

# A Five-Year Plan for Meeting the Needs of a Growing Senior Population in Placer County – Fourth Annual Update

Submitted by Placer County Health and Human Services September 2020

## Background

The Five-Year Plan for Meeting the Needs of a Growing Senior Population in Placer County was received by the Placer County Board of Supervisors on January 10, 2017. The initial emphasis of the Plan was to address the needs of older adults in Placer County by researching and promoting a method to consolidate services and establish a single point of entry for long term services and supports. The Recommendations and Implementation Plan followed the World Health Organization's eight domains of livability that influence the quality of life of older adults and was used as a framework in developing an age-friendly community. It was intended to be a dynamic document that would be updated as actions are completed and/or more information comes forward. Many of the recommendations to move Placer towards an age-friendly county require collaboration and efforts on the part of business and civic groups, community agencies, and city and county government beyond Health and Human Services (HHS).

As stated in the Plan, it is useful to have a committee or commission to oversee the implementation processes. The Older Adult Advisory Commission (OAAC) is the voice of Placer County older adults and took a lead role in developing and supporting the implementation of the County Plan. The OAAC continues to discuss and clarify what is possible in our communities and determine action steps. The OAAC has determined that four of the eight domains are areas of focus in Placer County. These domains were prioritized and assigned to Commission members for further needs assessment and advocacy and will be a focus of the OAAC's Annual Report.

HHS has continued to support the OAAC and took steps to implement the Plan through the course of its work in the prioritized domains. HHS is a member of the OAAC Executive Committee and actively participates in monthly OAAC meetings and events. In addition, HHS is a member of the Placer County Aging and Disability Resource Connections (ADRC) Steering and Advisory Committees. Further, HHS is a member of Placer PROTECT (Providing Resources & Outreach to Elderly Citizens Together) and participates in monthly PROTECT meetings and events. These integral connections support a coordinated, collaborative effort to identify and address the needs of the older adult population in Placer County.

**Placer County 5-Year Plan for Meeting the Needs of a Growing Senior Population  
Recommendations and Implementation Plan – Annual Update**

**1 Communication and Information**

As stated in previous reports, there was a need to raise awareness of, and participation in, the many resources, programs, and services available to Placer County older adults. A centralized, sustainable model for information and assistance was needed as a conduit for older adults and people with disabilities to become aware of and access available resources.

On July 1, 2020 Placer County launched the new 211 information and referral system. The 211 system provides a free, confidential, multilingual information line and website that connects people with services and resources in their area. Additionally, 211 provides a sustainable, centralized point of entry for older adults and people with disabilities in need of long-term services and supports in Placer County. As the 211 system was developed, there was partnership with established older adult information and assistance providers in the County to incorporate the comprehensive knowledge of local resources they possess. The new 211 service will raise awareness of, and participation in, the many resources, programs, and services available to Placer County older adults and people with disabilities.

In addition to the new 211 system, an emerging source of information and assistance for older adults is the Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) of Placer County. The ADRC is a collaboration of partner organizations designed to streamline access to services for people with disabilities, older adults, family members and caregivers. HHS has participated on the ADRC Advisory Committee and supported the designation of an ADRC in Placer County since its inception in 2015. The ADRC has created an Enhanced Information and Assistance (I&A) Protocol, which establishes a systematic process for information sharing, referral, and assistance, to meet the needs of individuals looking for Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) options. This system will serve people of all ages, disabilities, and income levels with objective and unbiased information on the full range of LTSS options and when needed, assistance with referral and service connections, coordination, and service delivery. The Enhanced I&A will be provided by four Core Service Providers: Placer Independent Resource Services, Seniors First, Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center, and Agency on Aging-Area 4. The Core Service Providers I &A staff will be trained and certified by the Alliance of Information and Referrals Systems (AIRS) and will utilize a “warm-handoff” technique when referring to extended partners. The ADRC Advisory Committee’s application for designation with the California Department on Aging is currently pending. HHS will continue to support the ADRC as it moves from development to implementation.

**2 Transportation**

Residents of Placer County over the age of 65 years make up 18 percent of the total population, compared to a 13 percent average across California. This large cohort of residents will continue to have specialized transportation needs as they age, particularly for public transportation options. Fortunately, several public transportation options exist for older adults in Placer County with new options being explored.

Residents who are not able to use conventional public transit services within western Placer County can utilize the specialized transportation programs provided by the Western Placer Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (WPCTSA). Each program responds to a unique transportation need not otherwise currently met or met well within a prescribed service area. The WPCTSA designated the City of Roseville to establish and operate the regional Transit Ambassador Program. The program educates new passengers in becoming familiar with western Placer County transit services and aid passengers at transit transfer points. It also operates the Retired Dial-a-Ride Vehicle Program, which purchases retired (surplus) dial-a-ride vehicles from Placer transit operators and sells the vehicles to local social service non-profit organizations for a nominal amount for use to transport elderly and/or disabled clients.

Two additional programs are offered by the WPCTSA in collaboration with the local non-profit organization Seniors First: Health Express Non-Emergency Medical Transportation and the My Rides Program. The My Rides Program is a volunteer countywide transportation service that includes a mileage reimbursement program for individuals who are unable to use conventional public transit services. Transportation is provided to and from medical-related appointments, public services, and other vital services including grocery shopping, banking, dentist appointments, lab and pharmacy visits, and hair appointments. The My Rides Program also provides a voucher for individuals who cannot otherwise afford the costs associated with an occasional and necessary trip to medical-related appointments. The My Rides Program currently services all communities in Placer County based on volunteer availability. The Health Express program provides non-emergency medical transportation outside the service areas of the public dial-a-rides and to Sacramento area hospitals on an advance-reservation, shared-ride basis. Health Express serves Placer County residents over the age of 60 years or disabled residing just east of Colfax to the Sacramento County line and includes the cities of Colfax, Sheridan, Forest Hill, Auburn, Lincoln, Loomis, Rocklin, and Roseville.

For Fiscal Year 2019/20, one unmet transit need was identified by the Placer County Transportation Planning Agency (PCTPA) that would be to the benefit of older adults and people with disabilities. It was determined that there is a need for service between Lincoln and Rocklin for someone who is physically unable to use the Placer County Transit Lincoln/Sierra College fixed route. Placer County, Lincoln, and Rocklin will work together to ensure that individuals who meet this criterion can be served by Dial-A-Ride services between Lincoln and Rocklin. Data will be collected for 24 months for this modified service and analyzed to determine the feasibility of this modified service, the number of the requests for service by jurisdiction and location, and the best operational methods for implementation.

To improve mobility for the elderly, low income, disabled and otherwise transportation disadvantaged Placer County residents who are unable to use the traditional fixed route services, the WPCTSA Short Range Transit Plan for 2018-2025 identified several strategies for consideration/further study. One notable strategy is to contract with Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) such as Lyft or Uber. Another strategy is to partner with a microtransit company that offers flexible scheduling of minibus vehicles. TNCs may supplement Dial-A-Rides when there is a lack of volunteer drivers or for trips to/from rural areas not serviced by fixed routes. TNCs could also offer medical transportation outside

hours of operation of the public transit service. It was noted in the Placer County 2040 Regional Transportation Plan that the cities of West Sacramento and Citrus Heights have completed successful pilot projects of on-demand microtransit services and the PCTPA is monitoring these pilot programs for lessons learned.

For those living in the South Lake Tahoe region, the Tahoe Transportation District offers a complementary South Shore Area ADA Paratransit Service for persons 65 years of age and older and individuals with disabilities who meet eligibility criteria. Paratransit service hours are the same as the local fixed operating hours and the service area extends to origins and destinations one mile on each side of the fixed routes.

For those living in the Truckee-North Lake Tahoe region, the Tahoe Truckee Area Regional Transit (TART) provides public transportation and offers a complimentary ADA taxi service called Placer TART Paratransit Service. This service is comparable to the level of fixed route bus service, operating 6:00 am to 6:00 pm 7 days per week within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of the TART fixed route buses. TART also offers a Dial-A-Ride service year-round with priority service for seniors and people with disabilities. Trips are available within the town limits 7 days per week. Additionally, the City of South Lake Tahoe Senior Center offers free transportation on Thursdays and Fridays within South Lake Tahoe for seniors on a reservation basis only.

### 3 Housing

Senior Homeless is projected to nearly triple nationally by 2030. Rising housing costs compounded by insufficient retirement income, illness, or job loss can quickly result in homelessness for low income seniors. The Placer County 2020 Homelessness Point-in-Time Count found that 17 percent of those counted were adults aged 60 years and older, a 1% increase from 2019.

In 2019, 44 seniors aged 65 years and older were housed through the Placer County's Continuum of Care (CoC) program. Currently, there are 99 seniors who are experiencing homelessness and awaiting more permanent housing through the CoC. The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened concerns for homeless seniors. It is estimated that they will be up to three times more likely to die if infected, because they have higher rates of chronic illnesses and their bodies age faster living on the street. HHS is making great efforts to address senior homelessness in Placer County and quickly move high-risk seniors into non-congregate shelter to protect against COVID-19.

The Whole Person Care (WPC) program coordinates physical health, behavioral health, and social services for at-risk individuals, including older adults, who are high users of multiple services, including hospital emergency departments, probation, mental health and substance use programs, and social services. The WPC team actively engages individuals to build trust and motivate their enrollment into the program. A comprehensive health assessment is used to identify participants with the most critical need to expedite services. WPC offers medical respite beds to individuals who are homeless, in an unstable living situation, and/or too ill or frail to recover from physical illness/injury in their usual living environment (but not in need of treatment from a hospital or skilled nursing facility). Additionally, WPC offers comprehensive housing services to participants who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. Housing transition services assist the individual to obtain

housing and develop daily living skills to support them to remain stable in their new living situation. A review of WPC data from 2019 revealed that 40 participants were aged 65 years and older and 13 were aged 70 years and older.

Full Service Partnership (FSP) provides intensive services to individuals with a serious mental illness, including older adults, by employing a “whatever it takes” approach to help them on their path to wellness, recovery and resilience. Services include crisis residential, rent subsidies, and supporting new services and funding to augment the CoC for individuals at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness. For instance, HHS is working with Turning Point Community Programs on an FSP to reduce the need for hospitalization, interactions with the criminal justice system, and to reduce homelessness. Specific activities include a 24-hour phone response to crisis issues that arise in the home related to our consumers’ mental health needs. Assistance is also available to coordinate access to any community-based services that are not otherwise provided by the County and which are essential for achieving and maintaining independent living. A review of FSP data from 2019 revealed that 26 FSP participants were aged 65 years or older, one of whom was homeless but sheltered.

Placer County was among 15 counties selected to implement the State’s homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing demonstration grant program titled Home Safe. The California Department of Social Services awarded HHS \$469,000 to implement Home Safe from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2021. In 2019 the HHS Adult Protective Services (APS) program received an average of 180 new cases each month, many of which involved an older adult who is at risk of losing their housing or has recently become homeless as a result of financial exploitation, physical abuse, or caregiver neglect. The Home Safe program enables trained APS staff to provide short-term housing crisis intervention to help clients stabilize and recover while maintaining or securing housing. Staff work with landlords, utility companies, legal services, and other community resources to develop solutions. Home Safe interventions can include short-term rental and utility assistance, hoarding interventions/cleaning services, mental health treatment, intensive case management, and more. The Home Safe program enhances Placer County’s CoC through homeless prevention and early intervention for vulnerable older adults and people with disabilities. The program has prevented homelessness for 62 clients since its implementation and will continue this valuable work through June of 2021.

Project Roomkey is a coordinated effort to secure hotel and motel rooms in Placer County to be used as temporary residences for quarantining and treating individuals experiencing homelessness who have tested positive for or have a high-risk exposure to COVID-19. High-risk includes seniors aged 65 years and older and/or those suffering from chronic illness. The county has two hotel/motel shelter sites with approximately 84 beds available, as well as 12 travel trailers provided by the state. Each shelter site provides supportive services, on-site supervision and three meals per-day to residents. Project Roomkey has completed 360 unique assessments and served 152 homeless individuals in Placer County. HHS will continue to seek ways to expand its services and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 among the most vulnerable in the community.

#### **4 Community and Health Services**

Placer County continues to offer numerous community and health services through nonprofit organizations and local government programs that support and enrich the lives of older adults. Services range from caregiving, food and nutrition, mental health, caregiver support, abuse protection, and more. With the PG&E Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events and the COVID-19

pandemic, several of the HHS Older Adult Services programs shifted efforts to ensure the health and wellbeing of their clients.

The HHS In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program helps pay for care services provided to older adults and people with disabilities, so that they can remain safely in their own home. IHSS is considered an alternative to out-of-home care, such as nursing homes or board and care facilities. The types of services which can be authorized through IHSS are housecleaning, meal preparation, laundry, grocery shopping, personal care services (such as bowel and bladder care, bathing, grooming, and paramedical services), accompaniment to medical appointments, and protective supervision for the mentally impaired. IHSS currently serves approximately 3,780 consumers residing in Placer County. HHS is a member of the IHSS Advisory Commission, which serves as a bridge to improve the IHSS system for consumers and providers. The Advisory Committee is also a channel of information and advocacy to the Board of Supervisors and for the entire community.

The IHSS Public Authority (PA) program acts as the employer of record for approximately 3,600 IHSS home care providers in Placer County and aids IHSS consumers in finding and hiring a provider. The PA maintains a care provider Registry and matches consumers to providers who meet the consumers' service needs. The PA supports a positive, productive relationship between consumers and providers. While the great majority of IHSS consumers have family members providing for their care, there are approximately 846 consumers on the PA Registry without a provider. There are only 348 Registry providers available for matching to a consumer, thus there continues to be a shortage of providers. The PA is working in a proactive, innovative manner to identify and recruit new providers. This year the PA has focused on collaboration with the California Employment Development Dept. (EDD) for recruitment of providers. The Registry was able to create a unique satellite account with EDD to utilize CalJOBS, an online employment tool for job seekers. Several Public Authorities across the state to do the same and increase provider recruitment.

The Senior Peer Counseling (SPC) program is a community service offered by HHS to improve the mental health of older adults through prevention and early intervention. This program is a free, short-term, peer support, goal-oriented program for Placer County residents who are 55 years and older. SPC trains older adult volunteers to become Peer Counselors and matches them with older adults in the community for short-term support with issues such as family conflict, adjustment to health or living situation, loss of independence (e.g., loss of driver's license), caregiver stress, loneliness, depression, and other age-related transitional concerns. The Peer Counselors are in a unique position to help because they bring their own life experience and are trained to listen, support, and gently coach the client towards their stated goals. New clients start by setting small goals that they work towards, leading to a sense of autonomy, purpose and improved mental health. In 2019 there was a monthly average of 15 active Peer Counselors and 11 clients. The Peer Counselors spent an average of 191 voluntary hours with the clients each month offering their support and assistance, primarily through phone conversation in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the PSPS events in 2019 and 2020 the APS and IHSS programs took a proactive approach to ensure the welfare and safety of their clients, who are primarily older adults and people with disabilities. Both programs contacted the most vulnerable clients, particularly those with durable medical equipment that required power, to assess their level of risk and develop a safety plan. The great majority of clients had an appropriate support structure and plans to address needs that might arise during a power shutoff. The few clients who were found to have unmet needs, such as food and

medications, were connected to appropriate resources and a plan was developed to ensure their welfare. Additionally, program clients were provided information regarding PG&E's Medical Baseline Program, power banking program, and the new partnership with the FREED Center for Independent Living that provides support to older adults and people with disabilities during the activation of a PSPS event.

With the outbreak of COVID-19 the APS and IHSS programs again took a proactive approach to ensure the health and safety of their clients. Both programs conducted wellness checks by calling the most vulnerable clients, particularly those over the age of 80 years, living alone, or without a care provider, to assess their need for additional support. 1,396 clients were contacted, and the majority had adequate care in place with no need for additional support. Other measures taken by APS and IHSS to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission to older adult clients included conducting virtual provider orientations, annual reassessments and generally minimizing in-person contact to the greatest extent possible. Anticipating a critical need for emergency care providers, the PA Registry created an Emergency Back-Up System. The back-up system enables care providers to be quickly assigned to recipients when their care provider could no longer work due to COVID-19. The Back-Up System has allowed several recipients to receive the care necessary to remain safely in their homes through the pandemic.