

## Goal 3

2020

*We will live in communities and have access to services and care that optimize health and quality of life.*

*Californians will live in communities with policies and programs that promote well-being throughout our lifespans.*

*Californians will have access to quality, affordable, and person-centered health care through delivery systems that are age-friendly, dementia-friendly and disability-friendly.*

# DRAFT California Master Plan for Aging: Goal 3- Health and Well Being

## GOAL 3: HEALTH AND WELL BEING RECOMMENDATIONS

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# Executive Summary

The third goal of the Master Plan for Aging envisions transformative change in how we view the aging of California’s population. Aging is the great equalizer - it touches all persons regardless of income, race, disability, immigration status or education; we will all age and we hope to do so with a measure of health, dignity, grace, security and comfort. At the same time, our collective notion of “wellness” and “health” should not equate disability or functional need with loss or illness. We all wish to live as healthy a life as possible regardless of our specific needs. Negative stereotypes and fears of aging and disability have historically pushed aging issues to the background. This Master Plan has the potential to reimagine aging—impacting how society thinks about, plans for, and responds to life’s changes with age.

These issues are not limited to individuals over a certain age, but impact young people, families, and communities alike. We need to reframe how we perceive both age and disability to support health and function throughout the lifespan. Thus, we seek changes in current approaches to aging and disability by recognizing that all ages--young, middle aged, older-- need to prepare for a longer life span. Simultaneously, our institutions need to ensure that our systems and infrastructure can support this societal vision.

Responding to the needs of diverse populations through system transformation will yield a healthier California, making us a national leader and trend setter in addressing the demographic and social trends affecting the entire nation. To accomplish this goal, cross-system reform is needed at the person-level, system-level and provider level.

**Person-level: Healthy Aging, Wellness and Prevention.** Key Objective: Redefine healthy aging as the process of developing and maintaining wellbeing as we age. This objective focuses on individual behavior, but relies on system transformation to address racial, ethnic and income disparities. Recommendations:

- Rebrand Aging in California to create a positive narrative about aging;
- Promote intergenerational healthy aging and wellness initiatives;
- Recognize and address social determinants of health including racism and climate change; and
- Enhance evidence-based prevention and wellness

**System-level: Health Care and Integrated Systems of Care.** Key objective: Develop an integrated, coordinated quality health care and LTSS system that addresses the whole needs of the person including preventive care, well-person care, and acute care coupled with access to long-term services and supports. Recommendations:

- Provide leadership in system integration: Focus on leading at the state level and across sectors to implement integrated service delivery across all California counties and for all older Californians and people with disabilities;
- Behavioral health: Address issues related to system integration, access, planning, and workforce.

- Oral health: Focus on system integration, data and enhancing access to oral health services by expanding MediCal and Medicare coverage.
- Telehealth: Expand access, institute payment parity for televideo and telephonic services while aligning broadband funding, engage consumers, and address oversight issues.
- Alzheimer’s Disease: Build out systems for screening, detection/diagnosis, documentation, care planning and care coordination. Implement care standards for plans and providers.
- Palliative Care: Expand access to palliative care services, grow the workforce, incorporate best practices and operationalize Advanced Care Planning
- Skilled Nursing Facilities: Transform care by stabilizing the workforce, increasing staffing levels, strengthening oversight, reforming payment structures and consolidating state leadership

**Provider-level: Professional Health Care Workforce Development.** Key objective: Prepare and grow California’s health care workforce to meet the demands of an Aging California with high quality care and support. Recommendations:

- Vision: Adopt an organizing framework
- Supply: Increase the number of qualified providers in primary care and behavioral health
- Training: Prepare the workforce to provide person-centered, culturally-congruent, team-based and technology enabled care
- Oversight: Align regulations to support optimal access to geriatric care
- Recruitment: Incentivize geriatric workforce preparation

A successful Master Plan should anticipate and respond to needs from a person’s perspective, engaging both the public and private sectors in systems-based solutions that touch all major areas of life experience (e.g., health, human services, housing, transportation, others). To realize the Master Plan for Aging goals with access to services and care that optimize health quality of life, it is incumbent upon all of us to advance system change.

### Cross-Cutting Issues – Goal 3

A number of themes emanate throughout the recommendations focusing on equity, leadership and integration of services that impact the health of older adults and people with disabilities.

#### Equity

California is one of the most racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse states in the nation. Equity issues impact access to health care and related services for older adults and people with disabilities in under-represented, under-served and under-recognized communities. More recently, the COVID-19 crisis has dramatically revealed and exacerbated the shortcomings in California’s health care delivery system. It has laid bare tremendous system

inequities and health disparities that directly result in racial and ethnic populations being at disproportionate risk to contract, to be hospitalized and to die from COVID-19. It has also highlighted the widespread ageism and ableism that infiltrate societal views of older adults and people with disabilities and diminishes their value. To ensure an equitable system, we must address health disparities and social determinants of health while fighting discrimination, xenophobia and marginalization. Collectively, we affirm the critical importance of equity in addressing the health care needs of older adults and people with disabilities, thereby eliminating disparities caused by systemic barriers.

### Leadership

Our hope for the Master Plan for Aging lies in the potential for broad system change, and in the opportunity to fundamentally reframe the way we collectively view and serve California's older adults and people with disabilities. System change requires engagement and collaboration between the Governor, state and local agencies, the Legislature, and the private sector. And, as noted in the Long-Term Services and Supports Subcommittee Report, "Bold leadership starts at the top with elected and appointed officials who are willing to invest in and prioritize the needs of this growing segment of our state's population... Without strong leadership, nothing can be realized -- but with it, everything can be accomplished." Improving health and LTSS care for older and disabled Californians will require the appointment by the Governor of a Cabinet-level leader who will be responsible for both providing the vision for (in partnership with older and disabled stakeholders) and implementation of this plan. That leader will be responsible for administering all health and LTSS services provided to older and disabled Californians.

### Cross-Sector Collaboration

It is time for aging and disability issues to be addressed beyond the traditional spheres of health and human services, or as solely the responsibility of the state/public sector. Many state agencies – along with a wide range of private entities – contribute greatly to California's aging experience, including housing, transportation, higher education and veteran's affairs, among others. All of us together need to be equally engaged -with strong leadership from the governor- to ensure a holistic solution to California's infrastructure and care system challenges. A successful Master Plan will establish a framework for engaging new partners and spurring collaborative innovation across the public, private, and independent sectors. It will create equal accountability for all entities to creatively and comprehensively address our aging population's needs now and in the future through a sound financing structure.

### Integration: People First

Older adults and people with disabilities should have access to systems that are responsive to the individual as a whole—not idiosyncratic system silos based on their funding source, administering agency, or local oversight entity. A successful Master Plan will outline an approach that ensures individuals can readily access the information and services they need, when they need it—regardless of eligibility distinction, income level, or place of residence. The recommendations outlined in this goal area all call out the need for integration, reflecting the notion of building the system around the needs of the person, rather than forcing the person to adjust to the needs of the system.

# Wellness and Prevention Across the Lifespan

## Healthy Aging Background:

The benefits of integrating healthy aging in all aspects of state programs and initiatives can lead, in time, to a healthier population of older adults and persons with disabilities. California's racially and ethnically vulnerable communities, in particular, have great need for best practices given the social economic and racial inequities they face. Our objectives in this section are to redefine healthy aging as the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older adults and includes the role of health and behavioral health systems, individual responsibility, improvement in data and metrics for measuring outcomes, addressing racial, ethnic and income disparities and educating society to integrate best practices.

## Healthy Aging Recommendations:

**Goal 1. Implement a branding campaign that reframes the public narratives about getting old and about the value of engaging in practices to promote healthy aging, prevention, and wellness in early life.** Most people are afraid to get old and view aging in negative terms and remain in denial until too late. This initiative will include the media (social, print, technology --Silicon Valley), entertainment (Hollywood), public agencies (DPH, CDA) and advocacy groups (AARP) that can make healthy aging trendy and "sexy" and can encourage younger groups to plan for a long life.

- A. ***Implement a state level commission (or advisory group) to examine how we can educate, inform and otherwise convince Californians that they can expect (especially if they practice healthy lifestyles) to live up to 100 years of age and thus plan accordingly.*** It will have valuable partners from the private and corporate sectors (e.g. Kaiser, Blue Cross, Aetna): insurers, payors and providers already understand the cost-benefit of motivating their consumers to engage in wellness and prevention practices to avoid higher costs.
- B. ***Particular focus must be given to diverse communities, including those with lower life expectancies (African American and Native Americans) and those with higher life expectancies (Hispanic and Asian).*** This would be a precedent-setting initiative having California show the nation how to "socialize" society to plan for a longer life beginning early in life to practice healthy and wellness norms.

## **Goal 2. Promote Intergenerational Educational Healthy Aging and Wellness Initiatives.**

Drawing on the life span perspective we recommend "drilling down" to the K-12 level and all younger age groups to educate and inform about healthy aging practices. This goal is about reintegrating all ages through intergenerational connections but also to mitigate potential generational tensions (e.g. older voters opposed to school bond measures, younger voters opposed to nursing homes and senior programs in their neighborhoods). These include a variety of examples:

- A. ***Co-locate childcare and adult facilities to promote intergenerational experiences beginning in infancy.***
- B. ***Promote intergenerational programs beginning in elementary school.*** Programs such as “Adopt a nursing home” or volunteer home visits that allow elementary student to engage with elders in both community and institutional settings; and engage in social and supportive activities
- C. ***Teach Disability Sensitivity beginning in Middle School.*** Promote empathy and support for persons with disabilities through experiential learning (e.g. navigating with a wheelchair, hearing with cotton in ears, using glasses with limited vision) and valuing aging with a disability.
- D. ***Conduct “Healthy Practice” classes beginning in High School.*** Incorporate learning targeted to longevity planning to include advanced directives, understanding mobility limitations, examining role of transportation and accessibility, assessing impact of unhealthy food and beverages on long-term health.
- E. ***Orient college students to high risk behaviors.*** Include education about unhealthy sexual, substance use, and diet and the consequences they may have in later life. Include education about positive social engagement, peer support, end-of-Life preparations (for older family members).
- F. ***Support and expand existing financial literacy and retirement reparation for young adults and families.*** Income is a key aspect of acting on best practices. Most adults have not planned for retirement security (savings, investments, long term care) and thus enter older years dependent on public support (SSI, Medicaid, Social Security, IHHS). The CAL SAVERS is a national model for promoting savings among low income workers and can be a foundation for a state level financial and retirement efforts, especially among racially and ethnically vulnerable communities most likely to be financially insecure.

**Goal 3. Recognize and address the Social Determinants of Health:** Healthy aging and wellness is not just a medical or health issue; it is heavily impacted by broader issues of poverty, climate change, social isolation, housing affordability, poor nutrition, transportation barriers, educational disparities, racism and nativism and by geography (zip codes). The existing social and economic disparities of diverse, vulnerable populations (especially Black and Brown) forecasts a much larger population of older persons in 20-30 years facing poverty, poor health, vulnerability and greater dependence on the State and Federal government. Thus, it is to our cost-benefit advantage to address these disparities early on to lesson the public dependency later on.

- A. ***Promote funding to California Universities and Colleges to examine the various dynamics of social determinants as they impact the aging of California’s population.*** Pay particular attention to the future of our State when it becomes majority -minority and its elder population faces the risks of greater social and economic vulnerability. Findings and recommendations can be made to the



state legislature and Governor's office and be part of the Public Narrative Rebranding and Intergenerational educational initiatives.

**Goal 4. Prioritize prevention and wellness:** Prevention is about proactive actions that avoid unnecessary problems and wellness is about positive actions that minimize harmful outcomes. Prevention activities at all levels – primary, secondary, and tertiary, are needed for all age groups. A variety of approaches can be considered in this space:

- A. **Address the imperatives of social isolation and its connection to depression, dementias and suicides.** Fund Universities to investigating these concerns.
- B. **Implement evidence-based initiatives to prevent falls among older adults and people with disabilities.** Falls among the elderly are the leading causes of hospitalizations and institutionalization (and accompany decline and death). Models of effective falls prevention currently exists (such as Ventura County and the USC Falls Prevention Institute)---support and replicate these effective programs and initiatives.
- C. **Address food insecurity by maximizing the reach of services such as Cal Fresh and Commodity Supplemental Food Programs.** Food insecurity and its resultant impact on health is a growing concern and food deserts in low-income areas persist. Enjoin the CDA and AAA's to spearhead food security strategies for older adults.
- D. **Promote a senior campaign to raise awareness about the risks of prescription drugs, alcohol, and other substances in older age.** Opioid Addictions and overmedication lead to harmful outcomes for older adults and persons with disabilities. This must be done in conjunction with acknowledging the realities of those with chronic pain.
- E. **Promote holistic, complementary wellness approaches (e. g. Tai chi, Qigong, meditation, yoga, Pilates, music and pet therapy, massage) to promote healthy aging.** Non-traditional and non-medical forms of exercise, stress reduction and prevention are proven to be effective in wellness improvements for all populations. To reach vulnerable populations, enlist such practitioners to modify these practices for those with cognitive and physical limitations.

*[Actors: The recommendations in this section fall largely on several agencies with responsibilities for various aspects of healthy aging, prevention and wellness: California's Departments of Aging, Public Health and Health Care Services. We recommend that these three agencies integrate their efforts (e.g. a task force) in assessing these recommendations and developing an action plan to operationalize these ideas. Cross—cutting efforts among departments is essential to minimize the "silo" nature of state government and to ensure collaboration across all governmental agencies.]*

**Goal 5. State Level Leadership and Coordination:** There is currently no state-wide coordination or leadership in facilitating state-wide action in examining the barriers and

impediments to promoting healthy aging, prevention and wellness nor working in partnership with others committed to these issues and branding healthy aging as a mainstream public issue. The many different ideas, strategies and recommendations in this report require a 'home" that can integrate the big ideas and themes and its application to supporting a healthier diverse California as its ages.

- A. ***California should institute a state level entity (e.g. commission, advisory group) to evaluate each state agency with a "healthy aging" lens and lead the charge.*** This advisory body should work with the California Department of Public Health to ensure the healthy aging perspective is integrated into the work of all state agencies.

# Health Care and Integrated Systems of Care

## Health Care Integration Background:

Our healthcare system is fragmented, unaffordable and often fails to provide the care and services older adults and people with disabilities, and their families need. The multiple systems (public and private) are difficult to navigate and require our most vulnerable populations to coordinate their own care across Medicare, Medicaid and other needed services.

Our focus must be on developing a health care delivery system in California that is integrated, and offers a standard quality of care for all Californians that includes preventive care, well-person care, acute care and chronic disease care and management that is coupled with access to home and community-based services. This will enable society to address the inequities based on socio-economic factors that are reflected in racial, age, ability, sexual orientation and geographic disparities.

We strive for a streamlined system that is person-centered and includes wellness and preventive care, acute and chronic care, long-term services and supports (LTSS), behavioral health (including mental health and substance abuse services); vision, dental, and hearing services; durable medical equipment, physical therapy, palliative and hospice care provided according to the individual clinical needs of people, accessed through clinically appropriate modalities, including tele-health services. Service systems should bridge transitions and be nimble to deliver care to those in need in a variety of settings, including the home.

Health Services are a key quality of life issue for older adults and people with disabilities. As we age, we have more chronic and acute health conditions and these conditions interact with functional abilities to create greater need for health services and concerns around these services. People of all ages with disabilities have similar complex health and social needs. Currently, there is a bewildering array of providers and systems of care that a consumer and their family need to navigate to maintain health and wellbeing. The Master Plan proposes a vision of integrated services and systems that are easy to use for older and disabled consumers. Finally, current fragmented systems of care disproportionately disadvantage many distinct populations, especially lower-income groups and racial and ethnic minorities who historically have suffered from health disparities.

## Health Care and Integrated Systems of Care Recommendations:

### **Goal 1: An integrated system of care requires strong leadership.**

- A. ***The Governor should appoint a cabinet-level leader who will be responsible for all integrated services for older adults and people with disabilities.*** Such services would

include but not be limited to health, behavioral health, long term services and supports (LTSS), and oral health. This position will create a vision and call to action for optimized and integrated services and lead implementation of that vision across state, federal, and private systems of care. The integrated care leader will be advised by a stakeholder advisory committee with subcommittees related to specific areas of concern. One of the primary charges for this leader will be the reduction of health disparities in these populations through the effective use of integrated care.

**Goal 2: Commit to service and system integration as an explicit vision for the State to pursue.**

- A. *Establish a Medi-Cal/Medicare Innovation and Coordination Office in the Department of Health Care Services to lead all efforts around duals integration in the state.*** Older individuals with multiple chronic conditions and/or functional limitations, people with disabilities, and residents of nursing facilities are largely dual eligible and are the most vulnerable in the COVID virus. For these individuals, the need for coordination across physical and behavioral health care, access to LTSS, and programs that address social support needs is more critical now than ever. This is a high priority equity issue since duals are low-income, sicker, more likely to experience a serious mental illness, and more likely to be from populations systematically and historically disadvantaged. .
- B. *Build off lessons learned from Cal MediConnect.*** [Cal MediConnect \(CMC\)](#) combines the delivery of Medi-Cal and Medicare benefits through Medi-Cal managed care plans in seven California counties. CMC was authorized as part of the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) [Financial Alignment Initiative](#) with the goal of developing person-centered care delivery models integrating the full range of medical, behavioral health, and LTSS for dual eligible individuals to the greatest extent possible. We recommend that the lessons learned from CMC inform future care transition efforts, by providing a platform to build off integrated service delivery for California’s dual eligible population.
- C. *Align Medicare/Medi-Cal funding streams through the D-SNP Platform.*** The [Coordinated Care Initiative](#) (CCI) is set to sunset in 2022. We recommend that the state build leadership and develop a strategy for the next phase of the CCI, using the Duals-Special Needs Plan (DSNP) platform to better align and coordinate care or whatever other federal integration vehicles may be available at that time.
- D. *By 2025, assure that Medicare-Medicaid recipients (i.e., “dual eligibles”) have a fully integrated option wherever they live in the state.*** Duals now receive their benefits through up to eleven different delivery systems, depending on their specific conditions and where they live. A fully integrated option means access to health (both Medicare and Medi-Cal funded benefits) and the full range of

LTSS, behavioral health, and oral health services in a coordinated and accountable system of care. These integrated options should also include strategies for incorporating social supports such as housing access, food security, and other nonmedical services. Integrated options can be built on existing accountable entity platforms -- Medi-Cal Managed Care, PACE, Dual Eligible Special Needs Plans, and other potential federal demonstrations or programs.

- E. **Expand access to PACE.** PACE is a growing and proven model of integrated care that is well suited to managing care transitions. We recommend that PACE be offered as a Medi-Cal plan choice, in areas where it is available. As with other managed care plan options, PACE would be included in all enrollment and outreach materials for dual eligibles and persons with disabilities, and that it be identified as a Medicare plan choice for dual eligible beneficiaries.

*[Actor: DHCS would implement this recommendation through changes in managed care enrollment and outreach materials and notices provided to Medi-Cal beneficiaries and Medicare D-SNP plans. ]*

- F. **Pursue federal demonstrations to test new community-based integrated care models.** Existing federal demonstration authority currently allows CMS to conduct demonstrations of adaptations of the PACE model to serve additional at-risk populations, including persons with serious mental illness, younger adults with physical disabilities, and older adults at risk of nursing home placement. The State should also pursue other integration opportunities through CMS demonstration authority.

- G. **Ensure that any Medi-Cal reforms include a robust integration vision and strategy for older adults and people with disabilities.** This includes as a first principle ensuring that any Medicaid reform includes dual eligibles. Duals comprise two-thirds of older adults and younger disabled on Medicaid in California. All Medi-Cal reforms should include an evaluation of impacts on older adults and people with disabilities.

### **Goal 3. Focus integration efforts on two key areas in Medi-Cal: Behavioral Health and LTSS.**

- A. **Behavioral health services, including care for Alzheimer's and other cognitively challenged patients, should be integrated with primary care to avoid stigma and make them easily available.** The State should end the carve-out of the specialty MH system and break down barriers for older adults and the younger disabled that exist among Medicare, Medi-Cal mild to moderate coverage, specialty mental health, and privately funded care.

- B. Health care should be integrated with all Medicaid funded LTSS services.** This includes IHSS, CBAS, and MSSP, including through Medi-Cal managed care health plans, PACE, and other integrated program platforms. Health care should also be integrated with other LTSS services not currently supported by Medi-Cal funding, e.g., assisted living, adult day health care, and the full range of Area Agency on Aging services.

[Actors: Charge the Secretary for Health and Human Services to lead these two focused integration efforts, with the participation of the Departments of Health Care Services, Aging, Public Health, and Social Services.]

**Goal 4. Incorporate strategies to include social determinants as part of integrated care and systems.** Poor health is largely due to factors outside of health care delivery: poverty; housing and food insecurity, agism and racism, and climate change to name a few. Addressing these issues through health integration strategies can help alleviate health disparities and inequities. Ensuring there are specific goals to reduce disparities and monitor progress are essential for integration efforts.

- A. Incorporate In Lieu of Services (ILOS) mechanisms, as recommended in the State's CalAIM proposal, to allow Medi-Cal managed care health plans to provide housing, food, and other non-medical benefits to beneficiaries on an as needed and voluntary basis (voluntary for both plans and plan members). Current federal law permits states to use ILOS, as long as these are included in health plan contracts with the state. This can be implemented immediately by DHCS, at least with those health plans that are prepared and interested.** [Actor: DHCS]
- B. With experience and evaluation of these interventions, the State should within three years examine the feasibility of developing a benefit package that includes non-medical services.**

**Goal 5. Develop better integrated care options for Medicare-only beneficiaries.**

- A. Explore how to use Medicare Advantage plans to create LTSS integration incentives and options for the non-Medi-Cal older population.** The fact that these plans can now offer non-medical benefits offers an opportunity for State Master Plan goals to influence and align with private plan strategies. California's leaders can work with Medicare Advantage plans to encourage full use of the chronic care benefits and covered LTSS benefits to promote an integrated approach for these Medicare beneficiaries.
- B. Incorporate Non-medical benefits into Medicare.** Federal law through the [CHRONIC Care Act](#) now permits Medicare Advantage plans the flexibility to provide non-medical benefits (e.g., special supplemental benefits for the

chronically ill) as part of the plan benefits package. [Guiding Principles](#) have been adopted by a diverse group of stakeholders to help in the development, offering and implementation of non-medical benefits in Medicare Advantage. We recommend the state work with Medicare Advantage plans, Special Needs Plans, and Medigap plans operating in California to leverage opportunities to access to non-medical benefits. This framework would provide the structure needed to align incentives and improve care transitions for older adults and people with disabilities on Medicare.

- Explore opportunities to include MediGap carriers, Medicare ACO's, and large should permit MediGap plans to offer complementary products to cover LTSS services and coordinate those products with their MediGap offering.
- Explore development of new community based integrated care models for Medicare beneficiaries through federal Medicare waivers and demonstrations through which PACE and other provider-based, risk bearing entities would provide integrated services to middle income seniors and persons with disabilities, partially financed through income-adjusted premiums.

*[Actors: DHCS would work with stakeholders and CMS to identify Medicare waivers and demonstration authorities, such as the PACE Innovation Act, that could be used to allow new provider-based, risk-bearing entities to provide health care and long-term services and supports to middle income Medicare beneficiaries and to collect income-adjusted premiums. DHCS would support and advocate on behalf of promising demonstrations with CMS.]*

## Health Care and System Integration Resources:

Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission: June 2020 Report to Congress, Chapter 1, Integrating Care for Dually Eligible Beneficiaries: Background and Context; Chapter 2, Integrating Care for Dually Eligible Beneficiaries: Policy Issues and Options. Accessed on July 27, 2020 at:

[more resources needed here: Bipartisan Policy Center report from Jan 2019)

# Assuring the Workforce to Care for Older Adults

## Workforce Background

The Aging sub-committee of the California Future Healthcare Workforce Commission deliberated for over a year on the demands of the future and the requisite make-up and preparation of the workforce to care for all Californians<sup>1</sup>. These recommendations draw on the work of the Commission, who envisioned older adults aging in place with dignity and respect in an engaged community and a fully integrated person-centered and technology-enabled team (medical + social + behavioral) to deliver appropriately timed, evidence-based best practices, and culturally congruent care. Actualizing that vision requires 1) Adequate supply of health care professionals, distributed equitably across both geography and underserved communities. Importantly, the workforce should mirror the diversity of the population necessitating strong pipeline programs to recruit from under-represented groups, career path and mentorship support and incentives to work with older adults across settings; 2) Appropriate preparation: Nationally, less than 5% of the workforce of health care professionals (nurses, physicians, pharmacists and social workers) are certified in geriatrics, yet almost all health care professionals encounter older adults in their practice. Older adults need competent health care professionals, prepared with content in geriatrics, dementia care, palliative care, behavioral health, as well as the ability to work in interdisciplinary teams and use enabling technology<sup>2</sup>; 3) Optimal regulations to ensure quality and encourage innovation so that all members of the care team practice to the full extent of their education and preparation and are compensated accordingly through value-based reimbursement; and 4) Incentives to attract and retain health care professionals in geriatrics/gerontology across settings.

Enacting the vision requires an organizing framework. Two initiatives provide examples: The Geriatric Emergency Department initiative<sup>3</sup> and the Age-Friendly Health Systems initiative<sup>4</sup>. These programs have resulted in fast deployment of improved and well-informed care for older adults, offering a practical and rapid approach to deploy evidence-based geriatrics training. Older adults and people with disabilities with multiple chronic medical conditions are well managed by an integrated and interdisciplinary workforce. Interdisciplinary teams, exemplified by The Program for the All-Inclusive Care of the Elderly (PACE)<sup>5,6</sup>, improve outcomes including better survival, improved functional and cognitive outcomes and lower rates of healthcare utilization<sup>7,8,9</sup>. The recommendations build on the essential elements, increasing supply, competence, regulatory support and incentives to promote the workforce to address the future needs of all Californians.

## Workforce Recommendations:

**Goal 1: Increase the supply of qualified providers to assure access to person-centered, team-based and technology-enabled care.**

- A. *Expand the number of primary care physician and psychiatry residency positions, yielding an increase of 1,872 primary care physicians and 2,202 psychiatrists by 2030.***<sup>1</sup> There is an inadequate supply of primary care and psychiatry providers for the growing population of older adults and there are many areas of the state that are underserved, with health disparities based on multiple dimensions including race/ethnicity, geography, LGBTQ status, disability, and economic disadvantage.



[Actors: CA State, licensing board, Medical Schools and practice sites.]

- B. Develop a psychiatric nurse practitioner program that recruits from and trains providers to serve in underserved communities to address access gaps in behavioral health by treating over 350,000 patients over five years.**<sup>1</sup> There is inadequate access to psychiatric and behavioral health care with particular emphasis in rural and urban underserved communities. Lack of integration of behavioral health care exacerbates chronic disease burden and compromises quality of life outcomes.

[Actors: UC Schools of Nursing.]

- C. Scale the engagement of community health workers, promotores, and peer providers through certification, training, and reimbursement, broadening access to prevention and social support services in communities across the state.**<sup>1</sup> It is vital to increase the capacity of primary care and behavioral health teams to support better outcomes for all and to promote recovery and self-sufficiency for people with mental illness and substance use disorder. Engaging community health workers, promotores and peer providers expands access and increases cultural appropriateness of care.

[Actors: Community colleges, practice sites.]

- D. Develop the pipeline by infusing curricula around aging careers in high school health academies with priority targets for underrepresented populations, support pipeline programs at colleges and universities to recruit the future workforce.** The projections of the inadequate supply of health care professionals to care for older adults in California extends decades into the future. To achieve health equity and access, recruitment efforts today at the high school level can influence outcomes in a decade. Pipeline programs that target diverse youth across urban and rural communities are essential to assure that the future workforce represents the population of older adults in California and is positioned to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate care. Investment all along the pipeline is required to motivate and support promising health care professionals to achieve their career goals.

[Actors: High schools, department of education.]

[Actors: OSHPD, CA Mental Health Oversight and Accountability Commission]

**Goal 2: Prepare the workforce to provide person-centered, culturally congruent, technology enabled care for older adults**

- A. Promote inclusion of competencies to care for older adults including those with dementia, work in teams and use enabling technology in health workforce curricula at ALL levels.** Curricula in health professions education vary in the extent of content in geriatrics, dementia care, palliative care and behavioral health. The American Geriatrics Society published multi-disciplinary competencies to prepare all entry-level health care professionals at a minimum, addressing health promotion, evaluation and assessment, care planning and coordination, interdisciplinary and team care, caregiver support and healthcare systems and benefits. The American Geriatrics

Society competencies reflect consensus on basic preparation<sup>2</sup>. Very few health care professionals are prepared to care for older adults, work in teams and use technology to improve access and delivery.

[Actors: CA colleges and universities.]

- B. **Require physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, and social workers to obtain 10 hours of continuing education (CE) in geriatric and dementia competencies.** The incumbent workforce is not sufficiently prepared to care for older adults and those with dementia.

[Actors: Licensing boards for health professionals.]

- C. **Encourage development of continuing educational offerings designed for multi-disciplinary audiences by streamlining the CE accreditation application and approval process through standardization across and reciprocity between CE accrediting bodies.** The growth of team-based care calls for rethinking and redesigning our continuing education accreditation process that currently evaluates educational offerings from the perspective of disciplinary silos.

[Actors: CE Accrediting bodies.]

- D. **Support state and federal programs and legislation that increases hospice and palliative care workforce and funding (ex. PCHETA, new APM).** Require a minimum level of exposure to primary palliative care in pre-professional/pre-licensure education for physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, nurses, and social workers. Conduct a healthcare provider awareness campaign through a public-private partnership to increase accurate understanding of palliative care as care during serious illness. Incentivize continuing education in specialty-level palliative care. Subsidize palliative care training for Medi-Cal providers. Health care professionals are not sufficiently prepared nor incentivized to provide end-of-life care.

[Actors: CA State legislature.]

- E. **Establish a certification process for behavioral health peer-support specialists, including those trained to provide services to older adults, through future legislation.** All counties should develop peer-training programs that involve people with lived experience to provide culturally appropriate auxiliary or additional behavioral health services for older adults and others with complex medical needs. The behavioral health peer support workforce is not sufficiently prepared to provide comprehensive care for older adults in California.

[Actors: Legislation, community colleges, practice sites.]

- F. **DHCS should direct the California Institute for Behavioral Health Strategies (CIBHS) to utilize its funding to develop and deliver a geriatric curriculum to the existing behavioral health workforce in order to inform and better prepare their work with**

**older adults.** The incumbent behavioral health peer support workforce is not sufficiently prepared to provide comprehensive care for older adults in California.  
[Actors: DHCS and the California Institute for Behavioral Health Strategies.]

- G. **California's higher education programs for the disciplines in the behavioral health workforce should ensure that geriatric topics are included in the core curriculum, and that geriatric behavioral health elective courses for specialization are available and are promoted to students.** Community colleges and university extension programs should develop career technical education programs and peer education programs to support the development of paraprofessionals in geriatric behavioral health. The behavioral health workforce is not sufficiently prepared with geriatrics and gerontology content to care for older adults.  
[Actors: CA Colleges and Universities.]
- H. **Adopt statewide toolkit for primary care providers, to best practices and facilitate early diagnosis and treatment of dementia as required by Medi-Cal, DMHC, and others.** Primary care providers across the state are not sufficiently prepared to identify and manage care for persons with dementia.  
[Actors: CDA, DHCS.]

### Goal 3: Align regulations to support optimal access

- A. **Maximize the role of advance practice providers (e.g., nurse practitioners and physician assistants) as part of the care team to fill gaps in primary care, helping to increase the number of nurse practitioners to 44,000 by 2028, and providing them with full practice authority<sup>1</sup>.** There is inadequate access to primary care that is cost-effective, high-quality, person-centered and comprehensive, particularly in underserved communities. Even with expansion of medical school slots, the projected supply is insufficient. Furthermore, the supply of health care professionals who reflect the communities they serve falls short of demand. Nurse practitioners and physician assistants can advance access to high quality care.  
[Actors: CA Legislature [AB890 in process now]]
- B. **Maximize the role of gerontologists (e.g., Master's in Gerontology graduates) on care teams and in appropriate roles, such as care coordination.** Nationally, there are over 650 programs producing well-trained gerontologists, many of these programs are within California. Gerontologists improve the quality of life and promote the well-being of persons as they age within their families, communities and societies through research, education and application of interdisciplinary knowledge of the aging process and aging populations. There are national examples of gerontologists performing in key roles in care transitions and care coordination and being reimbursed through Medicaid Waiver programs. Given the shortage of geriatrically-prepared health and social service professionals, gerontologists should be utilized in primary care and team care delivery to older adults.

- C. ***Under OSHPD, conduct Healthcare Workforce pilot demonstration projects of nurse delegation in community to provide oversight to direct care workers in performing medical/nursing tasks***<sup>10</sup>. Most older adults age in place in the community, supported by family caregivers and direct care workers. With increasing complexity of health and social care needs, the direct care workforce has the capacity to manage some tasks previously limited to licensed nursing scope of practice (such as medication administration, wound care, tube feeding) through the mechanism of Nurse Delegation. This evidence-based practice has been adopted in many states, and involves RNs assessing the older adult to establish care needs, instructing the direct care worker and assuring their ability to perform the task, and monitoring the situation to assure ongoing safety. Other states (e.g., Washington and New Jersey) have advanced new models of care delivery and have conducted evaluative research to evaluate the implications for safety and access.  
[Actors: OSHPD]

#### Goal 4: Incentivize optimal workforce preparation to care for older adults

- A. **Adopt an organizing framework to inform system change, based on Healthy People 2030 goals for older adults, the Age-Friendly Health Systems initiative and the Geriatric Emergency Department initiative.** An organizing framework with strategic incentives can inform system change to optimize care for older adults by providing a compelling vision and goals in prioritizing decisions. To optimize addressing complex social and health care needs for vulnerable older adults and persons with disabilities, fundamental changes are required in how care is delivered, such as interdisciplinary teams that include gerontologists, community health workers, peer counselors and promotores. Enabling technology can maximize care access, especially in rural and underserved geographic regions.
- B. ***In its next five-year plan for the Mental Health Service Act's Workforce, Education and Training (WET), The Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD) should include a requirement for counties to designate priority slots in future loan forgiveness and stipend programs for trainees who are interested in geriatric behavioral health services.*** The percentage of slots so designated should be consistent with each county's prevalence of older adults with behavioral health needs. Data reporting on this requirement should be mandatory<sup>11</sup>. There is a lack of incentives to increase the geriatric expertise in the public mental health workforce among behavioral health trainees. Several counties (e.g., Los Angeles) are already doing this and have been able to create a better trained geriatric behavioral workforce.  
[Actors: OSHPD.]
- C. ***OSHPD should include special considerations in WET funding for promoting the geriatric behavioral health workforce in small and rural counties.*** For example, strategies might include adjusting the funding formula, providing designated funding allocations and a streamlined application process. There are significant geographic

disparities in availability of behavioral health workforce in the public mental health system.

[Actors: OSHPD.]

- D. **Accrediting bodies and professional organizations should include geriatric behavioral health competency expectations as a component of curriculum review and set standards for prioritizing this area of expertise within programs.** There is inadequate support and motivation for setting competency standards for the geriatric behavioral health workforce

#### Workforce Resources:

<sup>1</sup> California Future Health Workforce Commission. <https://futurehealthworkforce.org/>

<sup>2</sup>American Geriatrics Society, Multidisciplinary Competencies in the Care of Older Adults at the Completion of the Entry-level Health Professional Degree

<https://www.americangeriatrics.org/geriatrics-profession/core-competencies>

<sup>3</sup> American College of Emergency Physicians. Geriatric Emergency Department Accreditation Program. <https://www.acep.org/geda/> Accessed July 2020

<sup>4</sup> The John A. Hartford Foundation. Age-Friendly Health Systems Initiative.

<https://www.johnahartford.org/age-friendly-health-systems-initiative> Accessed July 2020

<sup>5</sup>Leavitt, M. (2009). Interim report to Congress. The quality and cost of the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly.

<sup>6</sup>Kane, R. L., Homyak, P., Bershadsky, B., Flood, S. (2006). Variations on a theme called PACE. *Journal of Gerontology Series A*, 61 (7): 689-93.

<sup>7</sup> Sommers, L. S., Marton, K. I., Barbaccia, J. C., & Randolph, J., (2000). Physician, nurse, and social worker collaboration in primary care for chronically ill seniors. *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 160, 1825-1833.

<sup>8</sup> Stuck, A. E., Siu, A. L., Wieland, G. D., Adams, J., & Rubenstein, L. Z., (1993). Comprehensive geriatric assessment: A meta-analysis of controlled trials. *Lancet*, 34, 1032-1036.

<sup>9</sup> Wieland, D., Stuck, A. E., Siu, A. L., Adams, J., & Rubenstein, L. Z., (1995). Meta-analytic methods for health services research: An example from geriatrics. *Evaluation and the Health Professions*, 18, 252-282.

<sup>10</sup> Young, HM and Siegel, EO. (2016). The Right Person at the Right Time to Ensure High Quality and Value Person-Centered Care for Older Adults: Scope of Practice and Other Systems-Level Factors. *Generations*, 40(1): 47-55.

#### Additional resources:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration Bureau of Health Workforce. National and Regional Projections of Supply and Demand for Geriatricians: 2013-2025. Rockville, MD: DHHS; 2017.

<https://bhw.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bhw/healthworkforce-analysis/research/projections/GeriaticsReport51817.pdf>. Accessed April 29, 2018.

American Geriatrics Society. State of the Geriatrician Workforce. New York, NY: AGS; 2018. [https://www.americangeriatrics.org/sites/default/files/inlinefiles/State%20of%20the%20Geriatrician%20Workforce\\_10%2001%2018.pdf](https://www.americangeriatrics.org/sites/default/files/inlinefiles/State%20of%20the%20Geriatrician%20Workforce_10%2001%2018.pdf). Accessed April 29, 2018.

Health Resources and Services Administration. HHS awards \$35.7 million to improve care for older adults [press release]. July 13, 2015. <https://hrsa.gov/about/news/pressreleases/150713geriatricworkforce.html>. Accessed October 2018

Frank, J.C., Kietzman, K., Damron-Rodriguez, J., et al. (2017). California Mental Health Older Adult System of Care Project Deliverable 3 Report, <http://www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu/Older-Adult-Mental-Health>

Damons, J. (2001). Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) Year 2 Overview. Long-Term Care, Bureau of TennCare, Tennessee.

# Care Transitions

## Care Transitions Background

For older adults and people with disabilities, particularly those with complex medical or social needs, transitions between settings of care can create a number of challenges. These transitions- referred to as “care transitions”- involve the individual’s transfer from hospital to home, hospital to nursing home or nursing home to home. Successful care transitions rely on coordination of and access to services across the health care and long-term services and supports (LTSS) continuum in order to meet the individual’s health care, functional, and social support needs. However, many older adults and people with disabilities are discharged from hospital or nursing homes without the appropriate services and supports in place, placing them at greater risk for re-hospitalization or long-term institutionalization.

Much of this problem is rooted both in the federal/state breakdown of Medicare and Medi-Cal service delivery systems as well as the fragmentation between medical and social service delivery systems:

- *Medicare/Medi-Cal fiscal misalignment:* California’s 1.4 million individuals eligible for Medicare and Medi-Cal (“dual eligibles”) have high rates of chronic conditions and functional impairments who rely on access to services across health care and LTSS systems of care, particularly during care transitions. Medicare pays for acute care and medical services, and Medi-Cal provides access to specified LTSS and other services. This fragmented fiscal arrangement dis-incentivizes providers and payers from investing in services according to individual needs and preferences across the Medicare and Medi-Cal service delivery systems, which, for the individual, complicates care transitions.
- *Medicare-only population challenges:* Since Medicare doesn’t cover LTSS, beneficiaries with complex care needs have great difficulty in accessing functional support services that are needed during times of care transitions, and must instead navigate a fragmented service delivery system without assurance that their needs will be met.
- *Fragmentation in health care and LTSS systems of care:* The lack of coordination across health care and LTSS systems writ large makes it difficult for individuals transitioning home to access health care and LTSS in a coordinated fashion.

Developing a framework for successful care transitions relies on alignment of fiscal incentives to coordinate care across health care and LTSS systems, ultimately incentivizing access to services and supports according to individual needs and preferences.

## Care Transitions Recommendations:

**Goal 1: Use Care Coordination and Assessments to improve care across settings during transitions.**

- A. **Implement a comprehensive pre-discharge and in-home assessment.** Prior to an individual's discharge from the hospital or nursing home, we recommend development of a uniform bio/psycho-social assessment of needs that builds off the individual's goals and preferences, along with a home assessment of falls risk. The assessment should build off the individual's goals and preferences to inform the plan of care.
- B. **Implement a caregiver assessment before discharge.** The at-home caregiver is critical to the successful transition and as such, we recommend that their needs should be assessed in a comprehensive manner.
- C. **Promote Care Coordination that spans different settings.** Care coordination is a cornerstone of a person-centered system of care, including care transitions, serving as the lynchpin connecting individuals with a range of needs across the medical and LTSS delivery systems. As such, care coordination should be a critical component of any care transitions program.

#### Care Transitions Resources:

Aging and Disability Business Institute: *Integrating Care to Improve the Nation's Health*.

Accessed July 5, 2020 at:

<https://www.aginganddisabilitybusinessinstitute.org/resources/integrating-health-and-social-care-to-improve-the-nations-health/>

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services: *Community-Based Care Transitions Program Fact Sheet*. Access on July 5, 2020 at: <https://innovation.cms.gov/files/fact-sheet/cctp-fact-sheet.pdf>

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services: *Community-Based Care Transitions Evaluation*. Accessed on July 5, 2020 at: <https://downloads.cms.gov/files/cmml/cctp-final-eval-rpt.pdf>

*Partners in Care Foundation: A Change Agent in Community-Based Care*. Generations Magazine. Spring 2019. Accessed July 5, 2020 at: <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/21895/34/>

Graham, Carrie, PhD: *The Impact of Cal MediConnect on Transitions to Community-Based Settings*. May 2017. Accessed on July 5, 2020 at: [https://www.thescanfoundation.org/media/2019/08/the\\_impact\\_of\\_cal\\_mediconnect\\_on\\_transitions\\_from\\_institutional\\_to\\_community-based\\_settings\\_may\\_2017.pdf](https://www.thescanfoundation.org/media/2019/08/the_impact_of_cal_mediconnect_on_transitions_from_institutional_to_community-based_settings_may_2017.pdf)

Center for Health Care Strategies: *Facilitating Community Transitions for Dually Eligible Beneficiaries, Health Plan of San Mateo's Community Care Settings Program and Inland Empire Health Plan's Housing initiative*, December 2019. Accessed July 27, 2020 at: <https://www.chcs.org/resource/facilitating-community-transitions-for-dually-eligible-beneficiaries/>



# Behavioral Health

## Behavioral Health Background:

Older adults in California with behavioral health problems, which include both mental health and/or substance abuse issues, are unserved and underserved relative to their needs<sup>1</sup>. For example, adults age 65 and above were 16.0 % of the adult MediCal population, but only 1.7% received one or more specialty mental health services (SMHS) during the year (FY 2016-2017). Priority concerns include the need for more systematic data collection, shortages in geriatrically-prepared behavioral health workforce, geographic and racial disparities in service availability, and a lack of state guidance and leadership to promote an older adult system of care for behavioral health services. Older adults with behavioral health needs, coupled with common physical health issues, are best served with integrated health models that increase access and convenience to meet their needs.

Geographic disparities in access to behavioral health care remains a pressing issue for older adults. Even in counties that offer innovative programs that are tailored to meet the needs of older adults, their reach is usually limited to a small proportion of older adults with need who are located in a specific geographical area of the county or, in some cases, are members of a special population group. In some counties, specialized mental health programs for older adults are only available in certain geographic areas, typically the cities or more densely populated areas. In other counties, even basic services are not available in certain geographic pockets. These geographic barriers are seen as especially challenging for older adults who are more likely to have mobility limitations and are at heightened risk due to social isolation.

Integrated care can address geographic barriers to receiving care, an issue especially relevant in rural counties and in rural pockets of large counties where there is little or no service delivery infrastructure. Co-location of behavioral health services with primary care improves access to care, especially for older adults who are more likely to have multiple chronic conditions.

The deleterious impact on substance abuse and addictions, depression, and mental illness shortens the life span and leads to an assortment of debilitating illness, diseases and morbidities. Other components of the Master Plan address these issues in great deal but we draw on several that are pertinent to this Goal. We specifically applaud those recommendations that designate a new older adult administrative unit within HCS and we recommend drawing on innovative early intervention and prevention programs. Geriatric/gerontology behavioral expertise and standardized geriatric training is crucial given the rising needs of an older population including culturally and racially appropriate services for racially and ethnically vulnerable older populations. The UC System can play an

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK201404/>, [https://www.calbhbc.com/uploads/5/8/5/3/58536227/2017\\_18\\_statewide\\_summary\\_of\\_all\\_2017\\_data\\_notebooks\\_12.31.2018\\_fi nal.pdf](https://www.calbhbc.com/uploads/5/8/5/3/58536227/2017_18_statewide_summary_of_all_2017_data_notebooks_12.31.2018_fi nal.pdf) and <http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/publications/search/pages/detail.aspx?PubID=1710>.

important role through its graduate programs in medicine, public health, nursing and social work by incentivizing them to address geriatric/gerontology education, training and best practices. We suggest financial support to encourage members of racial, ethnic and immigrant groups to seek advanced degrees in these areas. Proposition 63 provides crucial resources for behavioral health services and we recommend accountability and oversight of how these funds target and benefit older adults

Behavioral Health Recommendations:

**Goal 1. Increase service integration, especially the integration of medical, behavioral health, aging, and substance use services.** To effectively integrate services at the point of service delivery, the funding sources and administrative agencies must first align. This requires coordination across the relevant state and county administrative agencies and funding sources. At the point of service delivery, this type of systems integration would support more opportunities for physical co-location and service integration.

- A. ***Designate a new older adult administrative unit (administrator with geriatrics/gerontology expertise and support staff) within the California Department of Health Care Services, Behavioral Health unit.*** This new unit will provide leadership to improve older adult service delivery and work collaboratively across state departments and with county mental health and aging units. *Note: AB 480 (Salas) is a model legislative effort that was not approved in 2019 awaiting the development of the Master Plan on Aging (see [http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201920200AB480](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB480)).*
- B. ***Include engagement with stakeholders and consumers in Behavioral Health Planning.*** For service planning, consumer advocates and/or people with geriatric/gerontology behavioral expertise should be “at the table” within important statewide agencies and professional organizations, with designated slots or committees organized around the issues of older adult behavioral health.

**Goal 2. Document the scope of behavioral health needs and unmet needs among older adults and people with disabilities in California.**

- A. ***Institute mandatory and standardized data reporting requirements at state and local (county) levels.*** Counties should systematically investigate and document the unmet needs and measure and monitor their progress in serving the behavioral health care needs of older adults. *(Note: The UCLA Center for Health Policy Research has developed and published a recommended essential set of data elements to measure older adult outcomes in the public mental health system [see <http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/publications/search/pages/detail.aspx?PubID=1559>]).*
- B. ***Conduct dedicated outreach and document unmet need among older adults with mental illness and behavioral health issues.*** Outreach strategies must be specific to older adults, take into account where and how best to identify those in need.

**Goal 3. Ensure geographic equity in Behavioral Health Services.**

- A. The State should revise the current funding formula to assure that rural counties are provided the necessary funding needed to address critical geographic disparities.**

Behavioral Health Resources:

- *Geographic disparities (excerpted from the California Mental Health and Older Adult Study Deliverable 3 report (access at: <http://www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu/Older-Adult-Mental-Health>)*
- <http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/publications/search/pages/detail.aspx?PubID=1559>].
- *AB 480 (Salas) is a model legislative effort that was not approved in 2019 awaiting the development of the Master Plan on Aging (see [http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201920200AB480](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB480)).*
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK201404/>.
- [https://www.calbhbc.com/uploads/5/8/5/3/58536227/2017\\_18\\_statewide\\_summary\\_of\\_all\\_2017\\_data\\_notebooks\\_12.31.2018\\_final.pdf](https://www.calbhbc.com/uploads/5/8/5/3/58536227/2017_18_statewide_summary_of_all_2017_data_notebooks_12.31.2018_final.pdf) and
- <http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/publications/search/pages/detail.aspx?PubID=1710>)

# Alzheimer's and Dementia Care

## Alzheimer's and Dementia Care Background:

California leads the nation with the largest and most diverse population directly impacted by Alzheimer's and related dementias: currently 690,000 individuals are affected and 1.6 million family members provide hands-on, direct care and support to a loved one with the disease. These numbers are slated to grow by 22 percent by 2025. In its February 2019 *Measuring Public Health Status Report*, the California Department of Public Health documented Alzheimer's as the second leading cause of death in California. For the most recent period evaluated, there were nearly 1 million annual emergency room visits in California by patients with dementia.

The burden of Alzheimer's is large and growing, especially among women and people of color. The impact of the disease on individuals, families, communities and health systems is significant. Costs, to the public Medicaid program where costs are 23 times higher for beneficiaries with dementia than those without – and to families, who spend in excess of \$50,000 annually for assisted living or more than \$100,000 annually for skilled nursing care, are unsustainable at nearly \$350,000 per person over the average 7-10 year course of the disease.

## Alzheimer's and Dementia Care Recommendations:

### **Goal 1. Improve care for older adults and people with disabilities who have Alzheimer's and related Dementias.**

- A. **Improve screening and detection** – All managed care health risk assessments and service provider initial intakes/functional assessments should include validated screening questions to detect cognitive impairment. Medicare, through the annual wellness visit, covers a brief, validated structured cognitive assessment tool.
- B. **Increase the number of Californians who are aware of their diagnosis** – When an individual self-reports symptoms or concerns, or when a screening tool warrants, or upon referral, the patient should receive a comprehensive assessment. The California Alzheimer's Disease Centers have produced a toolkit for primary care physicians to guide in this process. Healthy People 2020 Goal DIA-1 calls on the nation to improve the percentage of all people aware of their diagnosis from just 62 percent.
- C. **Improve systematic documentation of Alzheimer's and related dementia diagnoses** – If a patient is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, mild cognitive impairment, dementia, or related condition, the diagnosis should, first, be disclosed to the patient, and then documented in the medical record and made available through the electronic health record.

**Goal 2: Ensure Californians with Alzheimer’s and related dementia receive care coordination and care plans.**

- A. **Provide Care Planning to patients and families with Alzheimer’s and related dementias** – California pioneered the Alzheimer’s Disease Clinical Care Guideline for post-diagnostic treatment and, since January 2017, Medicare has covered a comprehensive dementia care planning benefit. Yet, just over one percent of beneficiaries have been provided with a care plan.
  
- B. **Improve Care Coordination** – Without a diagnosis or a care plan, care coordination is unattainable. Nearly all persons with dementia have at least one co-occurring chronic condition and, increasingly, many live alone (estimates are one in five). Several groundbreaking CMS Innovation projects have been successfully piloted in California, including UCSF Dementia EcoSystem and UCLA Coordinated Alzheimer’s and Dementia Care, as well as ongoing Administration on Community Living (ACL) Dementia Care Management grants to California Department of Aging.

**Goal 3. Integrate care for Californians with Alzheimer’s and related dementias.**

- A. **Invest in home- and community-based services.** Because age is the greatest risk factor for Alzheimer’s, the vast majority of people affected are Medicare beneficiaries and many are dually eligible for Medi-Cal. With this population, the need to integrate the two funding streams – and invest savings in home and community-based supports – is paramount.
  
- B. **Improve hospitalizations.** With nearly 1 million high cost emergency room visits recorded each year in California. Healthy People 2020 Goal DIA-2 calls for a reduction in avoidable hospitalizations. West Health has set the national standard for Geriatric Emergency Departments and many Californians with Alzheimer’s and dementia have directly benefited from the model, most notably with reductions in hospital readmissions.
  
- C. **Improve care transitions.** An area where lack of integration is pronounced and costly is care transitions; persons with dementia who cycle between residential care or skilled nursing and hospitals, driving costs up in both the Medi-Cal and Medicare programs with little benefit to the resident; in fact, often to the resident’s detriment with transfer trauma.

**Goal 4. Address the needs of California caregivers**

- A. **Caregiver Identification and Assessment.** Because of the progressive, degenerative nature of Alzheimer’s disease, it’s imperative to establish a care team early. Physicians, health plans and community-based service providers are encouraged to identify and document a family caregiver, assess caregiver strain, and develop care plans for the caregiver. The Family Caregiver Alliance and the 11 Caregiver Resource Centers are national leaders in this work.

## **Goal 5. Create a dementia capable workforce in California**

- A. **Workforce** – Persons with Alzheimer’s, over the long course of the disease, rely on the full array of health professionals, from direct care workers to specialty physicians and every level of job category in between. It’s challenging to promote dementia training across such a wide spectrum of educational backgrounds, licensure categories and employment models. Models exist, including the California Long-Term Care Education Center training IHSS workers, statutorily required dementia training in all RCFEs, and training of care managers in health plans under the ACL grant noted above.

# Telehealth

## Telehealth Background:

California was one of the first states to pass a telehealth law with the [Telemedicine Development Act of 1996](#). At the time, the bill was considered progressive legislation and provided model language for other states. However, in the almost two decades that followed, telehealth law in California essentially remained unchanged, even as technology and its penetration rapidly evolved. Progress was made with the [California's Telehealth Advancement Act of 2011 \(AB 415\)](#) which went into effect in January of 2012 and in recent years, the language put in place by AB 415 has been amended, with the most significant change occurring with the passage of AB 744 in 2019.

With his signature, Governor Gavin Newsom positioned California back to the forefront of telehealth policy. One of the most substantial revisions, which applies to health plans issued, amended or renewed on or after Jan. 1, 2021, requires payers to reimburse for telehealth services on the same basis and to the same extent, as well as at the same rate as an equivalent service when delivered in person. With this law, California became one of roughly a dozen states to require payment parity. Newsom also signed into law [AB 1264](#). The bill adds California to the growing list of states and government entities embracing asynchronous (or store-and-forward) telehealth, which allows patients to submit questions or answers and provide data that providers can review at their discretion.

Although California is ahead of many if not most for patient and provider friendly telehealth legislation, there is still significant room to enhance our state's leadership to better serve the population, particularly the aging and disabled. The Covid19 pandemic has brought to light the importance of telehealth enabled care. Telehealth is one of the few subjects that has achieved bipartisan support. This is exemplified in the June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020 [letter](#) to Senate leadership signed by at least 30 senators from both sides of the aisle calling on Congress to "expand access to telehealth services on a permanent basis so that telehealth remains an option for all Medicare beneficiaries both now and after the pandemic. Doing so would assure patients that their care will not be interrupted when the pandemic ends.

Particularly with California's and the rest of the nation's experience with Covid-19; the ongoing vulnerability and increasing isolation among frail seniors, as well as the rapid rise of the aging population in California over the coming decade, telehealth is an imperative that not only can be used to improve patient experience and health outcomes but also be a lifeline to seniors and other high-risk individuals who are not able to seek care in doctor's offices or clinics amid COVID-19 and after.

Today, with waivers in place that allow reimbursement at parity, verbal consent and cross state practice, challenges still exist. Public awareness of what telehealth is and how telehealth can be accessed through their providers and health plans is still lacking. Overall visits for chronic care are down and as noted by national media, people are avoiding getting the care they need and in turn, their conditions are becoming increasingly worse.

Robust education and public awareness campaigns geared towards seniors and the disabled are needed to help stem this trend.

Concerns are that as the national emergency ends and the waivers are rescinded that many of the restrictive telehealth policies will be put back into effect. Requiring an additional telehealth specific consent when consent for treatment has already been signed or the lack of payment parity for Medi-Cal are examples of operational and reimbursement restrictions. These restrictions have been barriers to adoption and threaten to leave citizens without appropriate access to care if put back into effect. Recommendations ensuring that California continues to lead nationally will help all citizens, particularly the aging and disabled, receive the right care at the right time and at the right location.

## Telehealth Recommendations:

### **Goal 1: California should expand coverage of telehealth services:**

- A. *Statutory definition of telehealth should be inclusive of telephonic services that are important for low-income communities that lack internet/broadband access and also easier to use with seniors.*** California should permanently remove any geographic restrictions to ensure that patients can receive telehealth services regardless of their location. Expand coverage to include behavioral health, remote patient monitoring, advance care planning and goals of care conversations, dental care and technologies that address social isolation.

### **Goal 2: Ensure Telehealth payment parity for Medi-Cal and Denti-Cal:**

- A. *While AB 744 guarantees payment parity for commercial plans, many seniors and disabled Californians rely on Medi-Cal and Denti-Cal plans, these state plans should also guarantee payment parity for telehealth services.***

### **Goal 3: Reduce Licensing Board and practice restrictions:**

- A. *Ensure that Licensing Boards do not unnecessarily make the use of telehealth onerous or burdensome (i.e., extra credentialing or registration).*** As long as meeting standard of care, the practitioner should be able to provide care via telehealth.

### **Goal 4: Coverage and reimbursement clarity:**

- A. *Ensure the language used by commercial and state plans clearly identifies reimbursable codes and services that are covered.***

### **Goal 5: Bridge the digital divide by expanding telehealth.**



- A. *Expand telehealth access to low income families by aligning funding to improve internet access to underserved and rural communities.*

**Goal 6: Improve Consumer education and awareness of Telehealth availability:**

- A. *Create public awareness by informing consumers on what telehealth is and how telehealth can be accessed through their providers and health plans.* Initiate public awareness campaign to educate seniors about telehealth and provide robust training resources to seniors and family caregivers to support them in their use of technology.

**Resources:**

**Patient and Provider Educational/Training Resource Links**

1. CHHS website on telehealth for consumers - <https://covid19.ca.gov/telehealth/#top>
2. UC Davis - <https://health.ucdavis.edu/cht/clinic/index.html>
3. CHCF videos on consumer and patient perspective - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwVOebpljCI&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwVOebpljCI&feature=emb_title)
4. DHCS: <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/provgovpart/Pages/Telehealth.aspx>
5. HHS Telehealth Website - <https://telehealth.hhs.gov/>
6. AARP: Telehealth & the Coronavirus - <https://www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/info-2020/telehealth-faq.html>
7. AARP: New Patients Share Their Telehealth Experiences - <https://www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/info-2020/telehealth-benefits-for-patients.html>
8. Mid-Atlantic TRC "Helping A Patient/Client Understand Telehealth" - <https://www.matrc.org/matrc-telehealth-resources-for-covid-19/>
9. West Health resources for senior focused telehealth - <https://www.westhealth.org/telehealth/>

**References and resources used for MPA recommendations**

1. Letter to Senate Leaders CONNECT for Health Act 06.12.20.docx: [https://www.schatz.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Letter%20to%20leadership\\_CONNECT%20for%20Health%20Act\\_06.12.20.pdf](https://www.schatz.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Letter%20to%20leadership_CONNECT%20for%20Health%20Act_06.12.20.pdf)
2. Center for Connected Health Policy, The National Telehealth Policy Resource Center: <https://www.cchpca.org/>
3. California Telehealth Policy Coalition: <https://www.cchpca.org/about/projects/california-telehealth-policy-coalition>, West Health Institute is a member of the coalition and its Education Subcommittee
4. Morning Consult, Shelley Lyford, Congress Should Act Swiftly to Make Telehealth Expansion Permanent: <https://morningconsult.com/opinions/congress-should-act-swiftly-to-make-telehealth-expansion-permanent/>

# Palliative Care

## Palliative Care Background

Palliative care is specialized medical care for people living with a serious illness. This type of care is focused on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of the illness. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family. Serious illness is [defined](#) as a health condition that carries a high risk of mortality and either negatively impacts a person's daily function or quality of life or excessively strains their caregiver.

Palliative care is provided by a specially-trained team of doctors, nurses and other specialists who work together with a patient's other doctors to provide an extra layer of support. Palliative care is based on the needs of the patient, not on the patient's prognosis. It addresses and relieves suffering across all aspects of the person: mind, body, spiritual, and relationships. It is appropriate at any age and at any stage in a serious illness, though it should start at the point of diagnosis, and it can be provided along with curative treatment. Palliative care improves health care value by both improving quality and reducing costs of care for the sickest and most complex patients. [Learn more about palliative care.](#)

Advance care planning is the process by which people think about, document and communicate their preferences for medical care should they become unable to speak for themselves. It can improve the quality of care and the patient and family experience during serious illness by aligning medical treatment with patient preferences. Thoughtful conversations are a key element of advance care planning. But to ensure people's wishes are known and honored, it's important to have documentation in the form of an advance healthcare directive (AHCD) or the Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) form. Each form has a different purpose and should be used in the correct situation. [Learn more about AHCDs.](#) [Learn more about POLST.](#)

## Issues

Palliative care is not routinely made available to patients who would benefit from receiving the services. For example, fewer than 1 in 20 hospitalized patients who could benefit from palliative care actually receive it.<sup>2</sup> Palliative care is often [misunderstood](#) by both health care providers and the general public. The barriers posed by race, ethnicity, culture and language sometimes interfere with people getting the best care possible. In addition, palliative care access can be limited by a lack of providers trained in the specialty, especially in rural areas and in smaller hospitals. According to a 2017 California Health Care Foundation [report](#), inpatient palliative care capacity for the entire state was estimated to

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<sup>2</sup> National Palliative Care Registry. [Accessed March 12, 2020]; Palliative Care Service Penetration by Hospital Size. 2015.

be sufficient to meet 43% to 66% of need, and community-based capacity was estimated to be sufficient to meet between 33% and 51% of need.

In the current health care environment, there is too often a substantial misalignment between the medical care people want during serious illness and the care they actually receive. People are often not empowered to speak up for the kind of care they want, and clinicians are often not trained to have conversations with patients about their values, goals over time, treatment options and preferences. When it does happen, the documents that record these preferences are not readily available in the medical record or through an electronic registry to guide treatment during a medical emergency.

### Palliative Care Recommendations:

**Goal 1. Expand Access to Palliative Care Services:** Develop and implement strategies that make palliative care available to all seriously ill Californians across settings, including hospitals, clinics, nursing facilities, residential care, and home-based care.

- A. The state should incentivize health plans financially to expand the availability of palliative care in their geographic areas.*
- B. Require hospitals to have a palliative care consult service as a part of licensing.*
- C. Develop and implement strategies to support the sustainability of interdisciplinary home-based palliative care, such as adequate value-based payment, [consensus standards](#) for payer/provider contracts, and programs to support referrals.*
- D. Provide information to social service providers to increase their understanding of palliative care and engage them in identifying and referring appropriate consumers for palliative care services.*

**Goal 2. Incorporate Palliative Care Best Practices:** Identify and incorporate current best practices into care delivery, for example those put forth in the [Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care \(4<sup>th</sup> edition\)](#), developed by the National Consensus Project for Quality Palliative Care and the National Coalition for Hospice and Palliative Care.

- A. Regulate minimum standards for healthcare providers offering a “palliative care” service to patients and survey to ensure compliance.*
- B. Institute pay-for-performance add-ons to Medi-Cal reimbursements, as well as Medicare and commercial reimbursement, for superior palliative care as demonstrated by OASIS scores or other existing measurements.*

**Goal 3. Grow Palliative Care Workforce:** Require the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development and the California Health Care Workforce Policy Commission to assess

the general and specialty palliative care workforce needs in the state, and to take steps to mitigate shortages.

- A. *Provide incentives to encourage a more culturally-diverse and culturally-sensitive palliative care workforce.*

**Goal 4. Educate the Healthcare Workforce in Principles and Practices of Palliative Care:**

Implement strategies around workforce education in palliative care across disciplines.

- A. *Require a minimum level of exposure to primary palliative care in pre-professional/pre-licensure education for physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, nurses, and social workers.*
- B. *Conduct a healthcare provider awareness campaign through a public-private partnership to increase accurate understanding of palliative care as care during serious illness.*
- C. *Incentivize continuing education in specialty-level palliative care.*
- D. *Subsidize palliative care training for Medi-Cal providers.*
- E. *Require skilled nursing facility staff to be trained in palliative care principles and practices using the [CARE Recommendations](#) as the foundation for the training.*

**Goal 5. Empower Persons' Decision Making:** Empower older adults to engage in conversations with family members and healthcare providers about serious illness and end of life, and optimize their ability to make and record their decisions about their own care.

- A. *Conduct a statewide communications campaign through a public-private partnership to increase awareness of advance care planning and encourage all adults to complete an advance directive with an emphasis on naming a surrogate decision maker.*
- B. *Review and update California laws regarding the requirements for making an advance directive or POLST form legally valid in light of COVID-19, electronic completion, and current thinking.*

**Goal 6. Operationalize ACP:** Engage large healthcare providers (e.g., integrated healthcare systems, medical groups, hospitals, and payers) in establishing systems within their organizations for consistently and reliably soliciting, documenting, retrieving and honoring patient treatment preferences.

- A. Require electronic health record software to include one-click access to advance care planning documents, including advance directives and POLST forms.**

**Goal 7. Honor wishes of Californians at the end of life:** Create a statewide system for making information about patients' specific treatment preferences available to healthcare providers whenever and wherever it is needed, with advance healthcare directives and POLST that are incorporated into electronic systems so that this information is prominent and readily available and can be honored.

- A. Implement a statewide registry for electronic exchange of POLST.**

## Palliative Care Resources

<https://coalitionccc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/CAIC-Standards-for-CBPC-Oct-2017.pdf>

About Palliative Care. <https://www.capc.org/about/palliative-care/>

Advanced Care Planning Resources. <https://coalitionccc.org/tools-resources/advance-care-planning-resources/>

POLST Forms <https://capolst.org>

CHCF Report on Palliative Care. <https://www.chcf.org/publication/palliative-care-california-narrowing-gap/>

CARE Recommendations. [https://coalitionccc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/2015\\_CARErecs\\_web\\_final.pdf](https://coalitionccc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/2015_CARErecs_web_final.pdf)

## Skilled Nursing Facilities

### Skilled Nursing Facility Background:

The COVID-19 crisis has had a devastating impact on nursing homes. More than 40% of COVID deaths in California have been among NH residents; yet individuals admitted to NHs represent less than one percent of the state's population. In addition, there have been numerous deaths in California's residential care facilities, many of them unreported. All these infections and deaths have had a disproportionately negative impact on racial and ethnic residents and workers, highlighting the disparities in the long-term care system.

California needs to not only increase its efforts to protect the health and safety of residents and health care workers immediately; it also a broad vision and agenda for reform of nursing homes and residential care facilities. The following recommendations focus for the most part on nursing facilities, prioritizing the three that are high priority for dealing with the current pandemic.

### Skilled Nursing Facility Recommendations:

**Recommendations coming soon....**

# Oral Health

## Oral Health Background:

The oral health status of older adults and people with disabilities is of critical importance to their overall health. Unfortunately, the attention to the oral health needs of older adults has been inadequate. As a consequence, older adults have significant unmet oral health needs impacting their overall health and emotional and social wellbeing. For example, 50 percent of older adults living in nursing facilities and 33 percent in the community have untreated tooth decay. We also know that poor oral health disproportionately impacts older adults of color, individuals with disabilities, and those residing in institutional settings and rural areas. Nationally, for example, 31 percent of Black older adults have complete tooth loss compared to 15 percent of white older adults.<sup>3</sup>

Untreated oral health needs complicate chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease, increase the likelihood for infection, and have significant impact on emotional and overall wellbeing. Below we outline six recommendations to improve oral health outcomes for older Californians.

Seniors and persons with disabilities frequently have more difficulty accessing dental care because their health conditions result in dental procedures taking more time, being performed over multiple rather than a single visit, or requiring adaptations that involve additional costs besides time. Denti-Cal procedure payments are based on "typical" patients and have not recognized these additional costs. Legislative interest in 2018-19 led DHCS to initiate a single flat supplemental payment for seniors and persons with disabilities whose care was more costly.<sup>4</sup> The supplemental payment was a positive development. Recognizing the variation in additional costs for different dental procedures and persons with different conditions is, however, essential to equitably assuring better dental care access for seniors and persons with disabilities.

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<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Oral Health Surveillance Report 2019, Trends in Dental Caries and Sealants, Tooth Retention, and Edentulism, United States, 1999-2004 to 2011 to 2016" (2019)(herein after "Oral Health Surveillance Report"), available at [https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/pdfs\\_and\\_other\\_files/Oral-Health-Surveillance-Report-2019-h.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/pdfs_and_other_files/Oral-Health-Surveillance-Report-2019-h.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> SB 1464 in 2018 with Sen. Weiner as first sponsor and Sens. Mitchell, Nguyen, Nielson and Pan as co-sponsors and AB316 in 2019 with Asm. Ramos and Robert Rivas as co-sponsors.

## Oral Health Recommendations

### **Goal 1. Improve research and evidence around Oral health care for Older Californians and People with Disabilities.**

Today, there is a nearly complete absence of data on the oral health status of older adults and people with disabilities, their treatment needs, insurance coverage, and utilization of services.<sup>5</sup> This makes it particularly difficult to assess the extent of the need, develop solutions, and target resources. This is especially true for measuring disparities. Available California and national data demonstrate significant disparities in oral health outcomes based on race, but California data is not disaggregated for older adults and is outdated. Data based on disability and by residential setting (e.g home, residential congregate setting, rural, urban) is non-existent.

#### **A. *Collect Oral Health Data on Older Californians and People with Disabilities.***

Especially important to collect oral health data by age, disability, race, and setting.

### **Goal 2. Include Older Adults and People with Disabilities in Oral Health Statewide Plan and Local Oral Health Plans.**

California has developed a statewide oral health plan, but the plan contains few objectives aimed specifically at improving oral health outcomes for older adults.<sup>6</sup> With funding from Proposition 56, counties have also developed local oral health plans under the leadership of the statewide Office of Oral Health. Unfortunately, most of these local plans also omit older adults and people with disabilities or include few objectives to improve their oral health.

#### **A. *The Office of Oral Health must develop objectives specific to older adults and people with disabilities to implement statewide and to guide local oral health planning.*** At a minimum, such planning objectives would include:

- a. The expansion teledentistry, the virtual dental home, and co-location of services to better connect older adults and people with disabilities to oral health services in their homes and communities;
- b. increase the number of providers trained and able to provide care to individuals with complex and chronic health care conditions;
- c. and better integrate oral health into medical care.
- d. specifically address oral health disparities based on race, disability, and residential setting.

### **Goal 3. Improve access to Dental Coverage for older adults and people with disabilities on Medi-Cal.** Federal rules do not require states to include dental coverage for adult Medicaid recipients. Consequently, California has eliminated adult dental coverage in the past

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<sup>5</sup> California Department of Public Health, "Status of Oral Health in California: Oral Disease Burden and Prevention 2017," available at [https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DCDIC/CDCB/CDPH%20Document%20Library/Oral%20Health%20Program/Status%20of%20Oral%20Health%20in%20California\\_FINAL\\_04.20.2017\\_ADA.pdf](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DCDIC/CDCB/CDPH%20Document%20Library/Oral%20Health%20Program/Status%20of%20Oral%20Health%20in%20California_FINAL_04.20.2017_ADA.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> California Department of Public Health, "California Oral Health Plan, 2018-2028," Jan. 2018, available at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DCDIC/CDCB/CDPH%20Document%20Library/Oral%20Health%20Program/FINAL%20REDESIGNED%20COHP-Oral-Health-Plan-ADA.pdf>



during times of budget shortfalls and threatened such cuts in the 2020-21 budget. Such cuts are short sighted. Cutting oral health coverage increase other costs to Medi-Cal, such as increased emergency room use for oral health problems and costs associated chronic conditions. Such cuts also disproportionately communities of color. Of those who lose coverage, 73% are from communities of color. Of those, 48% are Latinx, 8% are black, and 15% are Asian American/Pacific Islander American.<sup>7</sup> California should make adult Medicaid dental coverage a permanent benefit.

- A. *Commit to Continued Medi-Cal Dental Coverage.*** California must commit to continued Medi-Cal dental coverage.

**Goal 4. Develop Statewide Medi-Cal Dental Advisory Board and Set Utilization Targets for Older Adults and People with Disabilities.** The most recent Medi-Cal dental utilization data indicates that fewer than 1 in 4 older adults had an annual dental visit in 2018, and just over 1 in 10 accessed a preventive service.<sup>8</sup> The Department of Health Care Services has established statewide Medi-Cal utilization targets for children. Unfortunately, no such utilization targets are in place for older adults and people with disabilities. With the known impact untreated oral health needs have on chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease and the increased risk for infection, it is critical that older adults are connected to oral health treatment.

- A. *California should create an evidence-based advisory group for the Medi-Cal dental program to guide decisions and make sure they are based on the best evidence and science and not merely on cost.***<sup>9</sup> This advisory board could also establish Medi-Cal utilization targets for older adults and people with disabilities.
- B. *California must put in place utilization targets for older adults and ensure that such targets are also being met based on race, disability, and residential setting.***

**Goal 5. Integrate Dental and Physical Health Care in the Medi-Cal Program.** A growing body of evidence shows that investing in the maintenance of a person's oral health has benefits for their overall health and well-being. Gum disease has been associated with respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes; poor oral health is associated with chronic pain and inappropriate use of the emergency department<sup>10</sup>; and for diabetics, oral health and properly controlled blood sugar go hand-in-hand. People with diabetes are twice as likely to develop gum disease, and in turn, infected gums make it harder to control blood sugar. Infections can cause gums to bleed, feel swollen and tender,

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<sup>7</sup> Families USA analysis of American Community Survey (ACS) data for 2018. IPUMS USA, Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota, <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/www.ipums.org>.

<sup>8</sup> Department of Health Care Services, Adult Dental Utilization CY 2017 and CY 2018, available at <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/Pages/DentalReports.aspx>.

<sup>9</sup> Little Hoover Commission, "Fixing Denti-Cal," April 2016, available at <https://lhc.ca.gov/sites/lhc.ca.gov/files/Reports/230/Report230.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Improving Access to Oral Health Care for Vulnerable and Underserved Populations. Washington, D.C.: Institute of Medicine and National Research Council; 2011.

and can lead to tooth loss. Nearly 14% of Californians have been diagnosed with diabetes, and the numbers are rising rapidly<sup>11</sup>. Diabetes costs in this state exceed \$24 billion each year<sup>12</sup>.

Despite the link between dental health and overall health, dental and medical services have traditionally been delivered by separate systems. The Medi-Cal program reflects this, with enrollees enrolled in managed care for medical benefits and the fee for service Denti-Cal system for their dental care. Patients access dental care largely on their own and little supporting infrastructure exists to allow the medical and dental systems to make connections when needed for a patient's overall health needs. Under the current model, it is difficult to coordinate care to improve patient health or measure outcomes and achieve cost-savings for the overall system. The State has approved two pieces of legislation to address these issues. In 2019, the State approved a dental integration program in San Mateo County, to be administered by the Health Plan of San Mateo. The program is set to begin in 2022. In 2016, the State approved AB 2207 requiring Medi-Cal managed care plans to connect their members to oral health care, i.e., provide a dental screening for every enrolled member as part of the initial health assessment; refer members who have oral health needs to a Medi-Cal dental provider; and identify health plan liaisons to establish relationships with dental providers to assist referrals from dental providers to the health plans for health plan covered services. However, the Department of Health Care Services has yet to issue guidance to health plans on these requirements and has not enforced these requirements.

- A.** Develop an integrated dental and physical health program in Medi-Cal by 2030. CalAIM proposed the development of pilot programs to include, among other services, the integration of oral health in Medi-Cal managed care. These pilot programs should be pursued, with the long-range goal of integrating all dental services in Medi-Cal managed care. The State should establish objectives for improving access to oral health care through managed care, including access to dental prevention services, and measure the cost impact of integrating dental care, such as reductions in emergency room visits due to dental pain and dental procedures performed in a hospital setting. Actor: DHCS
- B.** In the meantime, the State should issue guidance to health plans and enforce current Medi-Cal managed care plan responsibilities to connect members to oral health care. Actor: DHCS.

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<sup>11</sup> California Diabetes Program. California Diabetes Fact Sheet, 2012, Technical Notes. [www.caldiabetes.org](http://www.caldiabetes.org). 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Dall TM, Zhang Y, Chen YJ, Quick WW, Yan WG, Fogli J. The economic burden of diabetes. *Health Affairs*. 2010;29(2): 297-303

**Goal 6. Support Federal Medicare Coverage for Dental Care.** Today, traditional Medicare does not include dental coverage. As a result, nearly 37 million older Americans have no dental coverage. Efforts are underway to expand Medicare to include coverage for routine and preventive oral health care. A Medicare oral health benefit would provide coverage to all 6.2 million Medicare enrollees in California, including the 1.4 million Medicare beneficiaries dually enrolled in Medi-Cal.

- A. *California should, therefore, support efforts to expand this federal coverage.*** (say more about how specifically?)

The End.