



# Center for the Advanced Study of Aging Services

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## **UC Berkeley Villages Project: Evaluating an Innovative Approach for Aging in Place**

The UC Berkeley Villages project is a series of research projects at the Center for the Advanced Study of Aging Services (CASAS) aimed at increasing our understanding of ways to help seniors age in place. Usually developed by older adults themselves, Villages are grassroots, nonprofit organizations. In exchange for membership dues, seniors gain access to a range of services and supports designed to help them to remain in their own homes and communities. [Click here to learn more about Villages.](#)

## **CASAS Awarded Grant from Archstone Foundation to Conduct Multi-Site Evaluation of Nine California Villages**

CASAS has been selected to serve as the external evaluator for the Archstone Foundation's program, ["Creating Aging Friendly Communities through the Expansion of Villages."](#) The goals of this initiative are to support consumer-driven culture change as it pertains to the delivery of services for older adults who desire to age in place, further understand and document the varying Village models that are being developed, and identify the key organizational characteristics that will advance the effectiveness and sustainability of these models.

Nine Villages in California were awarded grants, and will participate in a multi-site evaluation conducted by CASAS. This two-and-a-half year evaluation, which began in October 2011, seeks to describe and document how Villages form, evolve, and implement member services. CASAS researchers will work with all the grantee Villages to set up data collection procedures and to refine data collection instruments. A pre-post assessment – in which new Village members will be interviewed at enrollment and again 12 months post-enrollment – will contribute to our understanding about the impact Villages have on the lives of seniors over time. Grantees will also receive technical assistance from NCB Capital Impact. [Click here to learn more about the Archstone Foundation project and to view a list of grantee Villages.](#)

### **CASAS to Conduct Third Survey of Village Organizations Nationwide**

Beginning this winter, CASAS will work with Professor Emily Greenfield of the School of Social Work at Rutgers University to conduct a third survey of Villages in the United States. This study, funded by the Silberman Foundation, will be part of a larger effort to survey both Villages and Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities-Supportive Services Programs (NORC-SSPs). NORC-SSPs are similar to Villages in that they provide services to older adults who wish to remain living in their own homes. [Click here to read more about NORCS.](#)

This upcoming survey will expand on CASAS' earlier work to understand how organizational characteristics, such as consumer directedness, inter-organizational relationships, and services provided, might predict both sustainability and effectiveness of Villages. This is also an opportunity for CASAS to re-interview the Villages that have participated in past research and learn how they have evolved since our last survey.

### **CASAS Evaluates ElderHelp Concierge Club: A Village Model Program**

In November 2010, CASAS researchers launched one of the first comprehensive evaluations of a Village model program in the United States. ElderHelp of San Diego has been serving the most vulnerable, frail and isolated seniors in San Diego since the 1970s. In 2007, ElderHelp made the transition from a more traditional senior service agency into a membership-based Village model, naming their new program “the Concierge Club.”

Among Villages, the Concierge Club is unique, with a large volunteer workforce and a strong case management component. Funded by The SCAN Foundation, CASAS' evaluation of this program includes surveys with Village members to assess the impact that Villages have on several factors that may be related to aging in place. In particular, the study examines how Village membership may affect health care access, formal and informal service use, social integration, civic engagement, confidence aging in place, and social isolation, among other things. This evaluation will also include a preliminary assessment of how Villages may reduce out of pocket costs for seniors. [Click here to learn more about the ElderHelp Concierge Club.](#)

## Findings from CASAS' National Study of Village Organizational and Membership Characteristics Now Available Online

In 2010, CASAS completed the first national study focused specifically on Villages. In partnership with NCB Capital Impact and funded by The SCAN Foundation, CASAS surveyed operational Villages in the United States regarding their organizational and membership characteristics. Demographic data were combined with organizational data from an earlier survey of aging in place initiatives.

Findings indicate that Village members are predominantly age 65 or older, white, non-Hispanic, homeowners, and they have care needs that are slightly lower than those of the elderly population in the U.S. overall. One-quarter of Villages are affiliated with other agencies, while the rest are freestanding, relatively autonomous entities. Member fees and donations are the primary sources of funding for Villages, but slightly more than half of Villages report receiving grants, and 20 percent report at least some funding from federal, state, or local government. Annual dues for individual memberships range from \$35 to more than \$900, with slightly more than half of all Villages offering a discounted membership, at a reduce annual fee ranging from zero to \$150 for individuals. [An article containing the full results of this study has been published in The Gerontologist. Click here to download.](#)

## CASAS Director Andrew Scharlach Studies Aging Services in Scandinavia

In 2010, several Scandinavian social scientists interested in aging from the Ersta Sköndal University in Sweden visited the UC Berkeley School of Social Welfare. Last May and June, Professor Andrew Scharlach returned the visit to Sweden and Denmark, where he collaborated with local scholars, gave lectures and visited several senior service agencies throughout Sweden and Denmark.



*Lars Svedberg, Director of Department of Civil Society Research at Ersta Sköndal University College, and Andrew Scharlach*

During his trip, Professor Scharlach was a guest of the Ersta Sköndal University College Department of Social Work (Magnus Karlsson, Director) and the Center for Civil Society Research (Professor Lars Svedberg, Director). While in Sweden, he collaborated with

Ersta Sköndal University College's Magnus Jegermalm and Jönköping University's Gerdt Sundstrom on current and planned research and publication projects, including an article on cross-national perspectives on long-term care and an article examining the roles of relative caregivers for older adults in the context of social, political, and economic changes in welfare state provisions. The Center for Civil Society Research in Stockholm hosted Professor Scharlach's visit to consider what Scandinavian countries and the United States could learn from one another regarding the role of civil society in the care of the elderly.

Professor Scharlach gave presentations to faculty and students at Linköping University, Jönköping University, and Ersta Sköndal University College. He also toured a number of senior service sites, including Hammarbyhojden Senior Center and Service House, Judaiske Hemmet Nursing Home, and Jewish Community Services for the Elderly. In Denmark, he lectured at Copenhagen University Center for Healthy Aging and the Danish National Center for Social Research and visited a traditional Danish nursing home. [Click here to view Professor Scharlach's report on aging in Sweden and Denmark.](#)



*Andrew Scharlach and Magnus Karlsson, Director of the Department of Social Work at Ersta Sköndal University College*

## **CASAS partners with NCB Capital Impact and the Village-to-Village Network**

The UC Berkeley Center for the Advanced Study of Aging Services is once again partnering with NCB Capital Impact to evaluate the effectiveness of the Village model. CASAS worked with NCB Capital Impact on the [first national survey of Village organizations](#) and will work once again with this valued partner on a [multi-site Village evaluation funded by the Archstone Foundation](#). CASAS staff will be working closely with Susan Poor, Senior Policy Advisor at NCB Capital Impact and the VtV Network, and Candace Baldwin, Co-Director of the VtV Network, on the Archstone Foundation project, through which Villages will receive a combination of technical support from NCB Capital Impact and evaluation from CASAS.

NCB Capital Impact is the sponsor of the national [Village to Village \(VtV\) Network](#), a peer-to-peer learning community, formed in 2010 through a partnership between NCB Capital Impact and Beacon Hill Village. The VtV Network provides ongoing technical assistance to members through its information phone line, webinars, open conversation sessions, online forums, a comprehensive online directory, Village to Village mentoring, and regional and national conferences.

Professor Andrew Scharlach of CASAS was the featured speaker in a VtV webinar in October 2010. His presentation entitled, "The Village Movement: Data Collection," educated participants about the benefits of and strategies for collecting data in a Village organization. Professor Scharlach was also a featured presenter at the 2011 National Village Gathering, held in Oakland on October 24-26, 2011. This year's theme was "Bridging the Gap: From Start Up to Sustainability."

[Click here to listen to an NPR interview with Susan Poor about the Village Movement.](#)

## **Kleiner Doctoral Fellowship in Aging**

The UC Berkeley School of Social Welfare offers the Kleiner Doctoral Fellowship in Aging, created with a generous contribution from the Eugene and Rose Kleiner Family Foundation. This distinguished fellowship provides full support—including tuition, fees, and living expenses—for an incoming student pursuing doctoral studies in Social Welfare with an emphasis on gerontology.

The Kleiner Fellowship supports an individually-tailored program of research experience and training. Fellows participate in collaborative research activities through Berkeley's Center for the Advanced Study of Aging Services (CASAS), which brings together School of Social Welfare faculty and graduate students, as well as academics from other departments, to address critical issues in aging. [Click here for more information about Berkeley's Center for the Advanced Study of Aging Services.](#)

Applications for Berkeley's doctoral program in Social Welfare currently are being accepted until December 16, 2011. For more information, or to apply, contact the **Social Welfare Admissions Department** or call (510) 642-9042.

## What is a Village?

Older adults in communities around the country are creating their own “villages” — grassroots, consumer-driven membership organizations designed to help them to age in place by reducing social isolation and unmet needs.

In return for annual dues, Village members typically receive:

1. Access to core services provided by staff or volunteers, such as shopping and transportation;
2. A concierge service through which members receive referrals and sometimes discounts to vetted outside services, such as home health care, legal assistance, and home repair;
3. Opportunities to develop mutually-supportive relationships with other members through social events such as parties or cultural events; and
4. Substantial opportunities for social engagement, whether by volunteering to provide assistance to other members, offering administrative help to the Village, or serving in a leadership position in the organization.

Modeled after Beacon Hill Village created in 2001 in Boston, more than 50 Villages currently are operational, with at least 100 more in development. While Villages hold many similarities to other aging-in-place approaches (e.g., NORC-SSP model, Israel’s Supportive Community Program), the grassroots nature of the Village model is unique. Most Villages are initiated, developed, and governed almost entirely by their members. The desire of Village members to preserve their independence without relying on the existing LTC system reflects the lack of affordable home- and community-based services for middle-income Americans as well as a uniquely American emphasis on individual rights and responsibilities.

Because Villages typically are funded almost entirely by membership fees and donations, some people have raised questions about their viability in poorly-resourced areas. While membership dues can run as much as \$900 per year, about one-half of Villages offer discounted memberships for low-income individuals. Some observers, however, have questioned whether self-funded initiatives such as villages may be sustainable only in communities that already are relatively advantaged, potentially further exacerbating the divide between elder “haves” and “have-nots.”

[The University of California’s Center for the Advanced Study of Aging Services \(CASAS\) has embarked on a multi-year research program designed to assess the effectiveness and sustainability of the Village model.](#)