

# Top US Gerontology Centers and Programs

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## Top 7 Gerontology Programs With Great Public Resources

By Sara Rattigan, Caring.com contributing writer

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The U.S. older adult population is rapidly growing. In response, the number of gerontology centers across the country with education programs devoted to the study of aging has also grown.

These programs, through course work and research, help students and professionals better understand the aging process and needs of aging adults. The more we learn, the more acceptance there can be of aging as a natural part of life and the more support there will be for families facing the challenges of caregiving.

Another benefit of aging programs is that most are affiliated with universities, so many offer resources to the general public. Below is a selection of carefully selected U.S. gerontology centers that provide not only top education to students but valuable resources to aging adults and their families.

### Great Gerontology Programs & Resources

1. [USC Davis School of Gerontology](#)
2. [Cornell Center for Aging Research and Clinical Care](#)
3. [University of Massachusetts Boston -- Gerontology Institute](#)
4. [Wayne State University Institute of Gerontology \(IOG\)](#)
5. [Miami University of Ohio -- Scripps Gerontology Center](#)
6. [University of Missouri St. Louis -- Gerontology Program](#)
7. [The University of Kansas Gerontology Center](#)

### USC Davis School of Gerontology

The oldest and largest school of its kind, the Davis [School of Gerontology](#) at the University of Southern California offers a wide range of degree programs "studying the human lifespan from all aspects of adult life." What does this mean for the general public, including caregivers? Nearly four

decades of knowledge up for share, from resources to services (including a forthcoming [Center for Digital Aging](#)).

## **Alzheimer Disease Research Center**

The [Alzheimer Disease Research Center](#) is part of a larger research center on memory and aging, and it has become a major resource for researchers, patients, and caregivers alike. In addition to providing local residents the opportunity to [participate in research studies](#), including treatment studies, the center offers basic disease information to the public as well as a [Q&A section](#) where readers can write in with their questions.

## **Guide for Elder Abuse Response**

While it's the last thing a family member wants to think about, recognizing signs of elder abuse is a critical caregiver skill. Data from across the U.S. suggest an increasing trend in the reporting of elder abuse. The [Guide for Elder Abuse Response](#) provides resources to caregivers and others through visually presented Facts & Figures and Signs & Symptoms summaries of seven different types of abuse. For those local to California, there is a resource map to locate nearby hospitals and law enforcement agencies.

## **Cornell Center for Aging Research and Clinical Care**

The mission of Cornell University's [Center for Aging Research](#) is to improve the quality of life for aging adults through a teamwork approach by scientists and doctors. Focused research at the Center comes in many forms, from geriatric depression to social integration of the older adult to the [Translational Research Institute on Pain in Later Life](#).

## **The Legacy Project: Lessons for Living From the Wisest Americans**

One Cornell project stands out as a resource for loved ones of older adults: [The Legacy Project](#). The Project website is a presentation "of practical advice from over 1,500 older Americans who have lived through extraordinary experiences." It addresses issues such as aging well, facing the end of life, and how to be happy, and it is a must-visit for anyone caring for an aging parent or family member.

## University of Massachusetts Boston -- Gerontology Institute

At UMass Boston's [Gerontology Institute](#), the emphasis is on policy issues and public service. There is a strong advocacy angle to most of the research, including projects like [Lift Up Your Voice!](#), which aims to engage and empower older adults and their caregivers, and the [Elder Economic Security Standard](#), which enables communities to develop policies that help elders age with dignity and independence.

### Pension Action Center

UMass Boston's [Pension Action Center](#) is a timely resource, with the cost of living on everyone's mind -- particularly the minds of those caring for aging loved ones. Center staff helps workers, retirees, and their families navigate a host of issues, including access to pensions and 401(k)s, pension denials, and access to survivor benefits. While the Center's core services are for residents of New England and Illinois, the [National Pension Lawyers Network](#) is a no-cost referral service that connects those in need with lawyers who can help them understand their rights.

## Wayne State University Institute of Gerontology (IOG)

The Wayne State University [Institute of Gerontology's](#) Detroit location puts it in a unique position to focus on urban health and diversity. In collaboration with the University of Michigan, the IOG hosts the [Michigan Center for Urban African American Aging Research](#), one of just seven minority aging research centers in the U.S. funded by the National Institute of Aging. The IOG also focuses on connecting older adults and caregivers to knowledge, from local events and activities to publications.

### Helping Handbooks

With input from professional caregivers at a local nursing facility, the IOG developed a series of [five handbooks](#) specifically for caregivers with a family member living in a nursing home. Each handbook is well organized and written with care. Topics range from [making the most of nursing home visits](#) to [taking care of oneself](#) as a caregiver.

## Miami University of Ohio -- Scripps Gerontology Center

With a mission to make a difference in the lives of aging adults, their families, and their communities, the [Scripps Gerontology Center](#) at Miami University has a broad range of research practices: long-term care policy, technology and aging, and caregiving, to name a few. Many publications are [available online](#) for public viewing. The Center's commitment to

community is evident through several public resources, including a user-friendly website for Ohio residents that provides county population charts by age and other demographics.

## **Opening Minds Through Art**

For those living in western Ohio, the [Opening Minds Through Art](#) (OMA) program is a one-of-a-kind resource. Those caring for someone with dementia may recall a time when a photograph caused a spark of joy or memory in their loved one. OMA is an art program conducted in small-group sessions by volunteers and designed for those with dementia. The goal is to encourage creative expression among older adults based on the growing evidence that this kind of therapy can benefit both psychological and physical well-being.

## **University of Missouri St. Louis – Gerontology Program**

Since 1981, the [Gerontology Program](#) at the University of Missouri St. Louis has been committed to preparing individuals for meaningful careers in aging: Graduates enter the workforce with the skills to build positive structures for the care and support of older adults and the ability to appreciate the rewards and challenges of working in the field. The program has many ongoing research projects from which they often draw on the general public.

## **The Research Registry**

UMSL's [Research Registry](#) is a phone bank of adults ages 50 and older, nationwide, who are willing to be contacted to participate in various surveys and interviews. All who meet the participation criteria are welcome to [sign up](#) to be considered for future studies.

## **The Life Review Project**

"Nothing is more quintessentially human than our ability to remember and reflect," says Tom Meuser, Gerontology Graduate Program Coordinator for the UMSL's Life Review Project. The sharing of these reflections, both positive and challenging, can be emotionally nurturing for older adults and caregivers. The UMSL Life Review Project captures single events and life stories of older adults -- through written word, photographs, and video -- to help make a difference for those living with dementia. A local news clip gives a closer glimpse of the project. Adults ages 60 and older in the St. Louis area are welcome to volunteer for the project.

## **The University of Kansas Gerontology Center**

The University of Kansas [Gerontology Center](#) began in 1977, and in the decades since it has grown substantially in its research and activity scope. The Center distinguishes itself from other institutes by its focus on aging issues related to brain function, communication, and decision making. The Center seeks knowledge that's of interest to all aging adults and their families: What contributes to the most [positive aging experience](#)?

## **New Cities**

[New Cities](#) is an ongoing project that looks at how surrounding environments affect older adult happiness. The project aims to learn what would be the ideal built community for aging adults. The knowledge gained from this project, whether from engineers with the power to design living spaces or from older adults and caregivers seeking housing options, may create more power for everyone who seeks certain qualities of care. Based on the project's research, a local "intergenerational" neighborhood is currently [being built](#) in Lawrence, Kansas, as a model for other communities.

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