



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER**

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: 1st District Supervisor
3rd District Supervisor
Adult & Aging Network
Department No.: 011
For Agenda Of: 11/17/15
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Time: 1 Hour
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Board Member(s) Supervisor Doreen Farr
Supervisor Salud Carbajal
Contact Info: Erin Weber, 568-2192, Barbara Finch, 681-4678
SUBJECT: Status of Seniors in Santa Barbara County

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

Consider recommendations regarding the Status of Seniors in Santa Barbara County, as follows:

- a) Receive and file a presentation from the Adult and Aging Network on the status of seniors in Santa Barbara County and provide additional direction as appropriate;
- b) Determine that these actions are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b) (3), finding that the execution of these actions are covered by the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment, and where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity may have a significant effect on the environment, the activities are not subject to CEQA.

Summary Text:

This item is on the Board agenda to provide an overview of the status of seniors in Santa Barbara County, including key demographic trends, systemic issues and gaps in the service continuum. Based on the many years of experience from the Adult and Aging Network membership, the report emphasizes the need for additional county resources to address growing concerns about senior nutrition, transportation and the complex medical needs of homebound seniors, including the need to hire an additional Public Health Nurse.

Background:

The Adult & Aging Network (The Network) is an advisory body to the Board of Supervisors comprised of over 35 members, representing 27 different public and private organizations, whose daily work involves meeting the needs of older adults and people with disabilities in Santa Barbara County (Attachment A- Adult and Aging Network Membership List). Members meet bimonthly to discuss key issues and emerging trends and to inform policy decisions at the local level.

This presentation to the Board was initiated by The Network, and information has been compiled with input from various County Departments, community-based organizations and seniors. County Departments consulted include Alcohol, Drug & Mental Health Services, Public Guardian, Department of Social Services, Fire and Public Health. Multiple conversations occurred with external stakeholders, including the Area Agency on Aging, CenCal Health, Doctors Assisting Seniors at Home (DASH), Cottage Health, Santa Barbara City and County Housing Authority, Central Coast Collaborative on Homelessness, Buellton Senior Center, Easy Lift, SMOOTH, Santa Barbara Foundation, Community Action Commission and Family Service Agency / Senior Ombudsman.

Outreach efforts produced an extensive amount of information on a wide variety of topics related to senior well-being. This initial report will not be all-inclusive, but will touch on some of the most pressing community concerns. The Network intends to return to the Board with additional information about other priority needs. It should be noted that, although seniors are the focus of this report, the Network also advises the Board on issues of importance to adults with disabilities.

The urgency behind this report is linked to demographic trends. Santa Barbara County's senior population is entering a period of rapid growth. According to national figures from the Pew Research Center, roughly 10,000 baby boomers turn 65 each day, and about 10,000 more will cross that threshold every day for the next 14 years. In 2014, the senior population in Santa Barbara County was estimated to be 61,694. The California Department of Finance estimates that by 2030 the population of adults over the age of 65 will increase by 36,000, which is a 66 percent increase from 2010. (By comparison, the child population is projected to increase by 11 percent and the adult population by 6 percent during this same time period.)

The Public Policy Institute of California reports that the over-65 population will also become much more ethnically and racially diverse, with the fastest growth among Latinos and Asians. From 2000-2010 the senior population in Santa Barbara County increased by 7 percent. Latino elders made up 84 percent of this growth and Non-Hispanic Asians over age 65 represented 11 percent of the growth. These statistics point to the increasing need for culturally and linguistically competent service providers. The need for senior support services is also compounded by longer life expectancy, which is 83.9 years for females and 79.9 years for males locally in Santa Barbara County.

Financial insecurity among the elderly is also growing. The economic downturn was catastrophic for many adults approaching retirement, as some saw their retirement funds diminished and others lost their homes and/or jobs. According to AARP, Americans 65 and older sustained the largest increases in poverty of any age group in 2009. In Santa Barbara County, the federal poverty rate for seniors peaked at 9 percent in 2006 and was estimated to be 6.5 percent in 2014. Santa Barbara is also home to many seniors who are considered "the hidden poor," those whose income places them above the federal poverty threshold, yet below the minimum income necessary to meet basic needs. The federal poverty level for a single elder person is set at \$10,890 per year and for an elder couple the threshold is \$14,710. By contrast, the California Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index (Elder Index) states that an

elderly renter living alone in Santa Barbara County needs approximately \$28,000/year to adequately meet his or her basic needs, including housing, food, out-of-pocket medical expenses, transportation, and other necessary spending. Many older adults cannot shoulder the cost of retirement, yet they are ineligible for programs that offer support. The Area Agency on Aging estimates that 40 percent of Santa Barbara County seniors do not have adequate financial resources to ensure a safe and healthy lifestyle.¹

County Departments:

The Network has consulted with a variety of County departments, and has identified senior health and safety as a shared concern. Multiple chronic health conditions, mental illness, functional and cognitive impairments and increasing rates of elder abuse and neglect all place seniors at risk and present challenges for service providers.

The Public Health Department's Emergency Medical Services reports that seniors account for a high percentage of annual transports to local hospitals. In FY 14-15, 10,884 seniors were transported to local hospitals via paramedic ambulance, a figure which represents 43 percent of total transports. Additional community-based programs that provide primary care and case management services in the home are needed to help reduce 911 emergency calls and hospital readmissions.

Department of Social Services: Elder reports to Adult Protective Services (APS) have increased 64 percent over the past five years, and self-neglect accounts for approximately 40 percent of all referrals. Active caseloads for In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) have increased 10 percent over the past two years. The County currently employs just one Public Health Nurse for Adult Services to cover the entire County. The position provides critically important services for the most vulnerable older adults by responding to referrals from IHSS and APS social workers. The PHN currently serves an average of 840 clients per year or 70 clients per month across the county. Services are very time and labor-intensive and may include medical evaluation of abuse or self-neglect, medication management, consultation with physicians, arrangements for medical equipment and referrals for basic care services that may prevent further deterioration. The Public Health Nurse also partners with social workers and care providers to educate and shore up support for seniors with complex needs.

As our local population ages, the need for this type of service is increasing. The Network will be formulating a specific proposal aimed at meeting this need including the hiring of an additional Public Health Nurse to serve homebound seniors. Investment in addressing this need would save the county costs in emergency transports and other crisis support services by promoting early intervention to alleviate factors that contribute to mental and physical health deterioration.

Mental Health: An additional noteworthy gap identified by multiple County departments is the lack of local geriatric psychiatric assessment and intervention services, including inpatient and outpatient care. Specialty services are important for older adults, as there are specific behavioral, mental and emotional needs that occur with geriatric patients. For example, diagnosis and treatment plans are often complicated by factors such as dementia. Prior to its closure in 2003, Saint Francis hospital provided critically needed specialized services for the elderly, including 14 Geriatric-Psych beds for adults ages 55 and older. This resource is no longer available locally. Consequently, clients are frequently

¹ Area Agency on Aging formulated this calculation based on census data and income levels of seniors by using the Elder Economic Security Index

transported out of county for geriatric mental health assessment and/or placement and are returned home without adequate services and supports.

ADMHS does not typically provide services to individuals who are diagnosed with dementia, because dementia is categorized as a neurological disease, not a mental illness. Although ADMHS does not provide specialized services for older adults, clinicians do serve older adults through “ACT” teams, or Assisted Community Treatment. ACT clinicians – similar to many other county staff - are finding that elderly clients have increasing primary care needs and further integration of mental and physical health is imperative. Further analysis of the mental health and substance abuse system of care is needed to determine how to best serve elderly residents.

Opportunities for Community Partnerships

In addition to strengthening current County services, the Network is also recommending that the Board of Supervisors consider supporting local community based organizations that provide for the needs of seniors during budget deliberations. Local funding for senior services has either decreased or remains stagnant, and consequently many local providers struggle to meet the growing needs of the aging community. In late 2010, a Senior Trends Survey sponsored by the 2010 Aging Symposium was administered to local non-profit and government agencies. Over 40 percent of the participating agencies stated that they had experienced a decrease in funding since 2008 and another 38 percent reported stagnant funding levels. To meet the increasing demands of an aging population, the Network is calling for greater County investment in senior services, specifically in the following key areas identified by the Network.

Hunger and food insecurity among the elderly in Santa Barbara County is a growing concern. The 2013 Needs Assessment administered by the Area Agency on Aging indicates that nearly one in four Santa Barbara County respondents utilize meal and food support.² In comparison to the needs assessment administered in 2003, recent survey results indicate a very different picture, as seniors increasingly lack basic resources to live well and cite meals/food as a top need. Many seniors who benefit from meal services are extremely low income, living on less than \$15,000 per year.

The Network estimates that there are thousands of frail elderly who are in dire need of, and eligible for, nutrition services but local providers lack the financial resources to meet this need. One local provider indicated that they would be able to provide 1,000 additional meals with \$10,000 of increased financial support. Home delivered meals and nutrition sites for the frail elderly have been shown to reduce risk of chronic health conditions and enable local seniors to age in place in their homes as long as possible.³

Lack of affordable, door-to-door transportation is another fundamental gap in the continuum of services for the elderly. Seniors are not concentrated in particular neighborhoods and mobility issues can limit their ability to utilize public transportation, therefore accessibility is often a concern. Current challenges include lack of availability in remote areas, distance to public transportation, cost prohibitive fees and inconvenient schedules.

Transportation service providers have struggled to meet demand as increases in requests for service have been compounded by decreases in revenue. One local provider reported a 30 percent increase in

² The survey collected responses from over 2,000 local seniors citizens in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara County

³ National foundation to End Senior Hunger

requests for transportation since the implementation of the Affordable Care Act in July 2014. This equates to 750 more individuals attempting to access services and is largely attributable to newly eligible seniors, ages 60-64, who need transportation to medical appointments. Additional County support is critically needed to permit transportation service providers to sustain and increase their level of trips available to the community.

Conclusion

There are many challenges on the horizon as we strive to improve the service delivery system for older adults in Santa Barbara County. This presentation represents just some of the most pressing needs. The Network will continue its discussions in order to formulate specific proposals, including hiring an additional Public Health Nurse, as well as proposal for more county resources for senior nutrition and transportation. The Network will report back to your Board periodically regarding additional deficits and areas of concern, including senior homelessness and affordable housing, the need for caregiver support, veteran services, affordable in-home services and services to promote healthy aging for people with disabilities.

Attachments:

Attachment A- Adult and Aging Membership List

Attachment B - An Overview of Santa Barbara Seniors Power Point Presentation

Authored by:

Erin Weber, District Representative, Third District Supervisor Doreen Farr

Barbara Finch, Children & Adult Network Director, Department of Social Services

cc: