



NICOA'S  
*Monograph Series*

Volume 3 - Number 1

**Geriatric Education Centers in  
Indian Country:**

Resources for Improving the  
Quality of Care of American Indian and  
Alaska Native Elders

Bruce Finke, M.D.

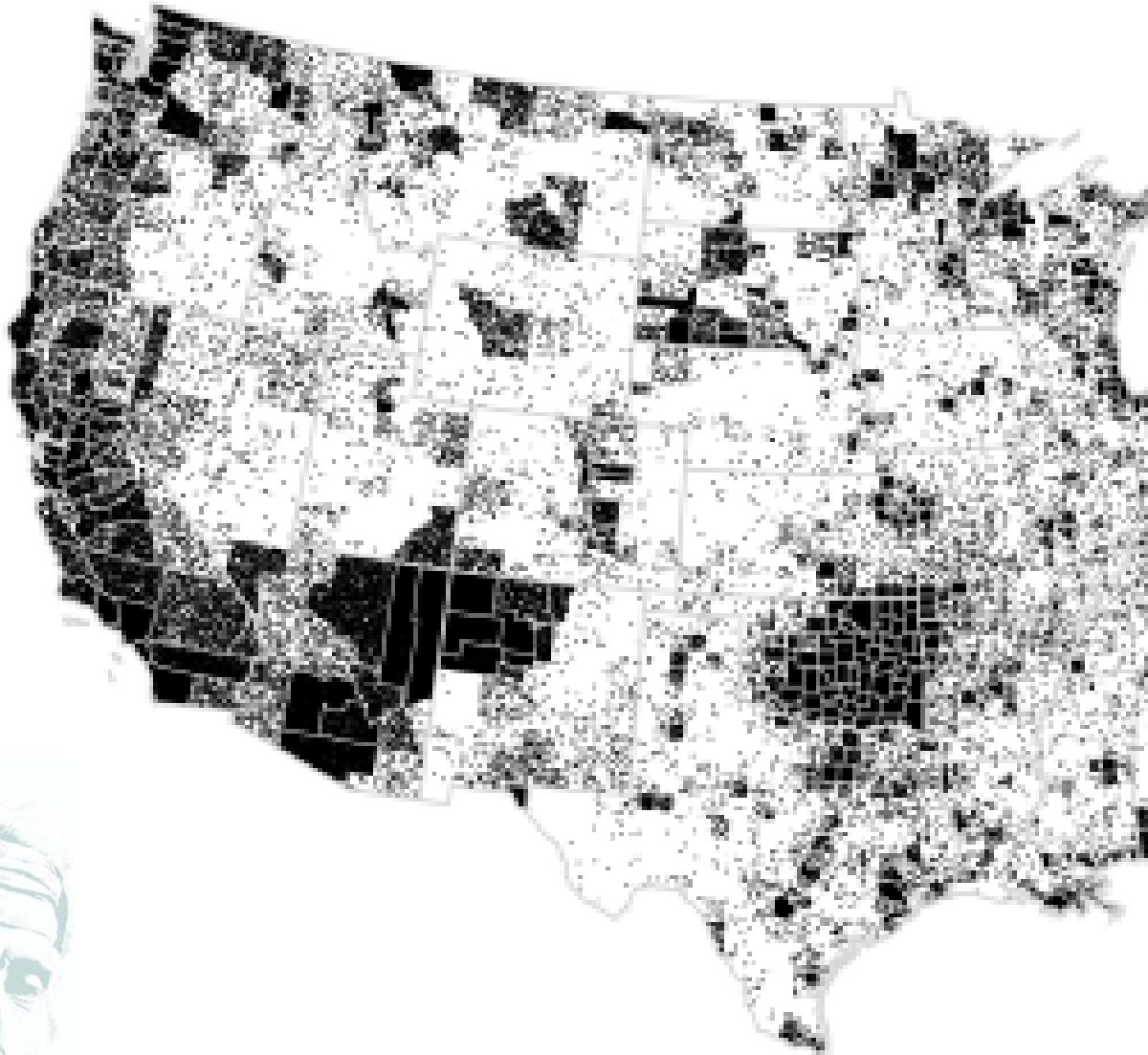
**A**merican Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) elders are a rapidly growing subset of the AI/AN population. There are approximately 300,000 elders identified in the 2000 Census, an increase of 26 percent over the decade. We expect the oldest old (85 plus) to increase at the same high rate. This blessing brings challenges. The Indian health system, comprised of the Indian Health Service, tribal and urban health programs, is now called upon to care for more elders with more complicated health status than ever before.

*National Indian Council on Aging*



## Indian Elders

American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) elders are a distinct population with unique health care needs. AI/AN elders are found in the 550 American Indian tribes and Alaska villages recognized by Congress and the additional 114 tribes and villages recognized by states alone. Just under half live on 310 mostly rural reservations. They speak one or more of 200 languages and dialects.



**Map 1: American Indian and Alaska Native Elders (55 years plus) from the 1990 Census by County. One dot = 1 AI/AN Elder**

Map by: Kurt Menke, GIS Specialist, UNM-EDAC using the NICOA - ATLAS project data

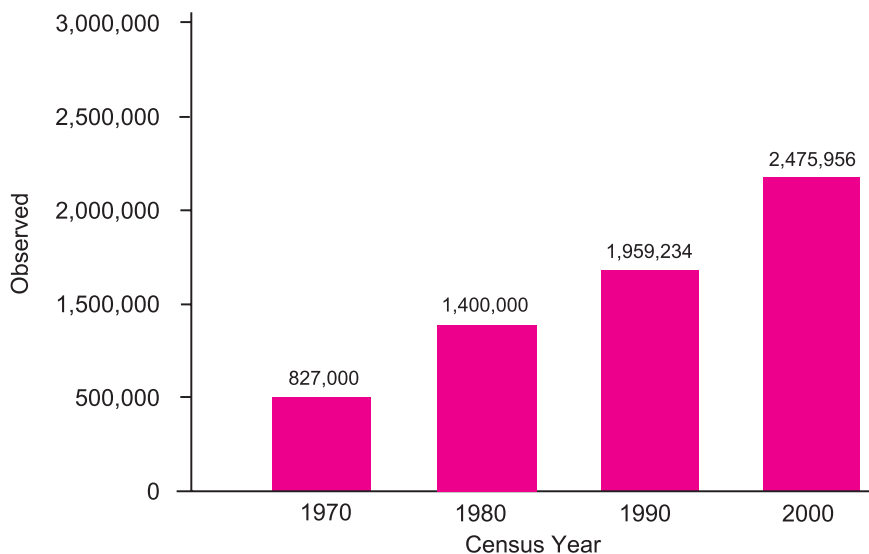




AI/AN elders, similar to elders elsewhere, utilize health services more than any other age group. AI/AN elders over 64 years of age comprise 5.7 percent of the Indian Health Service (IHS) user population but are responsible for 22 percent of inpatient day, 11 percent of ambulatory medical and clinical activities, and 15 percent of inpatient discharges.<sup>1</sup>

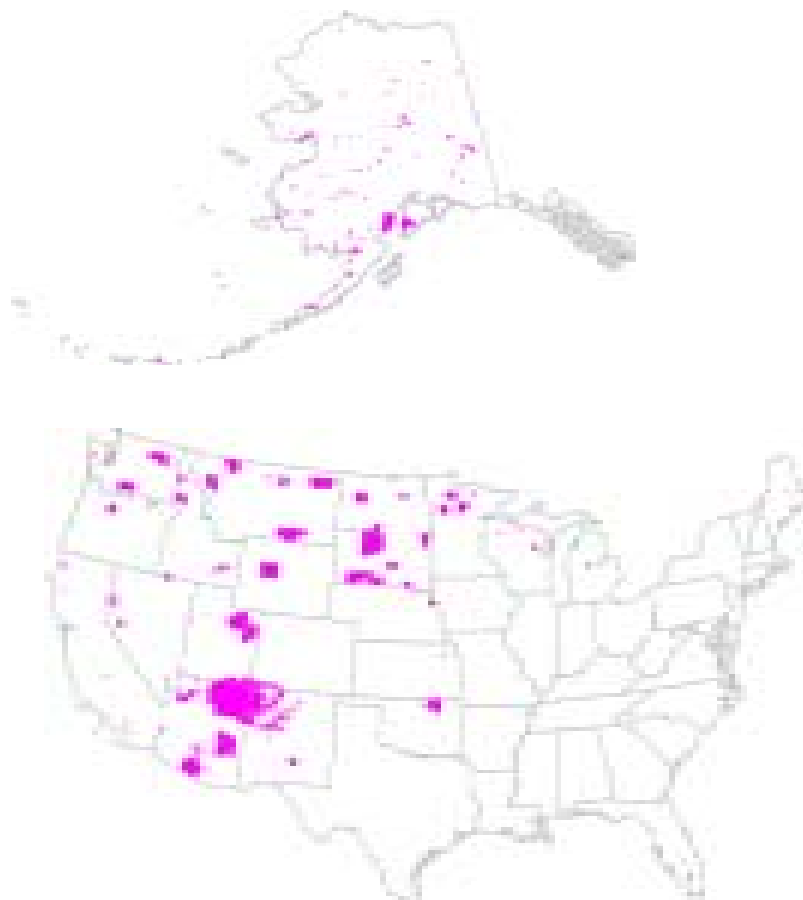
1: Indian Health Service "Indian Health Focus: Elders" (1997), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Indian Health Service, Office of Public Health, Division of Community and Environmental Health, Program Statistics Team.

Graph : American Indian and Alaska Native Populations Across Censuses



Map 2: American Indian and Alaska Native Reservations and Trust Lands.

Map by: Kurt Menke, GIS Specialist, UNM-EDAC using the NICOA - ATLAS project data





## Geriatric Education Centers

Geriatric Education Centers (GECs) are funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in order to improve access to health care for America's elderly by providing quality education and training in geriatrics for health professionals from a variety of disciplines. The GECs are the only national network focusing on geriatric education as a means of preparing all health care providers to serve the needs of a diverse elderly population.

Nationally there are 45 GECs. HRSA funds approximately 80 percent of the GECs.

Geriatric Education Center objectives:

***Improve the training of health professionals in geriatrics, including geriatric residencies, traineeships and fellowships.***

***Develop and disseminate curricula on the treatment of health problems in elderly individuals.***

***Train and re-train faculty to provide instruction in geriatrics.***

***Support continuing education for health professionals who provide geriatric care.***

***Provide clinical geriatrics training in nursing homes, chronic and acute care hospitals, ambulatory care centers and senior centers.***



**Map 3: Location of Geriatric Education Centers**

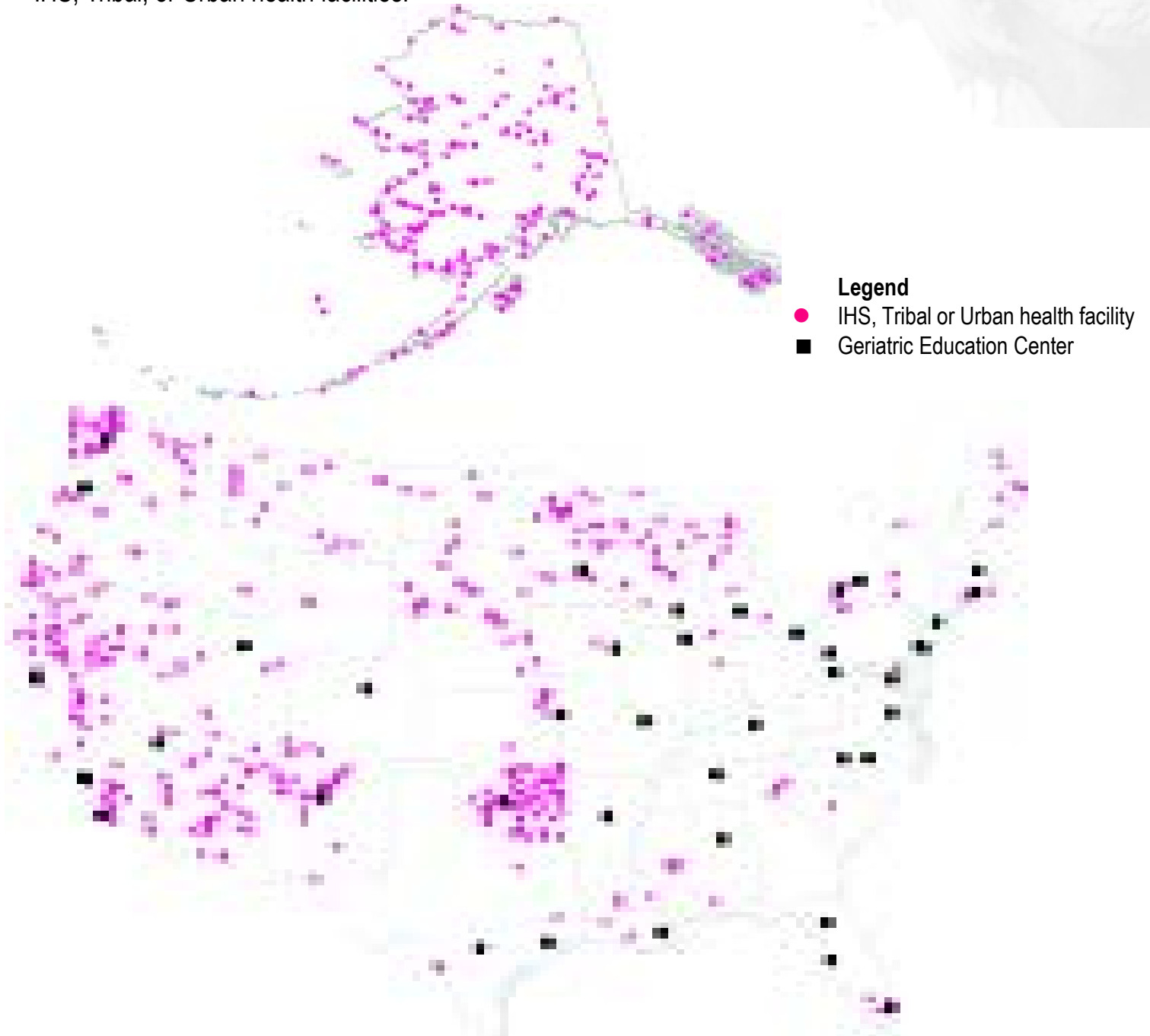
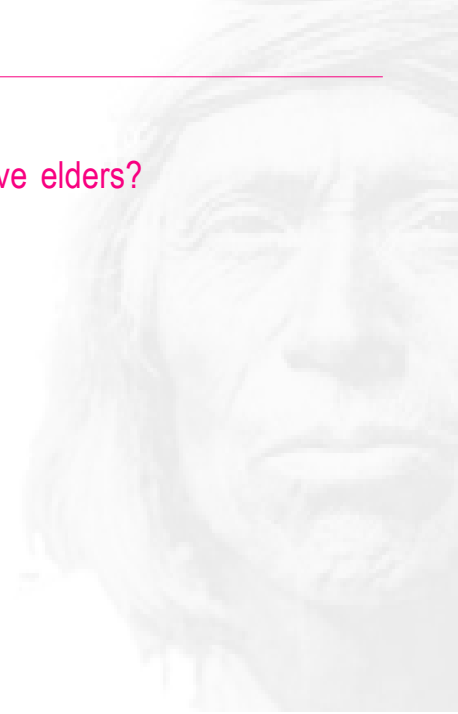
None in Alaska

Map by: Kurt Menke, GIS Specialist, UNM-EDAC using the NICOA - ATLAS project data



## How can GECs help improve the care of American Indian and Alaska Native elders?

A number of GECs are working with tribal and IHS health care facilities, senior centers, and tribal programs to provide training and education on geriatric topics. These GECs often serve as key resources in rural areas with otherwise limited availability of geriatrics expertise. Map 4 shows the GECs in relationship to IHS, Tribal, or Urban health facilities.



**Map 4: Location of Indian Health Service, Tribal and Urban health facilities and Geriatric Education Centers**

Map by: Kurt Menke, GIS Specialist, UNM-EDAC using the NICOA - ATLAS project data





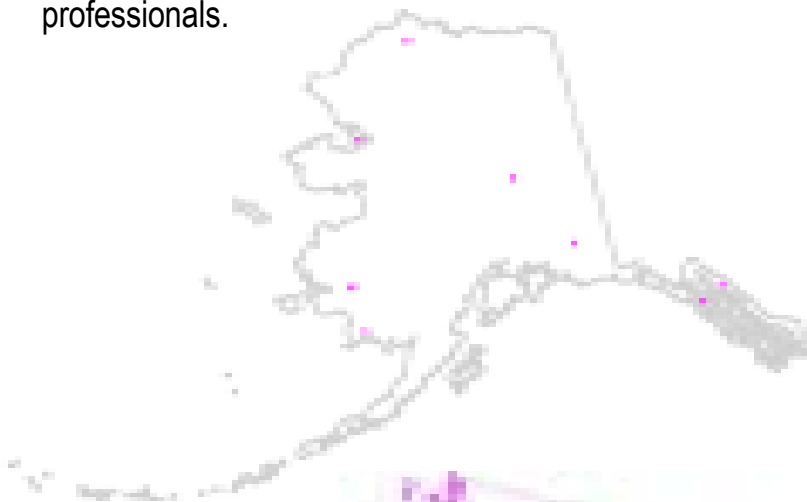
Map 5 shows the GECs in relationship to Title VI - funded Tribal nutrition sites (usually located in senior centers).

The GECs can also play a valuable role as a geriatric education resources for health care professionals training at the many tribal colleges. Map 6 shows the GECs in relationship to tribal colleges providing education to health care professionals.



**Map 6: Tribal Colleges and Geriatric Education Centers.**  
None in Alaska

Map by: Kurt Menke, GIS Specialist, UNM-EDAC using the NICOA - ATLAS project data.



**Map 5: Administration on Aging Title VI Nutrition Programs.**

Map by: Kurt Menke, GIS Specialist, UNM-EDAC using the NICOA - ATLAS project data

**Legend**

- Title VI nutrition site
- Geriatric Education Centers



## Tribal Colleges



### Legend

- Tribal Colleges
- Geriatric Education Centers

## Conclusion

The Geriatric Education Centers have an important role to play in the education and training of health professionals in geriatrics to foster quality health care for the rapidly increasing population of American Indian and Alaska Native elders. Increased collaboration between the Geriatric Education Centers, tribal colleges, and American Indian/ Alaska Native health facilities is a first step toward achieving this goal.

“Our elders deserve not only our respect and recognition for all that they have accomplished, but they also merit our best efforts in ensuring their health and well-being.”

**Michael Trujillo, MD, MPH**  
**Assistant Surgeon General**  
**Director, Indian Health Service**

- |   |   |
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1. University of Alabama at Birmingham GEC  
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South Birmingham, AL 35294-2041  
(205) 934-4399

### Arkansas

2. Arkansas GEC  
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences  
4301 West Markham  
Little Rock, AR 72205-7199  
(501) 257-5537

### California

3. California GEC  
Department of Medicine  
University of California Los Angeles  
32-144 CHS 10833  
Le Conte Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1687  
(310) 312-0531

4. Pacific GEC  
University of Southern California  
Resource Center  
3715 McClintock  
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0191  
(213) 740-8711

5. San Diego GEC  
University of California,  
San Diego School of Medicine  
Department Of Medicine  
200 West Arbor  
San Diego, CA 92103-8415  
(619) 543-6275

6. Stanford GEC  
Stanford University  
703 Welch Road Suite H-1  
Stanford, CA 94305-0151  
(415) 723-7063

### Colorado

7. Colorado GEC  
University of Colorado  
Health Sciences Center  
Box A094, 4200 E. 9th Avenue  
Denver, CO 80262  
(303) 270-8974

### District of Columbia

8. Washington D.C. Area GEC  
George Washington University  
2150 Pennsylvania Avenue,  
NW Room 2B-425  
Washington, DC 20037  
(202) 994-6055

### Florida

9. Miami Area GEC  
University of Miami  
1400 N.W. 10th Avenue (M-865)  
Dominion Tower, Suite 614  
Miami, FL 33136  
(305) 243-6270

10. University of Florida GEC  
P.O. Box 100277, JHMHC  
Gainesville, FL 32610-0277  
(904) 395-0274

11. University of South Florida GEC  
Suncoast Gerontology Center  
University of South Florida  
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC50  
Tampa, FL 33612  
(813) 974-4355

### Hawaii

12. Pacific Islands GEC  
University of Hawaii  
347 N. Kuakini Street, HPM-9  
Honolulu, HI 96817  
(808) 523-8461

### Illinois

13. Illinois GEC Network  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
College of Associated Health  
Professions  
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1640 West Roosevelt Rd.  
Chicago, IL 60608-6904  
(312) 413-1520

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Midwestern University  
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(630) 515-6034

### Iowa

15. Iowa GEC  
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2153 Westlawn  
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### Kansas

16. Kansas GEC  
University of Kansas Medical  
Center  
3901 Rainbow Blvd.  
Kansas City, KS 66160  
(913) 588-1636

### Kentucky

17. Ohio Valley Appalachia  
Regional GEC  
University of Kentucky  
Ligon House  
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### Louisiana

18. Louisiana GEC  
Louisiana State University  
School of Medicine  
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### Massachusetts

19. Harvard Upper  
New England GEC  
Division on Aging  
Harvard Medical School  
643 Huntington Avenue  
Boston, MA 02115  
(617) 432-2620

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20. GEC of Michigan  
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21. Minnesota Area GEC  
University of Minnesota  
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22. Missouri Gateway GEC  
St. Louis University School of  
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24. New Jersey GEC  
University of Medicine &  
Dentistry of New Jersey  
School of Osteopathic Medicine  
42 East Laurel Rd., Suite 3200  
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### New Mexico

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Center for Aging Research  
Education and Service  
1836 Lomas Blvd., NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87131-6086  
(505) 277-0911

### New York

26. Consortium of New York GECs  
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New York, NY 10003-6677  
(212) 998-9016

### Finger Lakes GEC

27. Finger Lakes GEC  
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Monroe Community Hospital  
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### Long Island GEC

28. Long Island GEC  
University at Stony Brook  
Health Sciences Center - Medicine  
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8163  
(631) 444-7840

29. Western New York GEC  
Division of Geriatrics/Gerontology  
Veterans Administration Medical  
Center  
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30. Appalachian GEC  
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31. Duke GEC  
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University of Medicine Center  
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32. North Carolina GEC  
Program on Aging, GETA  
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Chapel Hill, CB #7550  
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34. Oklahoma GEC  
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Sciences Center  
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36. Delaware Valley GEC  
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Institute on Aging  
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37. GEC of Pennsylvania  
University of Pittsburgh  
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### Puerto Rico

38. University of Puerto Rico  
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School of Medicine  
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39. Rhode Island GEC  
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### South Carolina

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43. South, West, and Panhandle  
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### Utah

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### Washington

46. Northwest GEC  
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47. Mountain State GEC  
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Center on Aging - Education Unit  
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