

Policy Agenda

The Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County is committed to advocating for policy change that improves the lives of seniors in Alameda County. Aging in place, living with dignity, being part of a community, feeling safe, maintaining health and mobility, being able to exercise choice – these are expectations that all of us have as we age. Community-based supportive services are a necessary part of the equation in helping us meet the challenges of aging and live successfully in our communities, now and in the future – a future in which every fifth person will be over 65.

SSC's Policy Agenda looks to that future, addressing the longer-term implications of immediate policy choices that we face today.

Priorities for Action

Policy areas well-defined by past work, which call for immediate attention and focused effort.

Invest in Services – Explosive population growth and increased acuity levels are straining the service network and crowding out capacity to provide much needed preventive services. Stagnant funding, looming federal policy change, inflation, and recent minimum wage ordinances threaten the sustainability of programs and organizations. **SSC must champion reliable and relevant funding for community-based supportive services to meet the needs of Alameda County's rapidly growing older adult population.**

County Action Priorities:

- Champion funding for services, seeking revenue streams and solutions that will ensure the range and capacity of supportive services necessary to address current and future need.
- Encourage leveraging of federal dollars at multiple county tables.
- Empower and mobilize seniors so that their voices are heard and respected.

State and Federal Action Priorities:

- Fight to preserve funding for Older American's Act services and to protect existing Older Californians Act funding while preparing the state to backfill any federal cuts.
- Work to protect funding, capacity and access to Adult Day Health Care, MSSP, IHSS, PACE and other Medi-Cal-funded services, as well as ACA and Medi-Cal expansion coverage.
- Support adequate, stable funding for LTC Ombudsman and Adult Protective Services.

System Innovation – Silos and regulations exclude CBOs from contract opportunities; ignoring the power of supportive services to improve health outcomes. **SSC must advance collaborations and policy that establish community-based services as key partners with healthcare, coordinate and bridge sectors and silos, and leverage existing and new resources for better outcomes.**

County Action Priorities:

- Champion change that increases service capacity, makes case management and supportive services available countywide to low- and moderate-income seniors alike, and builds aging-friendly communities.
- Pursue collaborative implementation of the County Plan for Older Adults, including CBO and consumer representation at the planning table and exploration of public/private partnerships.

- Advance analysis and data collection that reflect the impact of supportive services on seniors' health. Explore developing a set of recommendations around data points.
- Inform thoughtful planning for innovation & leveraging in Measure A 2017 RFPs.
- Inform implementation of the County's Whole Person Care Pilot, promoting collaboration and the adoption of two-way communication between health entities and CBOs.
- Convene meetings with leaders in hospitals and healthcare entities to promote the benefits of high-touch, culturally sensitive local services and the value of partnering with local CBOs.

State Action Priorities:

- Work to align state policy and programs with local priorities; promote policy and regulations that embrace community-based social/supportive services as key players with managed care and in innovations such as Health Homes and Whole Person Care Pilot.

Advance Economic Security for Older Adults – The economic reality for Alameda County's rapidly aging population is grave. **SSC must advance solutions that improve access to food, housing, healthcare, cash assistance and other services that have powerful positive impacts on seniors' economic security.**

County Action Priorities:

- Work to incorporate seniors' needs in local housing initiatives, and support initiatives that will create service-enriched, affordable and low-income housing and anti-displacement solutions.
- Encourage local support for programs that provide nutritious food to seniors
- Coordinate with Everyone Home, EBHO and All In to advance these priorities.

State Action Priorities:

- Pursue a communications campaign that illuminates the plight of economically insecure older adults and connects the dots between people, policy and solutions.
- Work to restore SSI/SSP grant levels and COLAs to lift recipients out of poverty.
- Support programs and solutions that create a financial buffer for poor seniors.
- Support investment in senior employment and other programs that help seniors gain economic self-sufficiency.

Objectives for Policy Change

Policy areas that SSC supports, allowing us to be ready to respond to requests for backing.

Mental Health – The CDC recognizes mental health as a public health issue that must be treated with the same urgency as physical health. Medicare, Medi-Cal and the Older Americans Act are applying greater focus to the prevention and treatment of mental disorders. Yet much needs to be done to incorporate mental health awareness and objectives into the menu of services, and to fund an adequate level of highly competent mental health services for seniors.

Transportation – Practical barriers discourage eligible seniors from using city and county paratransit, including wait times, customer service, county line limitations, access for those using walkers, assistance with parcels. Opportunities for improvement at the local and county level need support from stakeholders in order to be realized.