



SONOMA COUNTY AGING & DISABILITY COMMISSION

Commission Meeting



Location: Carnelian Conference Room,
3725 Westwind Blvd. Santa Rosa 95403

Date: Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Time: 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Public Zoom Link: <https://zoom.us/j/97845062226?pwd=2LdD46H2bzPmbir6F7FFerP9E563Aj.1>

Meeting Details: Phone Number: 1 (669) – 444 – 9171
Meeting ID: 943 1192 7709 Passcode: 768493

Mission: The Aging & Disability Commission gives voice to the diverse needs of Sonoma County’s older adults, people with disabilities, and their caregivers.

Agenda

- | | | |
|------|---|------------------|
| 1:00 | <p>1. Welcome and Commission Member Introductions
<i>Commission Members, whether in person or virtually, will introduce themselves. Member introductions will include their Name, City of Residence, District (1-5), and Supervisor’s Name.</i></p> <p><i>Members participating virtually will need to disclose if there is anyone over the age of 18 in the room with them.</i></p> <p><i>Members of the public will have the opportunity to introduce themselves during Public Comment.</i></p> | Helman |
| 1:05 | <p>2. New Commission Member Application – Action
<i>The Executive Committee has nominated Pam Law (District 5) for election to the Commission. Election requires a majority vote of the Commission members present and voting.</i></p> | Helman |
| 1:10 | <p>3. Public Hearing - FY 2024 – 2028 Area Plan Update: Year 2 FY 25/26
<i>The AAA will provide an update on the current four-year Area Plan. The presentation will include updates on AAA-funded services, goals for next fiscal year, and time for public comment on the Area Plan. Public comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per speaker.</i></p> | Souza-
Milner |
| 1:55 | <p>**BREAK**</p> | |

2:00	<p>4. Approval of the 02.18.2026 Commission Meeting Minutes <i>The Commission will review the meeting minutes and may approve them as presented or with modifications.</i></p>	Helman
2:02	<p>5. Public Comment and Commission Member Open Forum <i>The public may address the Commission on any items on the agenda and on matters within the Commission's jurisdiction. The Committee cannot take action on non-agenda items. Public comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per speaker.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In-person attendees who wish to speak may indicate their request to speak during this time. When recognized by the Chair, please state your name and begin your comments.</i> • <i>Virtual participants who wish to speak must use the "Raise Hand" feature located within Zoom. When it is your turn to speak, the host will unmute your microphone and prompt you to speak. Please state your name and begin your comments</i> 	
2:05	<p>6. Chair Updates <i>The Chair will provide updates for the Commission to review and discuss.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marge Ling Nominations Update 	Helman
2:10	<p>7. Director and Staff Updates:</p> <p>Director Update: <i>The AAA Director will provide updates on relevant matters for the Commission, including recent developments or upcoming events.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Budget Update • State Budget Update • Federal Budget Update 	Dunaway & Souza- Milner
2:15	<p>8. Written Report Discussion <i>The Commission will discuss the written reports attached to the agenda.</i></p>	Helman
2:20	<p>9. Recruitment Membership Task Update <i>Discussion on the progress of the Recruitment Member Task.</i></p>	Helman
2:30	<p>10. Board of Supervisors Meeting – Spring 2026 <i>Spring 2026: Meetings with the Supervisors should be completed by May 2026</i></p>	Helman
2:35	<p>11. Standing & Ad Hoc Committee Report <i>Standing and Ad Hoc Committee Members will provide updates on their activities, progress on assigned tasks, and recommendations or actions for the Commission.</i></p>	Helman, Edwards

- Standing Committee: No Wrong Door
The Committee will provide an update on the progress of the work.
Interim Chair: Suzanne Edwards
Vice Chair: Priyanka Varma

- Ad Hoc Committee:
 - Website Design - **Action**
Ad Hoc group to develop recommendations for updates to the Commission webpage to make it more welcoming, informative, and simple to navigate.
Lead: Jaime Peñaherrera
Due: March 4, 2026

 - FY 26/27 Area Plan Objectives - **Action**
Ad Hoc group to develop recommendation for FY 2026-27 objectives in the Area Plan – Year 2 Update.
Lead: Deanna Shaat
Due: March 4, 2026

 - Community Convening Topics #2
Develop a Panel for a local Senior Expo
Lead: Eddie Estrada
Due: April 15, 2026

 - Legislative Ad Hoc (New) – **Action**
Coming up with questions for the Legislative Representatives
Lead: Robin Thompson
Due: March 30, 2026

 - No Wrong Door Ad Hoc (New) – **Action**
Prioritize work plan activities so the plan can be discussed and approved by the Commission.
Lead: TBD
Due: TBD

3:00 12. Adjourn

Helman

Attachments:

Minutes (02.18.2026), Commission Application – Confidential, Area Plan Year 2 Update, Commission Website Design Ad Hoc Recommendations, FY 2026-27 Area Plan Goals Ad Hoc Recommendations, New Ad Hoc Proposal – Legislative

Questions, New Ad Hoc Proposal - No Wrong Door, and Sonoma Seniors Today
Spotlight on Jenny Helman

Written Reports:

Member Recruitment Report – Becoming Independent, TACC Update Report and
MPA/LADAP Update Report

Supplemental materials related to an agenda item are available for public inspection during normal business hours at the Adult & Aging Office, 3725 Westwind Blvd., Suite 101, Santa Rosa. All listed times are approximate and subject to change. Agenda items are scheduled for consideration by the Commission, which may or may not choose to act. Breaks may be called at the discretion of the Chair. If you need any accommodation to effectively participate, please contact aaa@schsd.org or (707) 565-5238 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting. To receive the AAA Newsletter: AAA@schsd.org.

Aging & Disability Commission Members:

Chair: Jenny Helman

Vice Chair: Robin Thompson

Secretary: Deanna Shaat

Former Chair: Diane Spain

Parliamentarian: Trayce Beards

Commission: Rick Baum, Suzanne Edwards, Terry Kelley, Jaime Peñaherrera, Alain Serkissian, Priyanka Varma, Eddie Estrada, Heather Hannan-Kramer

AAA Director: Paul Dunaway

Community Services Program Manager: Cody Souza-Milner

Upcoming Events:

- Executive Meeting: Tuesday, April 7, 2026, from 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM
- Commission Meeting: Wednesday, April 15, 2026, from 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
- California Senior Legislature Applications Due March 31, 2026
 - To be sworn in during the October 2026 Annual Legislative Session
- Legislative Representatives to be invited to the April 2026 Commission Meeting
- North County Senior Resource Fair: June 7, 2026, from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
 - At Huerta Gym, Windsor
- African Soul Festival: August 29, 2026, from 11:00 to 5:00PM
 - 475 City Center Drive, Rohnert Park

Upcoming ADRU Table Events:

- None at this time



Sonoma County Aging & Disability Commission Meeting



Minutes

Wednesday, February 18th, 2026 | 1:00PM-3:00PM

Carnelian Conference Room, 3725 Westwind Blvd. Santa Rosa 95403

In-person Attendance: Deanna Shaat, Robin Thompson, Suzanne Edwards, Jenny Helman, Rick Baum, Priyanka Varma, Jaime Penaherrera, Alain Serkissian, Terry Kelley

Virtual Attendance: Trayce Beards, Diane Spain, Eddie Estrada

Absent: N/A

Staff Attendance: Paul Dunaway, Cody Souza-Milner, Cassandra Denson (Zoom), Joni Huntsperger, Kyle Collis

1. **Welcome & Commission Member Introductions** (Helman) (1:00PM)

2. **New Commission Member Application – Action**

Motion: Nominate Heather Hannan-Kramer for a seat on the Commission.

1st Motion: Robin Thompson | **2nd Motion:** Deanna Shaat | **Vote Result:** Passed

3. **Approval of the 1.21.2026 Commission Meeting Minutes** (Helman)

Approved as Written.

4. **Public Comment and Commission Member Open Forum**

Jamie Escoubas, COA: March 12th, 12pm-1pm- Soft Launch of the new Cloverdale community dining program. La Familia will be there to assist with translation services.

Pam, Community Support Network: Offers 2 supportive housing programs. Interested in how to support participants who age out of the programs. Also partnering with PACE.

Jenny Helman: North County Senior Resource Fair is looking for volunteers for the fair on June 7th, 10am-2pm. At Huerta Gym.

5. **Chair Updates** (Helman)

Debrief on “Elevator Pitch” Exercise from January meeting

- Commissioners were given an opportunity to discuss their experience.

Membership Task Status Update

- Groups gave an update on their task progress.
- Report presentations will be pushed back to the March Commission meeting.
- Recruitment cards are available for members to use.

Marge Ling Nominations – due March 4th



Sonoma County Aging & Disability Commission Meeting



- Jenny Helman provided a description of the award history and parameters.
- Commissioners can send Jenny Helman and Cody Souza-Milner their nominees by March 4th.
- Cody Souza-Milner will send a list of past recipients to the Commissioners for additional context.

6. Director Updates (Dunaway)

Open Doors

- Described information about the Open Doors Web tool that helps connect people with Sonoma County resources.
- The core safety net services listed on Open Doors are: health services, human services, and probation.
- Commissioners provided feedback and comments.

County Budget Update

- County Budget Workshops will be in April.

Federal Budget Update

- Federal Budget agreement has not been reached.
- Expecting a freeze on some operations.

Presentation on "Becoming an Area Agency on Aging"

- Presentation will be offered by County Welfare Directors regarding SB 1249. Will discuss what it is like to become a AAA.

Other Topics:

- North County Senior Resource Fair will need volunteers to support the event. Will be recruiting medical screening service providers to participate. There are multiple ways to participate/help. Reach out to Jenny Helman if interested.

7. Presentation from APS (Kyle Collis)

- The Commission received a presentation from Adult Protective Services staff regarding the role of the APS in responding to reports of suspected abuse or neglect involving older adults (60+) and adults with disabilities (18-59).
- APS has a 10-day window to investigate the reports they receive.
- Specialty Units: Housing, Financial.
- APS services are voluntary and confidential for the participant.
- Law Enforcement works on the criminality related to the abuse, whereas APS works on the fallout or personal needs as a result of the abuse.



Sonoma County Aging & Disability Commission Meeting



BREAK

8. Staff Update: (Souza-Milner / Huntsperger)

Area Plan Update Year 2 (FY 25/26)

- Public Hearing is scheduled for March 18th at 1pm.

Area Plan Needs Assessment Update

- Convening a community workgroup. First meeting is March 5th with a virtual option. Commissioners are welcome to join. Will be developing the survey questions.
- The Indian Cultural Center may be interested in participating in a Focus group.
- Will need volunteers to help lead focus groups, distribute surveys, and assist with processing results.

MPA and LADAP Update:

Update on Housing Action Team and Cloverdale Action Team

- Housing Team is currently on pause.
- The Health Dept. has reached out to Adult & Aging to coordinate support for older adult housing.
- AARP mini-grant is accepting applications. (Circuit Riders is applying for transportation funds. Cloverdale is applying for park benches on a new trail.)

Sonoma Valley Navigation Pilot

- Non-profits and health organizations that serve older adults will meet/partner to provide services in a no-wrong-door model.

9. Written Report Discussion (Helman)

- N/A

10. Board of Supervisors Meeting – Fall 2025 & Spring 2026 (Helman)

Fall 2025: Commission members from each County District will provide a report on their meeting with their respective Board of Supervisors.

Spring 2026: Meetings with the Supervisors should be completed by May 2026.

- Start reaching out to supervisors as soon as possible to book meetings in April.

11. Ad Hoc Committee Report (Helman)

Website Design

Ad Hoc group to develop recommendations for updates to the Commission webpage to make it more welcoming, informative, and simple to navigate.

Lead: Jaime Peñaherrera

Due: March 4, 2026



Sonoma County Aging & Disability Commission Meeting



- The ad hoc met in January, and they will provide a number of recommendations to make the site more accessible.

FY 26/27 Area Plan Objectives

Ad Hoc group to develop recommendations for FY 2026-27 objectives in the Area Plan – Year 2 Update.

Lead: Deanna Shaat

Due: March 4, 2026

- The Ad Hoc met in early February, where they reviewed outstanding FY25-26 objectives.
- Meeting again in late February to discuss recommendations for FY26-27.

Community Convening Topics #2 (New) - Action

Panel for DSLC Expo

Lead: Eddie Estrada

Due: April 15, 2026

- Ad Hoc will reach out to see if DSLC is willing to partner and confirm the date of the expo.

Motion: Establish the Community Convening Ad Hoc.

1st Motion: Terry Kelley | 2nd Motion: Priyanka | Vote Result: Passed

Committee members: Suzanne Edwards, Jenny Helman

12. Adjourn (Helman)(2:58PM)

Supplemental materials related to an agenda item are available for public inspection during normal business hours at the Adult & Aging Office, 3725 Westwind Blvd., Suite 101, Santa Rosa. All listed times are approximate and subject to change. Agenda items are scheduled for consideration by the Aging & Disability Commission, which may or may not choose to act. Breaks may be called at the discretion of the Chair. If you need any accommodations to effectively participate, please contact aaa@schsd.org or (707) 565-5238 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

To submit items for the AAA Newsletter, or to receive the AAA Newsletter: AAA@schsd.org

Upcoming Events:

- Executive Meeting: Tuesday, March 10, 2025, from 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM
- Commission Meeting: Wednesday, March 18, 2025, from 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
 - Area Plan Public Hearing
- California Senior Legislature Applications Due March 31, 2026
 - To be sworn in during the October 2026 Annual Legislative Session
- Legislative Representatives to be invited to the April 2026 Commission Meeting
- North County Senior Resource Fair: June 7, 2026 from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
 - At Huerta Gym, Windsor
- AAA Program Monitoring - Ongoing

Upcoming ADRU Table Events:

Jenny Helman: Giving Voice to Older Adults and People with Disabilities

Meet Jenny Helman Chair of Sonoma County's Aging & Disability Commission

Jenny, what led you to become an advocate for older adults?

After 25 years in the wine business, I was ready for something new. I went back to school and earned a certificate in Holistic Nutrition Counseling. I'd always been interested in healthy eating, growing my own food, and understanding how food and health are connected. I began teaching nutrition classes for older adults, things like eating well on a budget, cooking for one person, managing conditions like diabetes, and how small lifestyle changes can improve the way you feel day to day.

Through that work, and living in a senior community myself, I saw the challenges older adults face, including social isolation and difficulty accessing services. I also live with a disability that limits some of my daily activities. I'm fortunate to receive in-home care, and that experience has shown me how important it is for people to know what resources are available and how to access them.

How did you get involved with the Aging & Disability Commission?

While teaching about nutrition, I was also volunteering in other ways, such as delivering Meals on Wheels, doing senior peer counseling, and serving on the Healdsburg Senior Citizen Advisory Commission. In 2017, someone suggested I apply to the county's Aging & Disability Commission. It turned out to be a wonderful opportunity to make an impact at the county level. Being a voice for older adults and people with disabilities and speaking directly to county leadership is very important to me.

What do you find most rewarding about serving on the Commission?

I'm constantly impressed by the commitment of our volunteers and their willingness to speak up as advocates. Right now, we're focused on outreach and encouraging Commission members to connect with their communities, city and town councils, and county supervisors. I also love helping people navigate services. I've been able to

refer many community members to helpful resources like the 565-INFO information and assistance line and In-Home Supportive Services.

Are Commission meetings open to the public?

Yes! Meetings are open to everyone, either in person or on Zoom. Public input is the foundation of the Commission. We rely on community voices to help shape our discussions and share information with county leadership. Meetings are on the third Wednesday of most months from 1:00 to 3:00 pm. Agendas and Zoom links are posted on: <http://sonomacounty.ca.gov/sonoma-seniors>.

Is the Commission accepting new members?

Yes. The first step is to attend a meeting. The ideal Commission member has personal or professional experience with aging or disability issues and wants to connect with their community and help elevate the voices of those most in need. Commission members attend monthly meetings, serve on subcommittees, and participate in community outreach. To strengthen representation, we encourage applicants who are age 60 or older, living with disabilities, members of Indigenous communities, or identify as LGBTQIA+.

Do Commission members work directly with county supervisors?

They do. Twice a year, Commission members meet with their district supervisor to share progress updates and exchange information. Members also work closely with Human Services staff in the Adult & Aging Division, including the Director of the Area Agency on Aging. It's a great way to learn how the county works and build meaningful relationships with leadership.

What do the Commission's subcommittees do?

We have two standing committees: No Wrong Door and Executive.

The No Wrong Door Committee provides community input to the county's Aging & Disability Resource Hub, which helps people find the services they need to live independently.

The Executive Committee helps guide the Commission's direction and prepares meeting agendas. We also form short-term committees for specific projects like research reports, setting annual goals, or updating membership materials.



Jenny Helman and County Supervisor James Gore

Where should someone start if they need help finding aging or disability services?

The easiest place to start is by calling 707-565-4636 (565-INFO). This free local service connects callers with county social workers who are trained to help people understand their options, access benefits, and follow up to make sure their needs are met. People can also chat online at socoaddrh.org, email 565INFO@schsd.org, or browse the resource directory at: <http://agingdisabilitysonomacounty.org>.

How can people learn more or get in touch with you or the Commission?

You can reach me through our support staff at the Area Agency on Aging at aaa@schsd.org or 707-565-5238. More information about the Aging & Disability Commission is available at <http://sonomacounty.ca.gov/sonoma-seniors>. And please, come to a meeting! Introduce yourself and say hi. We'd love to meet you.

Becoming Independent was founded 57 years ago by a group of parents who rejected the institutional model of care at Sonoma Developmental Center. The organization was started after doctors recommended that parents place their children with developmental disabilities in institutional settings with limited visitation rights. These founding parents envisioned a different future for their children—one centered on community integration, independence, and dignity.

Service Population

- **Primary Focus:** Adults aged 18 and older with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)
- **Common Diagnoses:** Autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, and related conditions
- **Geographic Coverage:** Sonoma, Napa, and Solano counties
- **Total Clients Served:** Approximately 450 individuals across all programs
- **Age-Out Policy:** No age limit; services continue through end-of-life care

Funding Structure

The organization operates on a mixed funding model:

- **Primary Funding Source:** North Bay Regional Center (state-funded agency receiving Medicaid/CMS funding through California Department of Developmental Services)
- **Limitation:** State rates have remained largely stagnant for decades, covering only basic supervision services
- **Private Pay Option:** Available for individuals not connected to Regional Center services
- **Supplemental Funding:** Social enterprises and fundraising efforts fund enrichment activities (recreational outings, cultural events, community integration activities)

SERVICES PROVIDED

****Living Services (Approximately 125 Clients)**

Service Model: One-to-one support (one staff per client)

Description: Supports individuals living independently in their own homes, apartments, or shared living situations. Services focus on building and maintaining independent living skills.

Key Support Areas:

- Housing search and apartment selection
- Roommate matching and relationship support
- Cooking and meal preparation skills
- Medical appointment management
- Medication management
- Financial management and budgeting
- Navigation of community resources and county services

Client Profile: Generally individuals who require less intensive supervision and can manage periods of time independently, meeting with staff 3 times per week for an hour or as infrequently as once per month.

****Employment Services (Approximately 75 Clients)**

Service Model: One-to-one job coaching and educational support

Description: Provides comprehensive employment preparation, job placement support, on-the-job coaching, and higher education assistance.

Services Include:

- Resume building and development
- Volunteer placement for experience building
- Job application assistance
- Interview preparation and coaching
- On-the-job support and coaching

- Career advancement support
- Higher education navigation

Current Employment Partners:

- Charles Schulz Museum (20+ year placements)
- FoodMaxx
- Dollar Tree
- Keysight Technologies
- Federal Building
- Various community businesses

****Day Program (Approximately 250 Clients)**

Service Model: Small group setting (1 staff per 2-3 clients)

Schedule: Monday through Friday, 6 hours per day for clients (staff work 8-hour shifts)

Description: Comprehensive community-based program offering a "buffet" of activities, skills training, and social experiences.

Program Components:

Contract Work and Employment Training:

- Litter abatement services
- Janitorial services
- Restaurant setup
- Production line work with Morton and Bassett Spices
- Recycling services at Keysight Technologies
- Park maintenance for Sonoma County Parks and Healdsburg Parks (trash removal, restroom cleaning)

Volunteer Opportunities:

- Meals on Wheels (one of their largest volunteer forces delivering meals to homebound seniors)
- Animal care at Goatlandia, SnapCats, and PJB Equestrian Center
- Ceres Project
- Redwood Empire Food Bank

Social and Recreational Activities:

- Movie theater outings
- Dave & Busters visits
- Museum tours
- San Francisco Giants games (8 games per season)
- Out-of-county trips
- Community integration activities

Skills Development:

- Social skills building
- Flexibility and adaptability training
- Compromise and conflict resolution
- Community navigation

Service Locations:

- Main headquarters: Southwest Santa Rosa (Corporate Center Parkway)
- Sonoma Valley site
- Satellite location near Santa Rosa airport (serves Cloverdale, Healdsburg, North Windsor)
- Most clients (approximately 220 of 250) participate in community-based activities rather than on-site programs

Social Enterprise Businesses

These businesses provide employment training for clients while generating revenue to fund enrichment activities not covered by state funding.

Document Shredding Business

- **Services:** HIPAA-compliant document destruction for businesses and individuals
- **Contracts:** Holds Sonoma County contract
- **Workforce:** Staffed entirely by Becoming Independent clients
- **Services Offered:** Business shredding pickup, personal drop-off shredding

BI Buzz Cafe

- **Location:** Inside Kaiser building on Mercury Way
- **Purpose:** Training ground for employment services clients
- **Skills Taught:** Barista skills, customer service, cashiering, food handling
- **Outcome:** Resume building for competitive employment placement

Backdrop Event Center

- **Facility:** Multi-purpose event space at main location
- **Events Hosted:** Weddings, quinceañeras, corporate events
- **Workforce:** Clients perform event setup and breakdown
- **Schedule:** Available evenings and weekends when program space is not in use
- **Additional Use:** Hosts annual vendor fair for DSLC (Disability Services and Legal Center)

KEY CHALLENGES AND NEEDS IDENTIFIED

Housing Crisis Impact

Challenge: Severe shortage of affordable, accessible housing for individuals with IDD in Sonoma County.

Impact: Limits ability to support clients transitioning to independent living; difficult to find roommate situations; rental market discrimination concerns.

Current Approach: Creative roommate pairings, advocacy with landlords, leveraging staff support to build landlord confidence.

5.2 Limited Employment Opportunities

Challenge: Employer hesitation to hire individuals with disabilities despite strong support systems.

Impact: Reduced opportunities for competitive employment and career advancement for clients.

Current Approach: Employer education, emphasizing robust job coaching support, highlighting long-term successful placements.

Funding Constraints

Challenge: State funding rates have remained largely stagnant for decades while costs continue to rise.

Impact: State funding covers only basic supervision; all enrichment activities, community integration, and quality-of-life programming must be funded through social enterprises and grants.

Current Approach: Diversified revenue streams through social enterprises, active grant seeking, foundation partnerships.

Expanding Social and Community Experiences

Challenge: Continuously finding new volunteer opportunities, community partnerships, and social activities to expand client experiences.

Impact: Limits variety of experiences and community integration opportunities for clients.

Current Approach: Ongoing outreach to community partners, businesses, and volunteer organizations.

5.5 Direct Support Professional Recognition

Challenge: DSP (Direct Support Professional) role not adequately recognized in labor law codes.

Impact: Affects wage structures, professional development opportunities, and workforce retention.

Current Advocacy: National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) working on nationwide recognition and labor code reform.

Existing Strategic Partnerships

- **North Bay Regional Center:** Primary funding source and referral hub for clients
- **DSLC (Disability Services and Legal Center):** Complementary services with overlapping clientele; collaborative relationship
- **Sonoma County Sheriff's Department:** Over 300 employees trained through Elevating Awareness program; ongoing crisis intervention training partnership
- **County Parks Departments:** Contract services for Sonoma County Parks and Healdsburg Parks
- **At Home Nursing:** Located nearby, provides complementary medical services for aging clients
- **Meals on Wheels:** Major volunteer partnership; BI clients form one of the largest volunteer forces
- **Community Organizations:** Ceres Project, Redwood Empire Food Bank, Goatlandia, SnapCats, PJB Equestrian Center

County Resource Awareness Gap

Issue Identified: Becoming Independent staff may have limited awareness of county-provided resources and directories.

Resources Shared During Meeting:

- **565-INFO Hotline:** Staffed by social workers familiar with county and nonprofit services covering housing, meals, and various support services
- **ADRC (Aging and Disability Resource Hub):** Comprehensive directory of vetted free and fee-based services for aging and disability populations; several years in development
- **Open Doors Sonoma County:** Additional resource mentioned for disability services

Response: Kayla committed to sharing these resources with the Becoming Independent team, particularly the DSP workforce who actively navigate county resources with clients.

Training and Education Programs Offered

Becoming Independent provides two types of community education:

Informational Presentations

- Overview of Becoming Independent services
- Typically shorter format (15-20 minutes)
- Suitable for commission meetings and community groups

Elevating Awareness Training (Approximately 1 hour)

- Comprehensive training on supporting the IDD community
- Includes overview of Becoming Independent services
- Tips and best practices for working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Delivered to: Sonoma County Sheriff's Department (300+ employees), Ceres Project, Redwood Empire Food Bank, multiple Rotary Clubs
- Part of Sheriff's Department semi-annual crisis intervention training
- Focus on bridging gaps between various sectors and the IDD population

IDD	Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities - includes autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, and related conditions typically diagnosed before age 18
DSP	Direct Support Professional - frontline staff who provide one-on-one support to individuals with IDD in daily living, employment, and community integration
North Bay Regional Center	State-funded agency (one of 21 in California) that serves as the funding hub and service coordinator for individuals with IDD in Sonoma, Napa, and Solano counties
IPP	Individual Program Plan - comprehensive document maintained by Regional Center detailing client's life situation, needs, and services across all life domains

Cedar	Official diagnostic form used by Regional Center system to document intellectual and developmental disability diagnoses
DSL	Disability Services and Legal Center - complementary organization providing legal advocacy and additional services to disability community
ADRC	Aging and Disability Resource Center/Hub - county-developed directory of vetted services for aging and disability populations
NADSP	National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals - advocacy organization working to gain professional recognition for DSP workforce in labor codes
Social Enterprise	Business operations (shredding, cafe, event center) that provide employment training while generating revenue to fund client enrichment activities
Competitive Employment	Regular employment in the community where individuals with disabilities work alongside people without disabilities, earning at least minimum wage

TACC general meeting report from March 12 2026

- the annual C4A (California Association of Area Agency on Aging commissions) meeting will be on November 17th to 19th in Orange County if anyone is attending interested in attending, please let myself or Cody know
- The first presentation was from Trisha Wiig from Mt. Tam United Methodist Church in Mill Valley talking about the 3 Cheers respite program that they are putting together. Marin County's older adult population will reach 40% in 2030 making it the oldest county in California, They have put they're putting together a 2 day a week 4-hour program for older adults with early dementia and their caregivers This is based on a program from Montgomery AL respiteforall.org. The presentation was based around what it takes to create this program from grants, licensing and volunteering. They hope to have this open by mid 2026
- California Commission on Aging provided legislative update. They are working on AB2283= Fact sheet attached
- There was a question whether the gubernatorial candidates have discussed if they plan on keeping the MPA going after the election. Apparently, there is nothing on any of the candidates' websites that talk about aging and disability. TACC will provide talking points in the next few weeks to help us ask questions when the candidates come to our area for town hall meetings
- We spent a lot of time talking about the PSA reports from all the different areas of California. I found one was interesting from the San Diego PSA where some of their members and local officials were invited and paid for by the Japan Center to visit Japan and discuss how they take care of their elders and specifically how they deal with emergencies and the requirements of older adults during those times . They learned a lot and the Japanese delegation will be coming back to San Diego to learn from them. In Stanislaus County their AAA has presentations every month from agencies that are hard to get through to on the phone such as Social Security and DMV. They learned that the DMV could come to people's homes if they are unable to get out themselves.

- There was a presentation called Get loud to protect behavioural health programs for older adults. I have attached a **call-to-action sheet** as funding is going to be changing and it's possible that funding to West County Services for their senior peer program may be eliminated. I plan on attending the behavioural health board meeting on March 17th . each county must provide an integrated plan that is due on March 31st after which there will be a 30 day public comment. And this is where we can write letters and provide advocacy for these programs. the goal is to nip these cuts to older adults in the bud if possible.
- The final presentation was by our very own Joni - she presented on implementing the Sonoma County MPA with a focus on community driven change, she did a great job and got some good feedback. Marin is in the process of beginning to start their MPA process and Contra Costa County is working hard to get their commissioners involved in their local plan.
- The next meeting is on May 14th.

FACT SHEET

Behavioral Health Services Act Advocacy for Older Californians

MARCH 10, 2026

by [Vivianne Mbaku](#)

Introduction

Older adults often have significant behavioral health needs but accessing care is challenging. The Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) offers the state of California an opportunity to address the behavioral health needs of older adults in a manner that reduces barriers to care and prioritizes the highest-need populations among those eligible.

As the state and counties prepare to determine how new BHSA funds will be spent, older adult advocates have an opportunity to help shape a system that will support older adults as they age. This fact sheet explains why behavioral health matters for older adults, provides background on the development and scope of the BHSA, and highlights upcoming advocacy opportunities for older adult advocates.

Why are Behavioral Health Services Important for Older Adults?

Behavioral health services are integral in supporting older adults to age with dignity. Older adults face significant behavioral health needs, and existing data show these needs often go unmet. California's Department of Aging conducted a survey of older adults in 2023, which found that 40% of respondents felt lonely or isolated, and 45% reported feeling depressed. ^[1] This data is consistent with national data that show that social isolation is highest among older adults. ^[2]

The risk of suicide also increases with age, and is highest for those 85 and older. ^[3] In 2019, 21% of all suicide deaths in California occurred among individuals age 65 and older. ^[4] At the same time, drug overdoses and deaths among older adults have tripled in the last 20 years. ^[5] Older adults also experience high rates of cognitive decline and dementia that can compound their behavioral health needs and also impact the behavioral health of their caregivers. ^[6]

Further, experiences of racism and discrimination prevent older adults from seeking care, "more than a quarter of U.S. older adults said they did not get the care or treatment they felt they needed because of discrimination." ^[7] Over one-quarter of LGBTQ+ older adults in California report being treated unfairly or discriminated against in the past year. ^[8]

Rising rates of older adult homelessness further complicate behavioral health treatment. Older adults are the fastest growing cohort experiencing homelessness, with a majority

experiencing homeless for the first time in their life in old age.^[9] Mirroring the demographics of the greater homeless population, Black older adults are overrepresented.

^[10] These data are a representation of the cumulative impacts of discriminatory social services and housing policies and highlight the need for a culturally-competent approach.

Many older adults also have trouble accessing behavioral health services because coverage is fragmented and complex. Medicare is the primary insurer for most older adults, but it has significant gaps in behavioral health coverage. For older adults with limited resources who are dually eligible for Medicare and Medi-Cal, Medi-Cal helps fill many of those gaps – offering more comprehensive benefits and covering Medicare out-of-pocket costs like co-pays and co-insurance.

However, Medi-Cal behavioral health services are split between county mental health plans and Medi-Cal managed care plans. The difficulty navigating Medicare coverage and the two Medi-Cal delivery systems reduces the likelihood that older adults get the care they need. At the same time, there is a lack of behavioral health services targeted to older adults.^[11]

These challenges make clear that older adult advocates have an important role in guiding behavioral health systems to better serve the unique needs of older adults.

Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) History and Scope

In March of 2024, voters approved Proposition 1, which consisted of two legislative bills: the Behavioral Health Services Act ([SB 326](#)) and the Behavioral Health Infrastructure Bond Act ([AB 531](#)).^[12] These two bills replace the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) of 2004. [The Behavioral Health Services Act \(BHSA\)](#) modernizes the state's approach to mental health services by expanding eligibility and the range of available services and supports.

The state aims to use BHSA to “improve access to care, increase accountability and transparency ... and expand the capacity of behavioral health care facilities across California.”^[13] In addition, the Behavioral Health Infrastructure Bond Act provides \$6.38 million for new behavioral health treatment beds and supportive housing units. Uniting housing with behavioral health services establishes a new approach to serving community members with the greatest needs.

There are several major changes in the transition from the previous Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) to BHSA:

Eligibility Expansion

All older adults who meet BHSA eligibility requirements are eligible for behavioral health services.^[14] BHSA does not specify an age range for “older adults” and there is no requirement to be enrolled in Medi-Cal.^[15] BHSA also expands eligibility for services to include “treatment for substance use disorder, regardless of the presence of a co-occurring mental health condition.”^[16]

Priority Populations

In addition to the basic BHSA eligibility requirements, BHSA requires counties to prioritize several sub-groups of adults and older adults with “the highest need and at greatest risk for

negative outcomes along the care continuum.” ^[17] These include older adults at risk or experiencing homelessness, at risk of conservatorship, and at risk for institutionalization. ^[18]

Population-Based Prevention

BHSA carves out dedicated funding to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) for behavioral health prevention services. CDPH population prevention services include public awareness efforts and coordination of statewide suicide prevention efforts. ^[19]

Funding Structure

BHSA reallocates behavioral health funding to counties. County funding is divided into the following allocations: 35% for Behavioral Health services and supports (BHSS) ^[20], 35% for Full-Service Partnerships (FSP) ^[21], and 30% for Housing interventions. Of the 30% for Housing Interventions, 50% must be used for people who are chronically homeless, with a focus on those in encampments. ^[22]

Culturally-Competent Approaches

BHSA requires the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to establish standards for BHSA services. These standards require service planning to “consider cultural, linguistic, gender, age and special needs of target populations.” Further, service provision must be made for a “workforce with the cultural background and linguistic skills necessary to remove barriers” to access. ^[23]

Advocacy Opportunities

Integrated Plans

BHSA requires each county to submit a 3-year Integrated Plan (IP) for Behavioral Health Services and Outcomes to the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). Unlike MHSA plans, BHSA uses the IP as a “prospective global spending plan” demonstrating how counties intend to use all available behavioral health funding, not just BHSA funding, to address unmet need and reduce disparities. ^[24] IPs must be data-backed. ^[25] Drafts of IP’s are due to DHCS March 31, 2026. A final IP will be due no later than June 30, 2026. Counties are required to update their IP annually on the same schedule. ^[26]

As a part of the IP drafting process, counties are required to conduct “meaningful stakeholder involvement” with constituents and stakeholders. DHCS requires engagement with various groups including (but not limited to): eligible older adults, individuals with lived experience, Area Agencies on Aging, independent living centers, continuums of care, and community-based organizations serving culturally and linguistically diverse constituents. ^[27]

It is essential for older adult advocates to uplift the needs of older adults by participating in their county’s IP stakeholder engagement process. Of importance, advocates should highlight where age-based behavioral health disparities exist in their community. Older adults’ increased risk of isolation, abuse and exploitation, and institutionalization are unique factors that can impact their ability to access behavioral health services.

Advocates can also uplift the lived experience of older adults currently navigating behavioral health systems. The unique positions of older adults must be highlighted in IPs to avoid creating additional barriers to care.

Population-Based Prevention

CDPH is responsible for funding and administering population-based prevention programs and strategies under the BHSA. Four percent of BHSA funding was allocated to CDPH for prevention, and at least 51% of the funds must be used for populations who are 25 years of age and younger.

Given that just 49% of funding is allocated for adults, including older adults, it is imperative for advocates to engage with CDPH and their counties to ensure the continuation of prevention strategies and programs targeted at older adults.

Uplifting the Needs of Older Adults in Stakeholder Meetings

Under BHSA, there are several new stakeholder meetings to track and monitor implementation. It is important that older adult advocates are engaged in these spaces. These stakeholder meetings include, for example: Behavioral Health Planning Council at DHCS, Commission for Behavioral Health, CalHHS Behavioral Health Taskforce, and the Behavioral Health Stakeholder Advisory Committee at DHCS. These meetings are generally open to the public, offer public comment, and meet regularly. See resources below for more information.

Justice in Aging is actively monitoring commenting opportunities for BHSA. To stay updated on California Behavioral Health updates check back here **and email us at info@justiceinaging.org to join our California Older Adults Behavioral Health listserv.**

Other Resources

- [CDA/West Health BH OA Report](#)
- [DHCS Policy Manual](#)
- [CDPH Behavioral Health Transformation Website](#)
- [DHCS Behavioral Health Planning Council](#)
- [DHCS Behavioral Health Stakeholder Advisory Committee](#)
- [Commission for Behavioral Health](#)
- [California Health and Human Services Behavioral Health Task Force](#)

Endnotes

1. California Department of Aging [Community Assessment of Older Adults](#), 2023. ↑

2. Office of the U.S. Surgeon General, [*Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community*](#), p. 19. ↑
3. CDPH, [*Older Adult Suicide in California 2021*](#) Fact Sheet. ↑
4. *Id.* ↑
5. Centers for Disease Control, [*Drug & Alcohol Deaths on the Rise Among Older Americans*](#). ↑
6. Insure the Uninsured Project, [*California's Behavioral Health Older Adults Survey Report \(2025\)*](#). ↑
7. Michelle M. Doty et. al., [*How Discrimination in Health Care Affect Older Americans, and What Health Systems and Providers Can Do*](#), Commonwealth Fund. ↑
8. California Department of Aging, [*Survey of LGBTQIA+ Older Adults in California: From Challenges to Resilience Summary Document*](#). ↑
9. Ana B. Ibarra, [*The Fastest-Growing Homeless Population? Seniors*](#), Cal Matters. ↑
10. *Id.* ↑
11. Insure the Uninsured Project, [*California's Behavioral Health Older Adults Survey Report \(2025\)*](#). 41.8% of respondents reported lack of behavioral health services targeting older adults, and 38.2% of respondents reported fragmented service delivery and lack of care coordination as significant service gaps. ↑
12. The state refers to these two bills together as "Behavioral Health Transformation" (BHT). ↑
13. Department of Health Care Services, [*Behavioral Health Services Act County Policy Manual, Section 2.A.*](#) ↑
14. *Id.* Section 2.B. Eligible Adult and Older Adults are those over 26 years of age who (1) Meet criteria specified in WIC Section 14184.402(c) OR (2) have at least one diagnosis of moderate or severe substance use disorder from the most current version of the DSM for Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders, excluding tobacco-related disorders and non- substance-related disorders. ↑
15. *Id.* Section 2.B.3. ↑
16. *Id.* Section 2.A. ↑
17. California Department of Public Health, [*Behavioral Health Transformation*](#). ↑
18. WIC 5892(d). ↑
19. CDPH acknowledges that "many counties may be funding population prevention services through other sources" other than BHSA. Therefore, BHSA prevention programs aim to be aligned with local level efforts. California Department of Public Health, [*Behavioral Health Transformation*](#). ↑
20. BHSS includes Older adult systems of care. 51% of BHSS funding is required to be used for early intervention programs. DHCS Behavioral Health Policy Manual, Section

7.A.1. [↑](#)

21. FSP's provide "individualized, team-based care" for those living with significant behavioral health needs. DHCS Behavioral Health Policy Manual Section, 7.B.1. [↑](#)
22. Housing interventions include: rental subsidies, operating subsidies, shared housing, family housing, project-based housing, and capital development projects. DHCS, [Behavioral Health Transformation](#). [↑](#)
23. WIC Section 5806(a). [↑](#)
24. DHCS Behavioral Health Policy Manual, Section 3.A. [↑](#)
25. *Id.* [↑](#)
26. Drafts of annual updates are submitted by March 31, with final update due no later than June 30. DHCS Behavioral Health Policy Manual, Section 3.A.3. [↑](#)
27. *Id.* Section B.1. [↑](#)

STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0036
(916) 319-2036
FAX (916) 319-2136



AB 2283: State Public Guardian

SUMMARY

Local Public Guardians are an integral part of California’s behavioral health system – providing protection, case management, and advocacy for older adults and people with disabilities unable to manage their basic needs and/or finances. Currently, California’s Public Guardian system is fragmented into a series of local programs facing overwhelming caseloads and no state leadership on standardized practices.

This bill would establish the State Public Guardian within the Judicial Council of California, who would, among other duties, provide guidance to local Public Guardians, develop standardized referral processes, and explore the development of a single state reporting system.

BACKGROUND

Conservatorship is a court proceeding in which the court appoints a person or organization (the ‘conservator’) to manage an individual’s (the “conservatee”) financial affairs, their basic needs, their care, or any combination of these. In California, there are three types of conservatorship:

- **General Probate Conservatorship:** for individuals who are unable to provide properly for their personal needs including physical health, food, clothing, or shelter, and/or are unable to manage their own financial resources or resist fraud or undue influence.

- **Limited Probate Conservatorship:** for individuals with a developmental disability who need conservatorship to protect their well-being. The purpose of this conservatorship is to promote and continue the conservatee’s independence.
- **Lanterman-Petris-Short (LPS) Conservatorship:** for individuals with a grave disability due to severe mental health or substance use disorder who present a danger to themselves or others. The purpose of this conservatorship is to provide the conservatee with individualized treatment, supervision, and placement.

Conservatorship proceedings may be filed by a spouse, relative, or the county Public Guardian – often following a referral by another local government entity.

County Adult Protective Services (APS) departments, which are responsible for the protection of older and dependent adults subject to abuse, neglect, or exploitation, regularly refer clients to their county’s Public Guardian. General Probate Conservatorship is established when the client has been found to be unable to manage their finances and/or care. These clients are often older adults with Alzheimer’s, dementia, or other cognitive impairment.

If the court cannot find a responsible party, it will appoint the county Public Guardian to act as conservator to manage the finances and care of these individuals.

ISSUE:

California's Public Guardian system currently operates at the discretion of county governments, without clear state guidance or the additional resources needed to remain current with changes in conservatorship law. According to the Master Plan for Aging, the need for local Public Guardians is expected to grow alongside the increasing number of older adults living with cognitive impairments.

SOLUTION:

This bill would establish the State Public Guardian, an executive-level position within the Judicial Council of California. The position would be responsible for the following:

- Providing policy updates and technical assistance to local county Public Guardian offices.
- Promoting access to training materials necessary to perform the duties of a Public Guardian.
- Reviewing existing policies and providing recommendations to the Legislature for statutory changes.
- Developing a standardized referral form in consultation with CDSS to streamline referrals to local Public Guardians.
- Exploring the development of a single data reporting system to reduce gaps in caseload management.

The support provided to local Public Guardians by the State Public Guardian will not, to the extent possible, include support to LPS Conservatorships.

California's Behavioral Health Services Act & Its Impact on Older Adults – A Call to ACTION!

Time to “GET LOUD” about protecting older adult behavioral health statewide as Proposition 1 implementation continues.

Passed in March 2024, Proposition 1, including the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA), made sweeping changes statewide, specifically:

- Carved out 30% of its resources for housing supports and services,
- Added substance use disorder services to its previous mandate for mental health services,
- Shifted prevention activities to the California Department of Public Health.
- Transferred coverage of mild to moderate behavioral health (BH) services from county BH departments to Medi-Cal managed care providers.

Tremendous pressure is on counties to do more, with less money – **30% less in many cases.**

Currently, older adults receive the fewest services and behavioral health programs – **we cannot afford any reductions.**

County BH Departments are drafting their three-year Integrated Plans (IPs) now. Per BHSA guidance, counties are required to meaningfully engage with community and providers in building IPs. We have already seen complete cuts to important prevention and early intervention programs for several groups, including older adults. Is this happening in your county?



The California Commission on Aging serves as the principal advocacy body for older Californians.

ccoa@ccoa.ca.gov | 916.419.7591 | www.ccoa.ca.gov



California’s Behavioral Health Services Act & Its Impact on Older Adults – A Call to ACTION!

Here is what you can do right now:

- 1. Contact your county BH Department.** Ask when the public comment period for their Integrated Plan (IP) is. Ask if reductions have been made in programs for older adults, such as caregiver support, peer counseling, etc.
- 2. Share your support.** Submit a letter in support for older adult programs with your concerns about program reductions to:
 - ▶ Your County Director of Behavioral Health
 - ▶ Chair of your county’s BH Commission/Board
 - ▶ Your state representatives
- 3. Attend meetings** of your local BH Commission/Board.
 - ▶ Public Hearings on IPs can be held during or after the 30-day public review period.
 - ▶ 72-hour public notice is required.
 - ▶ Invite interested community members to increase engagement and advocacy (consumers, advocates, family members, service providers, caregivers, etc.)
- 4. Speak up** at your Board of Supervisors meeting when the IP is on the agenda.

Locate your county’s BH contacts in the CA Department of Aging behavioral health toolkit (search: California Department of Aging Behavioral Health Toolkits).



For information or to report program cuts, contact:

Janet C. Frank, CA Commission on Aging BH Committee Chair, jcfrank@ucla.edu

Patrick Smith, CA Commission on Aging Legislative Director, patrick.smith@ccoa.gov





Master Plan for Aging March 2026 Updates

Health Action Team – The Health Action Team elected to use their March meeting to review and provide feedback on the AAA Needs Assessment survey questions. They will support survey distribution and identification of focus group participants as needed. In April they will continue developing policies that reflect the needs of older adults and bring recommendations to local healthcare agencies.

Transportation Action Team – The Transportation Action Team has spent the first months of 2026 reviewing the MTC Mobility Management Model (MMM). The MMM recommends each Bay Area County have one funded Mobility Manager to facilitate the community's access to transportation services. Sonoma County's Adult and Aging Division has one grant funded position to support older adults and people with disabilities to access transportation services, but lacks the robust system of person-centered support to provide travel training and meet the needs of the growing older adult community.

In response to this need, the Transportation Action Team proposes a Mobility Management Collective (MMC) model that invites all transportation providers (public, private, and non-profit) to share the responsibilities of a mobility manager. If adopted the MMC would regularly convene all transportation providers to build cross-agency understanding of services, review and respond to client needs, and share data on met and unmet transportation needs. Two members of the Transportation Action Team will propose this model at the March 17 meeting of the Transit Paratransit Coordinating Committee. Supporters are invited to attend in person or on Zoom.

Additionally, the Transportation Action Team has collected data on the number of medical rides provided by volunteer driver programs in 2025. In future months they will use this data to make recommendations to Sonoma County healthcare on the value and need to fund medical transportation programs.

Housing Action Team – The Department of Health Services (DHS) and Human Services (HSD) will convene the first of a series of cross-agency task force meetings on March 26 to address barriers to serving older adults experiencing or on the verge of experience homelessness. The goal of these meetings is to identify and change systemic barriers that challenge the DHS and HSD teams to work collaboratively and effectively to serve this vulnerable population.



Caregiving Action Team – The Caregiving Action Team continues to move forward a campaign to share resources on available caregiving supports through Sonoma County’s largest employers. The campaign is anticipated to launch in May.

Economic Security Action Team – The Economic Security Action Team completed an assessment of service navigation supports available for older adults and people with disabilities in Sonoma County. Findings from 35+ interviews with agencies countywide have been summarized in a report. In March, the team finalized recommendations from the research and drafted a plan to share recommendations with stakeholders.

Cloverdale Action Team – The Cloverdale Action Team continues to work on planning for a bilingual, bicultural job fair for older adults in North County. In addition to the job fair, they are exploring opportunities to offer resume support and interview preparation before the job fair.

Equity and Inclusion Action Team – The Equity and Inclusion Action Team met for the first time in March. They will continue to meet through September to support the development of the Area Agency on Aging Needs Assessment. In addition to supporting survey development and focus group structure, team members will serve as community liaisons to distribute the survey countywide.

A second Equity and Inclusion Action Team made up of Adult and Aging Division staff will convene April – September to provide technical support to survey and focus group development and distribution. They will also ensure client and programmatic needs are reflected in the assessment.

Sonoma Valley Community Navigator Pilot – This partnership between the MPA, Human Services Department, Supervisor Hermosillo’s office, and the Sonoma Valley Catalyst fund continues to move forward. Vintage House has been selected as the funded partner to lead the work and has hired Erick Larson in a consulting capacity to support program design. Vintage House and the MPA will convene seven Sonoma Valley non-profit and healthcare agencies on March 26 to develop a resource guide and formalize the Navigator Consortium.

North County Senior Resource Fair – The workgroup supporting the North County Resource Fair is in the process of reaching out to vendors to invite participation in the June 7 event.



Sonoma County Aging & Disability Commission

Website Landing Page Enhancement Recommendation Summary

Purpose

To strengthen the Aging & Disability Commission landing page so it is more welcoming, accessible, and clear to the public while maintaining County formatting and compliance standards.

Ad hoc Committee Members

Jenny Helman, Jaime Peñaherrera, Diane Spain, , Robin Thompson

Overall Assessment

The current page is accurate, transparent, and aligned with County governance requirements. However, it reads primarily as an internal or procedural page rather than a public-facing entry point for community members. With modest refinements, the page can better communicate impact, purpose, and opportunities for engagement.

Desired Outcome

A landing page that:

- Clearly explains why the Commission matters
 - Invites community participation
 - Reflects transparency and professionalism
 - Aligns with County standards
 - Demonstrates responsiveness to community engagement
-

Key Recommendations

1. Add a Clear Public-Focused Introduction

Insert a brief 2–3 sentence opening statement that answers:

- Who the Commission serves
- Why it matters to residents
- How it affects older adults, people with disabilities, caregivers, and families

Example direction:

“The Aging & Disability Commission advises the County on services and policies that impact older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers in Sonoma County. The Commission ensures community voices are heard in decisions affecting health, independence, and quality of life.”

- This section could also state our mission statement.
-

2. Clarify Audience and Purpose

Add simple language identifying who should engage with this page:

- Older adults
- People with disabilities
- Caregivers and family members
- Service providers
- Residents interested in public service
- Articulate “3 hats”

This can be done with one short paragraph or a brief “Who We Serve?” section.

3. Strengthen Calls to Action

Make engagement opportunities more visible and inviting. Consider clearly labeled sections such as:

- Attend a Meeting
- Apply to Serve on the Commission
- Share Community Input
- Learn About Aging & Disability Services

These do not require structural redesign, only clearer headings and formatting.

4. Use Plain Language Where Possible

- Reduce acronyms in the first paragraph
 - Shorten long procedural sentences
 - Use clear, community-friendly language
 - The goal is accessibility, not informality.
-

5. Visual Hierarchy Improvements

If permitted within County template limitations:

- Reduce size of the main top picture
 - Consider adding stock pictures of the populations we serve
 - Display logo more prominently
 - Use subheadings to break up dense text
 - Improve spacing for readability
 - Ensure key information is not buried mid-page
 - Add archived newsletter, e-blasts links
 - Add meetings and packets links
 - Add Area plan link
 - Add White papers
 - Add Commission reports
 - Add Resource Guide
 - Include the ADRH postcard and the link to the resource guide
 - Add the BOS bi- annual reports
 - List important phone numbers
 - Summarize Senior Center visits and findings
-

6. Implementation Approach

These enhancements can likely be completed with:

- Minor copy edits
 - Addition of one short introductory paragraph
 - Slight reformatting of headings
 - Addition and or rearrangement of important links
 - No structural redesign or technical overhaul appears necessary.
-

2026-27 ADC Area Plan Goals & Objectives

6.20 Two times per year, members will implement recruitment activities based on a review of Commission demographics.

6.21 Every Commission and standing committee meeting agenda will provide an opportunity for public comment to hear from and talk to the people represented by the Commission.

6.22 Every Commission member will participate in the Area Plan needs assessment through surveys, interviews, or focus groups.

6.23 Members will create an advocacy calendar to plan strategic contacts with county supervisors, representatives of elected officials, representatives on the California Senior Legislature, and Area Agency on Aging staff.

6.24 Three times per year, members of the No Wrong Door Committee will provide feedback to staff on Aging & Disability Resource Hub program design, operations, and quality improvement.



Proposed ad hoc committee Questions for Legislative Reps

3/18/26

Ad hoc committee procedures:

- The Commission may establish an ad hoc committee **to complete a specific task within a limited time frame.**
- The number of members must be less than a quorum of the Commission.
- Meetings are exempt from Brown Act requirements, so can be on Zoom or by email.
- Meetings do not require staff support, but staff may be asked for help if needed.

The Executive Committee has proposed establishment of a new ad hoc committee:

Questions for Legislative Reps

Background: Representatives of elected officials are being invited to attend the April 15, 2026 Commission meeting.

Specific Task: **Recommend questions and topics for legislative reps to respond to.**

Committee will:

- Review 2026 legislative priorities from the California Senior Legislature. Which ones would the Commission like to know more about? (e.g. increasing Medi-Cal personal needs allowance.)
- Review proposed legislation shared by Cody from state advocacy group. What information do we need about local impacts?
- Consider what the Commission should share with the legislative reps about Sonoma County. (e.g. Senior Peer Counseling/Support programs no longer supported by BHSA funding.)
- Consider how legislative reps can guide the Commission's creation of an advocacy calendar for 2026-27. What are important dates? What and when would they like to hear from us.
- Review legislative priorities for our Sonoma County legislators and use that information to help prioritize where the Commission can have the most impact by aligning with them.

Time Frame: **Submit recommendations to Jenny and Cody by March 31, 2026.**

Commission tasks for today:

1. Take a vote on establishing the committee.
2. Ask who is interested in serving on the committee. (Up to 7 members)

Robin has been designated as the Lead of this committee and will contact members to schedule the first meeting.



Proposed ad hoc committee No Wrong Door Committee Work Plan

3/18/26

Ad hoc committee procedures:

- The Commission may establish an ad hoc committee **to complete a specific task within a limited time frame.**
- The number of members must be less than a quorum of the Commission.
- Meetings are exempt from Brown Act requirements, so can be on Zoom or by email.
- Meetings do not require staff support, but staff may be asked for help if needed.

The Executive Committee has proposed establishment of a new ad hoc committee:

No Wrong Door Committee Work Plan

Background: The No Wrong Door standing committee meets 3 times per year (February, June, and October). At their February meeting, members drafted work plan activities that need to be prioritized and publicly approved before work can begin. This proposed ad hoc committee will prioritize work plan activities so the plan can be discussed and publicly approved at the April Commission meeting.

Specific Task: **Finalize the No Wrong Door Committee work plan.**

Committee will:

- Prioritize activities drafted at the February NWD Committee meeting.
- Draft a timeline for activities from April 2026 to June 2027.
- Outline specific implementation for first steps from April to June 2026.
 - What will be done?
 - By whom?
 - By when?
 - Reported where and when?

Logistics:

- As NWD Committee Chair, Suzanne will be the Lead of this committee.
- Members of this committee are the members of the NWD committee: Suzanne, Priyanka, Jenny, Robin, and Trayce. (One additional Commission member can serve on this ad hoc committee if interested.)
- The first meeting is Thursday, March 26th at 3:15pm. Jenny shared a Zoom link.

Time Frame: **Submit work plan proposal to Jenny and Cody by April 9, 2026.**

Commission task for today:

Take a vote on establishing the committee.