



SENIOR UPDATE
AREA AGENCY ON AGING
ADVISORY COMMISSION ON AGING
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Senior Update

...The Eyes and Ears of Alameda County Seniors

Commission on Aging

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THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF RESILIENCE IN OLDER ADULTS

The connection between resilience and aging: The American Psychological Association (APA) defines resilience as “the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, or significant sources of stress.” The Association notes that “As much as resilience involves ‘bouncing back’ from these difficult experiences, it can also involve profound personal growth.”

But what about resilience and aging? How do we define, resilience in older adults? According to the University of Arizona’s Center on Aging, the concept of resilience in aging was “born out of the paradox of old age.” The paradox is that in spite of losses and physical declines experienced in later life, older adults report feeling content, and they have lower rates of psychopathology than the general population. Researchers have argued that this is due to resilience, and that an understanding of resilience can lead to...healthier, happier, people and communities.”

In other words, resilience is not simply the ability to survive a difficult experience, but the ability to adapt and cope with circumstances in a way that enables one to emerge stronger, to thrive in the aftermath, and to integrate the lessons learned. These are traits that can be learned and can have an effect on positive aging, including senior health and wellness as they relate to healthy aging.

Characteristics of resilience: Researchers studying resilience in older adults and its effects note several characteristics. The categories include mental, social, and physical. Mental characteristics are adaptive coping styles, gratitude, and happiness. Physical characteristics are the ability to remain physically independent and mobile, enjoying good health and believing that one is aging successfully. Social characteristics include: community involvement, contact with family and friends, and positive relationships.

RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY IN OLDER ADULTS: A COMPLEX SYSTEM

In medicine, we still cannot objectively assess who will recover from health stressors imposed by disease or its treatment. If resilience, the dynamic ability to respond to and recover from health stressors, is considered as an emergent feature of a complex system, then methodology from complexity science may help us quantify the health-promoting features that support the recovery process. Dynamic indicators of resilience (variance, autocorrelation) and multiscale entropy measures were estimated from continuous heart rate and accelerometer data and compared to measures of patients’ physical functioning (e.g., ADLs, frailty) at admission, discharge and three month later.



LEGISLATIVE CORNER – ASSEMBLY BILL 636

Hello and welcome to a new feature of the Senior Update Newsletter. The “Legislative Corner” column will try to bring you timely information on changes in legislation that affect the older adult community in Alameda County. We will also bring you news of new legislation that is being put forth for the coming legislative session, along with how you might get in touch with the legislator to show your support, or disagreement on specific Bills. Today’s column will discuss Assembly Bill 636, which was signed into law on October 7th, 2021.

According to the National Council on Aging, up to 5 million older Americans are abused every year, and the annual loss by victims of financial elder abuse is estimated to be at least \$36.5 billion. Elder abuse is a problem that robs older Americans of their dignity, security and in some extreme cases can be fatal. In January of 2021, Governor Newsom released the Master Plan for Aging (MPA). One of the five bold goals of the MPA, "Inclusion & Equity, not Isolation" includes and specifically draws attention and focus to elder abuse in Strategy E: Protection from Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation.

Assembly Member Brian Maienschein stated “AB 636 is an important bill to protect seniors by making it easier for Adult Protective Services to share information with code enforcement and other agencies, about substandard care in independent living facilities, and to investigate cases of elder abuse.” Before this legislation, Federal law enforcement agencies were not included in the previous law as specified agencies that could receive relevant information about elder or dependent adult abuse. This limited collaboration between law enforcement agencies. The Advisory Commission on Aging Legislative Committee’s mission is to support and recommend legislation to the Alameda County Board of Supervisors that they feel is important for older adults. The committee will be the primary source of information for this column.

TIPS TO AVOID PRESCRIPTION OVERLOAD

- **Try nondrug alternatives.** Before taking any new drug, consider whether there’s a way to try to treat the problem first without medication. Can you change your diet to control your diabetes or high blood pressure? Eliminate caffeine to help your insomnia.
- **Read the medication guide or insert.** Pay special attention to harmful interactions and side effect keeping in mind that they may not affect you right away.
- **Keep an up-to-date list of your medications.** Make sure it includes over-the-counter drugs and supplements, which can cause dangerous reactions when mixed with certain prescriptions.
- **Stick to one pharmacy.** Discounts may tempt you to transfer your medications to different pharmacies, but if you fill all of your prescriptions in one place, it’s easier for your pharmacist to spot possible interactions and safety issues.
- **Schedule a medication review.** Sit down with your primary care doctor or pharmacist and talk about each of your medications and supplements — ask why you’re taking it, if there are safer ways to manage your symptom, and if it’s worth trying to go without.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOR SENIORS IN ALAMEDA COUNTY

Legal Assistance for Seniors (LAS) has changed a great deal since its founding in 1976. There have been substantive changes at the non-profit over the years, such as becoming the home to Alameda County's Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP) when the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 created programs to counsel Medicare beneficiaries and in 2017 when LAS added its housing practice group to help seniors avoid homelessness. The mission to ensure the independence and dignity of seniors by protecting their legal rights through education, counseling, and advocacy is how the agency contributes to senior justice in Alameda County.

Over a decade ago, LAS recognized the need to cross-train attorneys in order to better serve older adult clients. Attorneys were trained in two or more areas of LAS' practice, leading to a better understanding of LAS practice areas, increased flexibility within the legal team, more resiliency and responsiveness to change in case-loads and staffing, consistency, and reliability in services for clients, and far greater stability for the organization.

Supervising Attorney Mariel Kusano credits Legal Director Kirsten Voyles' leadership style with steering LAS in the direction of partnership. "Kirsten communicates and networks with so many people both internal and external to LAS. She created a culture of collaboration with an expectation that we support one another in our common goal of helping our clients. Attorneys and advocates share information about court procedures, trends in the law, and client needs and challenges. We feel supported by our teammates, and as a result, we provide better services to our clients."

The internal transformation led LAS attorneys to partner with outside organizations. For example, LAS is a member of the Alameda County Kinship Collaborative ("ACKC"). ACKC partners provide caregiver support groups and summer- and after-school programs. Membership in the collaborative allows LAS to provide clients with the resources for those supportive services. LAS is also a member of the Family Violence Council, the Alameda County Bar Association's Community Projects Committee, Alameda County Elder and Dependent Adult Multidisciplinary Team, and a partner in multiple housing working groups collaborating with other agencies and the court. Working with these community partners increases our outreach to Alameda County's diverse communities.

In Fiscal Year 2020-21, LAS' legal team supported 1,238 individuals throughout Alameda County in matters ranging from elder abuse to guardianship and from conservatorship to housing. The Medicare Counselors who volunteer through HICAP also bring cases to the Health Law team and safeguard health care justice for older adults. In FY 2020-21, HICAP served 1,539 clients with their Medicare needs. With teamwork at its core, the LAS staff builds their knowledge of the law and assists as many individuals as possible during these difficult times. As the 50th Anniversary of LAS' founding approaches in 2026, we hope that our organization will continue to grow and serve ever more seniors who call Alameda County their home.



MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY—SEPTEMBER 16

Mexican Independence Day often referred to as 'El Grito' or El Grito de Independencia, a tribute to the battle cry that launched a rebellion in 1810. Like America's 4th of July, the celebration of freedom is a giant fiesta with colorful parades, parties and family gatherings featuring food and with fireworks.

ALAMEDA COUNTY COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES

The Alameda County Mayor's Conference was created in 1954 to:

1. Develop and maintain a means of cooperative effort and understanding in matters of mutual interest and concern;
2. Assemble information helpful in the consideration problems peculiar to the various areas of the county;
3. Provide guidance for united city action in dealing with local municipal affairs;
4. Serve as a city-county relations organization;
5. Consider, study and make recommendations regarding regional problems;
6. Explore all practicable avenues of thought advanced in the interest of local public welfare and policies.

Membership consists of the mayors of the incorporated cities in Alameda County including Alameda, Albany, Berkeley, Dublin, Emeryville, Fremont, Hayward, Livermore, Newark, Oakland, Piedmont, Pleasanton, San Leandro and Union City. Officers are elected annually and serve a term of one year.

The Alameda County Mayor's Conference meets monthly to carry out its purpose. Its business meetings typically include committee action related to appointments for various regional commissions and committees, review of legislation, discussion regional issues/concerns and solutions, a presentation of topical importance and a dinner.

The Alameda County Mayor's Conference also acts at the Alameda County City Selection Committee as set forth in the Government Code 50270-50279.2. In this capacity, it makes appointments to regional boards. Appointments made by the City Selection Committee are included in the Alameda County Mayor's Conference meeting minutes and included in the meeting agendas.



MEET YOUR COMMISSIONER

Commissioner Laura McMichael-Cady joined in September of 2019 and chairs the Public Relations Committee. She is originally from upstate New York and moved to the Bay Area in 1989. Her background is a social worker for 25 years, working in the fields of aging and mental health in a wide variety of settings including geriatric/psychiatric care, skilled nursing rehabilitation, case management, home health, and hospital settings. She has been instrumental in helping Eden Area Village, a community of seniors helping other seniors to age in place, to become a non-profit organization. She serves on the board and runs the website. Her other activities include: volunteering with LIFE ElderCare, SOS MOW, and Eden Senior Housing. Laura is a long-time resident of Castro Valley, and advocate for increased access to services for seniors in Alameda County.

HEALTHY SNACK IDEAS

Developing a snack plan for your day or week can help you consume nutritious foods on a regular basis. Be creative. There are countless possible combinations of grains, nuts and seeds, cheeses, and fruits and vegetables. So don't be afraid to try new things. Many grocery stores even sell already-prepared healthy snacks. Just be sure to check the labels on prepared items. Pay particular attention to their sodium and sugar content.

Healthy and nutritious snack ideas to consider include:

Baked apples or pears topped with cinnamon, nuts, and/or raisins

- Baked kale chips (made by you or already prepared at the grocery store)
- Baked sweet potato fries
- Celery, apples, or bananas with nut butter
- Cheese and tomatoes on whole-grain toast
- Cucumbers topped with feta cheese and walnuts
- Fresh fruit and granola with low-fat yogurt
- Fresh fruit with low-fat cottage cheese
- Half a whole-grain bagel topped with ricotta cheese and berries
- Nuts and dried fruit (in modest portion sizes)
- Popcorn (plain air-popped or microwaved) seasoned with dark chocolate shavings, parmesan cheese, cinnamon, or any favorite seasoning (or using small amounts of extra virgin olive or coconut oil instead of butter)
- Rice cakes topped with nut butter and fresh or dried fruit
- Roasted chickpeas
- Smoothies made with fruit, leafy greens (like kale or spinach) and yogurt or non-dairy milk
- Whole-grain crackers with salsa and guacamole
- Veggie sticks and hummus





THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIALIZATION FOR SENIORS

It almost sounds too good to be true, but it's been proven that seniors who make it a priority to participate in social activities and stay connected with others are healthier, happier and live longer than those who don't. In fact, studies have shown that isolation and loneliness pose health risks for older adults, including high blood pressure, heart disease, depression and cognitive decline.

Humans are social creatures, and maintaining relationships and bonding with people through social activities are key for healthy aging and vibrant living, no matter our age. But for seniors especially, social wellness is crucial. Today, we offer several ways that socializing benefits seniors, as well as a few suggestions for activities for older adults to enjoy here at Fellowship.

Five Benefits of Social Interaction for Seniors

Socializing and relationship building have several benefits for your mental, physical and emotional health. Here are five ways that social interaction improves seniors' lives:

1. **Better physical health** – Seniors who socialize tend to be more active, especially if they participate in activities that keep them moving. You're more likely to exercise if you have someone to do it with you and motivate you to keep going. Socially active seniors also have stronger immune systems, making it easier to fight off colds and other illnesses.
2. **Improved emotional well-being** – Loneliness can be contagious. Staying connected with others helps increase our sense of belonging and improves our overall outlook on life. When you're around other people, you're more likely to feel positive about the world around you, reducing your risk of depression and anxiety.
3. **Reduced risk of cognitive decline** – Keeping your brain active and engaged can reduce your risk of a memory condition like dementia or Alzheimer's. Simply enjoying conversations and having lively debates with your friends can keep your mind sharp and strengthen connections in your brain.
4. **A longer, happier life** – Older adults can increase their lifespan by staying socially active. Unfortunately, loneliness can actually be fatal for seniors, while those who have a support system of friends, family and engaging activities are more likely to live longer than those who are isolated.
5. **Wards off boredom** – Social activities add variety to your life, giving you something to look forward to so you won't feel restless. A lively game night with friends is so much more interesting than sitting alone in front of the TV looking for something to bide your time. There's nothing wrong with enjoying a quiet night at home, but it's important to find a healthy balance between socializing and too much alone time.



TIPS FOR DECREASED APPETITE

Reduced appetite is common in older age. This can be related to hormonal changes, pain, changes in the digestive system, changes in taste and smell, and the environment in which you eat in.

Decreased appetite is of concern because it can cause lower food and nutrient intake. This can lead to worse health outcomes due to nutritional deficiencies and weight loss.



EAT 4-6 MEALS

If you are having decreased appetite, eating smaller meals may be beneficial. Eating 4-6 small meals instead of 3 large meals can help you to ensure you are eating enough food throughout the day, but not causing you to feel too full after meal time.



LIQUIDS WITH CALORIES

Drinking liquids with calories in-between meal time can help you increase your daily intake of nutrition. This can include milk or non-dairy beverages, smoothies, and oral nutritional supplements.



PROTEIN WITH MEALS

Eating enough protein is especially important in older age to prevent loss of lean muscle mass that naturally occurs as you age. Protein sources include meat, fish, poultry, dairy, eggs, beans, tofu, and nuts.



ENHANCE FLAVOR

Use a squeeze of lemon or lime, herbs, and spices on your food to enhance the flavor and make it more appealing. Try adding pepper, oregano, paprika, cilantro, rosemary or other herbs to your meals.



ENRICH MEALS

If you find yourself eating less, it is important to still get enough calories. You can increase calories in your meals by adding milk powder to sauces or soups, cook food in olive oil, add cheese to sandwiches, eggs, or pastas, or snack on nuts and dried fruit.



ENHANCE THE ENVIRONMENT

Changing your environment can help to make meal time more appealing. This can include making sure there is good lighting during meal time, using brightly colored dishes and cutlery, and eating around others.

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SSA has launched a brand new website, take a look at the new user friendly layout and services search engine at <http://alamedacountysocialservices.org>

Senior Update Editorial Board: Belinda Llaguno, Diarra Piggue, Laura McMichael-Cady, Delbert Walker



On Tuesday, May 24, 2022, Alameda County Board of Supervisors adopted a proclamation declaring May as Older Americans Month, recognizing the contributions of the county's older adult population to the community. The Proclamation will proudly be displayed within the Department of Adult and Aging Services and hold as a reminder to the commitment of the department to build an age-friendly community for all residents of Alameda County by:

- Planning programs that encourage independence,
- Ensuring activities are responsive to individual needs and preferences; and
- Increasing access to services through the support of aging in place.

Advisory Commission on Aging Meetings:

- ♦ Monday, August 8, 2022, 9:30 AM
- ♦ Monday, September 12, 2022, 9:30 AM

Email aaa@acgov.org for a Zoom link to the meetings.

Senior Information

Phone: 1-800-510-2020
<http://seniorinfo.acgov.org>

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The Alameda County Area Agency on Aging, along with The Center for Independent Living and Community Resources for Independent Living working to be a reemerging ADRC to promote and provide easy, uniform, and streamlined access to a broad array of services, support, and advocacy for individuals seeking long-term supports and services (LTSS) and information about LTSS.

OLDER AMERICANS MONTH 2022 **AGE MY WAY**

Dept. of Adult & Aging Services (left to right): In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Division Director Nicole Hayes, Division of Aging and Adult Protection (DAAP) Director Sonja Frost, Assistant Agency Director Faith Battles and Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Director Jennifer Stephens-Pierre