

IT'S 2023, WHERE ARE WE ON ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF ALAMEDA COUNTY SENIORS?

Older Californians face very significant barriers to health and economic security. California's Master Plan for Aging and the stakeholders engaged in advancing it have elevated thoughtful proposals and impactful policy recommendations. However, the state is falling behind in implementing solutions to address the growing need for home and community-based solutions.

In Alameda County, community-based organizations that provide services in the community see a growing crisis. It is a crisis of economic and housing insecurity, and it impacts the health and wellbeing of thousands of older county residents. In this fact sheet we share recent data that begins to describe the scope and extent of the crisis.

ECONOMIC INSECURITY

Older adults are the fastest growing segment of Alameda County's population, and in just 8 years will represent 25% of the total number of people in our county. This is not concerning by itself, but the cost of living and inflation have been outpacing income for years, making it difficult for people to make ends meet and to save for retirement.

- **36.2%** of older residents live below the Elder Index, a local measure of what it costs to cover basic expenses.
- **Almost half** of single older adults in Alameda County can't cover their basic living expenses.
- **46,979** older people and people with disabilities rely on SSI/SSP, which means their income is below the federal poverty level.

Economic insecurity is not a burden shared equally among the older population. People of color, women and LGBTQ individuals have less retirement savings and face a greater likelihood of aging into poverty.

HOUSING INSECURITY

Growing numbers of older people in Alameda County are housing insecure:

- **Almost half** of older renters are "housing cost burdened"—over 30% of their income goes to housing.
- **30%** of older renters spend over half their income on housing.
- **19%** of unhoused people are age 60 or older, according to the county's 2022 Point In Time count, an increase from 14% in 2019 and 10% in 2017.
- Over half of the unhoused population in Oakland are over age 50.

The Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County is a coalition of nonprofit and public organizations that provide health care and supportive services to over 80,000 older adults. We are committed to establishing an easily accessible, coordinated system of social, medical and supportive care for older people in Alameda County.

For everyone, interventions to address health and the social determinants of health have the best outcomes when a person has stable housing. For older adults, this is critical. Housing instability, displacement and homelessness have serious negative impacts on health.

HEALTH DISPARITIES AND ISOLATION

- **49,432 people** age 65 or older are “Duals,” with both Medicare and Medi-Cal coverage. Duals are more likely to have multiple chronic conditions and complex medical and social care needs, and are challenged by trying to navigate poorly aligned systems.
- **12,041 people** age 65 or older have only Medi-Cal coverage.
- **28,045 people** in our county were living with Alzheimer’s Disease in 2019. That number is expected to grow by 30% by 2025. By 2040 over 69,000 people will be living with the disease.
- **17.7% of people** age 60 and older rate their health as “fair” or “poor.” Over 30% of people age 60 or older rate their dental health as “fair” or “poor.”
- **Over 41%** of ED visits by people with Medicare fee-for-service age 65 or older were not necessary or preventable (CMS Medicare FFS data, 2018 & 2019). Medicare FFS includes Duals who are in the Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans.
- **24%** of older adults live alone. While many are thriving, living alone is a major risk factor for social isolation and loneliness.
- **20.8%** of people age 60 or older report they are sometimes or often lonely.
- **Three of the six** centers that provided Adult Day Health Care under the Medi-Cal CBAS benefit have closed over the last decade. Now fewer than 1,000 adults with complex medical, cognitive and psychological conditions are served. All five Adult Day programs have closed.

WHAT POLICY MAKERS MUST DO

California policy makers made important investments in the state’s Master Plan for Aging in spite of this year’s fiscal downturn and record state budget deficit, ending Medi-Cal’s asset test, increasing SSI/SSP grant levels, and funding an older adult behavioral health initiative. However, the crisis at the community level is great, and so much more needs to be done.

We strongly urge policy makers to move forward with a renewed sense of urgency to advance Master Plan for Aging solutions.

***Data Sources for this Report:** DHCS Medi-Cal Eligibles, May 2022; ATI Advisory analysis of MBSF administrative data licensed from CMS, based on Medicare enrollment records for March 2021; Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias Facts and Figures in California. California Department of Public Health, January 2021; CDSS IHSS Program Data, June 2022; CHISS Data, 2020, UCLA Center for Health Policy Research; Alameda County PIT Count Reports*

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