opportunities, credentialing, and ways that individuals can begin their journey into this field. The hope is to guide students to opportunities for specialization in gerontology as the proportion of older adults continues to rise across the globe.

What is Gerontology?

Gerontology is the study of age, aging, and older adulthood. As an interdisciplinary field of study, gerontologists have specialized training in biological, psychological, and sociological aspects of aging. There are endless careers in gerontology as the scientific understanding of aging touches upon most every field.

Geriatrics is a sub-field of gerontology, specializing in the physical and behavioral health of older adults. Geriatrics professionals most often have education as both a healthcare practitioner (e.g., doctor, nurse, physical therapist, mental health therapist, social worker) and gerontology. Although it is perceived that healthcare is the primary supporter of older adults, the Aging Network (see below) and other non-medical community-based resources often support more older adults in for-profit and non-profit organizations.

For more information on various career opportunities working in direct service with older adults, the following resources are available online:

[The Aging Network](#)

The aging network is a vast array of home- and community-based resources and housing for older adults. Careers in the aging network are often driven by federal legislation including the Older Americans Act, Medicare and Medicaid, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. An additional benefit of knowing your resources is to access opportunities for guest speakers, job shadows, service-learning projects, volunteering, and more! For more information about careers in aging services, the websites listed below are excellent resources to utilize.

- [LeadingAge](#)
- [American Psychological Association](#)
- [Gerontological Society of America](#)
- [American Geriatrics Society](#)

Gerontology Education and Credentialing

Gerontology Programs at Post-Secondary Institutions

[Gerontology Educational Programs Database from the University of Nebraska – Omaha](#)

National Associations and Organizations

[Gerontological Society of America \(GSA\)](#)

The Gerontological Society of America is the oldest and largest interdisciplinary organization devoted to research, education, and practice in the field of aging. GSA's principal mission is to promote the study of aging and disseminate information to scientists, decision makers, and the public. GSA also supports efforts to educate others on careers in aging (connect with this link: <https://www.geron.org/Career-Learning>)

[Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education \(AGHE\)](#)

As one of GSA's six membership groups, members of AGHE are often affiliated with post-secondary institutions with gerontology and/or geriatrics focused courses, short-term credentials, and degree programs. Member institutions may be from two- and four-year colleges and universities. Individuals who are members of AGHE are also members of GSA.

[American Society on Aging \(ASA\)](#)

ASA is the largest multidisciplinary association in aging, with a diverse membership across the United States.

[Accreditation for Gerontology Education Council \(AGEC\)](#)

AGEC is a non-profit organization that collaborates, but is independent from, the Gerontological Society of America and the Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education. This accrediting body follows rigorous educational standards set forth by AGHE to evaluate Associate, Bachelors, and Master's degree programs in Gerontology within the United States. A list of their accredited programs is available on their website.

[National Association for Professional Gerontologists \(NAPG\)](#)

The National Association of Professional Gerontologists grants professional, industry-recognized credentialing to gerontologists at the associate, bachelors, graduate, and professional scholar levels. The Credentialed Professional Gerontologist (CPG) designation affirms a person's educational and experience in work with older adults. Further, credentialed individuals are required to obtain industry-relevant professional development to maintain status as a CPG.

Opportunities in K12 for Students and Educators

Perkins-Funded College Courses

Students interested in a career within the helping professions should take advantage of dual enrollment or transcribed college credit classes while in high school. In many states, students can also take grant-funded courses at local colleges and universities. Options are available at many post-secondary institutions for students to take gerontology courses or other credit-based coursework that can apply to a student's career ladder. For example, Wisconsin's technical colleges are now able to apply nursing assistant training as a career pathway into gerontology programs!

Health Sciences Curriculum

How does your state’s health science curriculum reflect an aging population? Advocates are needed to change the Health Sciences curriculum at the state and national level to include topics relevant to gerontology. Additionally, health sciences educators may need additional training so they can respond to the changing workforce in communities across the country. For more information about the national health science standards, click [here](#).

[HOSA – Future Health Professionals](#)

HOSA’s mission is to “empower HOSA-Future Health Professionals to become leaders in the global health community, through education, collaboration, and experience. HOSA actively promotes career opportunities in the health industry and to enhance the delivery of quality health care to all people”. HOSA can be a great opportunity for students and educators from K12 and post-secondary institutions to learn more about careers working with older adults. Post-secondary gerontology and geriatrics programs can also lend their expertise in aging services to the work of HOSA chapters and activities across the entire country!

Partnership Opportunities with K12 Teachers and Post-Secondary Gerontology Faculty

Do the K12 school districts and post-secondary gerontology programs have partnerships in your region? Reducing the gap can also create a stronger pipeline to educate youth about gerontology, explore careers in aging, and examine opportunities for gerontology programs to lend expertise to K12 classes such as Family and Consumer Sciences, Business, or Health Sciences. Building and sustaining relationships with educational partners ultimately helps students to find their path in aging services.

Alignment with the National Career Clusters® Framework

As an interdisciplinary field of study, gerontology is aligned with the Human Services Career Cluster. Geriatrics, the medical sub-specialty of gerontology, would fall under the Health Sciences Career Cluster. At this writing, Gerontology nor Geriatrics are minimally represented in either career cluster. For specific career outlook information on [O*Net OnLine](#) or the [Bureau of Labor Statistics \(BLS\)](#) website, review entries for the following career codes*:

Job Description	Career Code
Artists and Related Workers, All Others	27-1019
Biological Scientists, All Other	19-1029
Child, Family, and School Social Workers	21-1021
Clinical and Counseling Psychologists	19-3033
Community and Social Service Specialists, All Other	21-1099
Community Health Workers	21-1094
Counselors, All Other	21-1019
Fitness and Wellness Coordinators	11-9179
Fundraisers	13-1131
Fundraising Managers	11-2033
Healthcare Social Workers	21-1022
Health Education Specialists	21-1091
Human resources Managers	11-3121
Managers, All Other	11-9199
Marriage and Family Therapists	21-1013
Medical and Health Services Managers	11-9111
Medical Scientists, Except Epidemiologists	19-1042

Careers IN AGING

passion • purpose • possibilities

Meeting, Convention, and Event Planners	13-1121
Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers	21-1023
Psychologists, All Other	19-3039
Recreational Therapists	29-1125
Social and Community Services Managers	11-9151
Social and Human Service Assistants	21-1093
Social Science Research Assistants	19-4061
Social Scientists and Related Workers, All Other	19-3099
Social Workers, All Other	21-1029
Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	11-3070

*This is not an all-inclusive list, but provides a general idea of what job categories are applicable in the field of gerontology. Note that focusing on geriatrics would expand this list even further.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer L. Ellis-Gajda, PhD, HS-BCP, CPG

jennifer.ellis@northwoodtech.edu

Program Director & Instructor of the Gerontology-Aging Services Professional Program
Northwood Technical College

Careers in Aging is an initiative of the [Gerontological Society of America](#).

