



Behavioral Health Needs of our Aging Population

Department of Child, Family and Adult Services

Senior and Adult Services

Presenter: Melissa Jacobs, LCSW

Deputy Director

Overview of Senior and Adult Services

The Senior and Adult Services Division (SAS) is committed to serving older adults and people living with disability by providing protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation while striving to preserve independence and self-determination. SAS includes three programs:

Adult Protective Services (APS) is a state mandated program dedicated to maintaining the health and safety of elders and dependent adults subjected to neglect, abuse, or exploitation, or who are unable to protect their own interests

In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) is a Medi-Cal based program that allows low income aged, blind, and disabled persons, including children, who are at risk for out-of-home placement, to remain safely at home by providing payment for care provider services.

Public Administrator/Guardian/Conservator

- The Public Administrator manages estates and makes final arrangements for Sacramento County residents who die without a will or any known relatives able or willing to act on the decedent's behalf to manage and resolve the estate. Working through appropriate methods of probate, the Public Administrator manages the estate until proper distribution is completed.
- The Public Guardian provides guardianship assistance for the estate of a minor when the estate assets are considered substantial and the parents are not available. However, conservatorship for the minor is not provided. Guardianships may be terminated when the ward reaches the age of majority, upon the death of the ward, or by court order.
- The Public Conservator arranges for the personal care of an individual or the management of his or her financial affairs. Working under appointment by the court, a conservator may be assigned to either a person or an estate, or both.

Overview of Older Americans Act Services in Sacramento County

Title III-B Support Services

- Information & Assistance
- Legal Assistance
- Residential Repairs/Modifications
- Transportation Services
- Housing Services
- Employment

Title III-C Nutrition Services

- Congregate and Home-Delivered Meals

Title III-D Evidence- Based Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Services

- Health Promotion (Evidence-Based)

Title III-E Caregiver Services

- Caregiver Respite & Caregiver Support

Title VII Vulnerable Elder Rights Protection Services

- Long-Term Care Ombudsperson



California's Master Plan for Aging – Sacramento Data

- 26% of Sacramento County residents will be over age 60 by 2040
- 16% of these older adults qualify for MediCal
- Predictions show a growing number of older Asian and Hispanic adults
- 56% of low income households are housing cost burdened



Housing Needs

- 181,000+ Californians experience homelessness daily
- 41% became homeless for the first time at age 50 or older.
- 21% of homeless people across the US are older than 55
- High housing costs combined with low incomes left survey participants vulnerable to homelessness.
- Having a permanent rental subsidy is associated with retaining housing

In Sacramento County (FY24/25)

- 525 unduplicated clients age 60+ were served in County funded shelters. (HMIS)
- 148 exited to Stable Housing (48%) i.e. permanent housing where the housing arrangement is not time-limited.
- Nottoli Place has served 170 (since March 2023)

Substance Use & Treatment Needs

- According to the [National Institute on Drug Abuse \(NIDA\)](#), substance use disorders in people aged 65 and older was expected to double by 2025.
- Results from the [2021 and 2022 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health](#) revealed that among adults aged 60 or older, 1 in 8 used illicit drugs in the past year, 1 in 11 had a substance use disorder (SUD) in the past year, and 1 in 8 had any mental illness in the past year.
- Substance use can lead to **isolation, strained relationships, and decreased participation** in activities, further exacerbating social isolation and feelings of loneliness and depression.
- In recent years, Sacramento County has witnessed an alarming but often invisible crisis: the growing misuse of [opioids](#) and [methamphetamine](#) among adults 60+ years of age.
- [Fentanyl](#), an illicit opioid, contributed to 14% of overall overdose deaths for those ages 60-74 in 2024, according to the [Sacramento County Coroner's Office](#).
- In 2024, meth was the number one drug of choice in Sacramento County, accounting for 35% of overdose deaths among those ages 60-74.

Mental Health Needs

Suicide Rates

- National data shows that social isolation is highest among older adults.
- The risk of suicide also increases with age, and is highest for those 85 and older.
- In 2019, 21% of all suicide deaths in California occurred among individuals age 65 and older

Accessing Services

- There is a lack of behavioral health services targeted to older adults even though older adults experience high rates of cognitive decline and dementia that can compound their behavioral health needs and also impact the behavioral health of their caregivers.
- Many older adults also have trouble accessing behavioral health services because coverage is fragmented and complex. The difficulty navigating Medicare and Medi-Cal delivery systems reduces the likelihood that older adults get the care they need.
- Older Adults also report experiences of racism and discrimination that prevent them from seeking care.

PEARLS - Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives for Seniors

- PEARLS is an evidence-based, in-home life coaching program designed to help older adults reduce depressive symptoms and improve quality of life. PEARLS is simple and easy to administer by staff at community-based organizations who might not have previous counseling experience or a higher education.
- PEARLS began in the late 1990s when the director of Aging and Disability Services, the area agency on aging for Seattle and King County in Washington, approached the University of Washington Health Promotion Research Center for a way to serve older adults with depression.
- The program takes place in six to eight sessions over the course of four to five months in an older adult's home or a community-based setting.
- The Sacramento PEARLS Collaborative includes El Hogar Community Services, ACC Senior Services, Resources for Independent Living, Society for the Blind, and Agency on Aging Area 4, which serves as the lead agency.



What's Next - BHSA

- Older adults would benefit from specialized behavioral health services to address complex co-occurring needs (MH/SUD; BHS/Medical)
- Contracts focused on serving older adult needs are imperative to address the increasing demographics and evidence of the severe impacts of loneliness and social isolation.
- Early Intervention programs can be effective



Thank You/Questions?

Contact:

Melissa Jacobs, LCSW

Deputy Director

[Senior and Adult Services](#)

JacobsMe@SacCounty.gov

Cell: (916) 662-4782