

Summary of Oct. 27, 2025 MPA Workgroups Meeting

Senior Housing Playbook Development

Zachary discussed the need for a playbook to guide state and local governments, the private sector, and philanthropy in supporting older adults in Santa Cruz County.

Inclusive Aging Services Discussion

The group discussed the Master Plan for Aging, with Stephanie raising concerns about the limited representation of young disabled people compared to elderly individuals. Zachary acknowledged the need for improved services at all stages of life and suggested consulting with local nonprofit developers like Midpenn Housing for input. Clay agreed with Stephanie's points and highlighted the challenge of eligibility-based services rather than needs-based services. The discussion touched on issues such as accessible housing and the prioritization of services for elderly individuals over younger disabled people. The group agreed on the importance of advocating for inclusive services and working together to improve support for all vulnerable populations.

Senior Health Initiatives Update

Sheree discussed Dientes' collaboration with Salud to improve senior oral health, including their social media campaign and clinic expansion. Steve highlighted the Scotts Valley Fire District's fall prevention program for seniors, which Zachary agreed to share information about. Lois mentioned an upcoming push to enroll farmworkers in Medi-Cal before the end of the year.

Senior Inclusion Initiatives Overview

The meeting focused on initiatives to promote inclusion and equity among seniors, with participants sharing successful programs and events. Nic highlighted the Diversity Center's efforts, including a youth intern program and intergenerational activities, while Rachel discussed the popularity of senior-focused events at the London Nelson Community Center, such as a senior prom and a sparkly senior social. The group also addressed the demand for tech tutoring and recreational activities like ping pong and bingo, with plans to expand offerings. Zachary offered to help promote these events through a newsletter and website, and Clay emphasized the collaborative success of these initiatives.

Senior Isolation and Community Solutions

The meeting focused on addressing isolation among seniors, with Danielle highlighting Gray Bears' efforts to create community spaces and events, including a holiday drive-thru and volunteer opportunities. Zachary emphasized the importance of senior volunteerism, noting that 85-90% of Gray Bears' volunteers are seniors. Rachel suggested holding quarterly meetings in person to enhance networking and collaboration. The group also discussed the importance of promoting caregiving as a career and the need for LGBTQ+ affirming trainings to create inclusive spaces for diverse groups.

Caregiver Shortage Solutions Discussion

The meeting focused on challenges in the caregiving industry, particularly the decline in reliable and affordable caregivers due to security concerns. Christina highlighted reports of caregivers avoiding work out of fear of ICE detention, exacerbating an already limited pool of dependable caregivers. The group discussed potential solutions, including organizing rapid recruiting events, exploring partnerships with organizations to host educational programs, and considering affordable caregiving options beyond IHSS. Lois suggested involving IHSS Commission and residential care facilities to address the staffing shortage, while Clay proposed reviving a respite registry system to better match caregivers with clients. The conversation ended with a call for creative ideas to meet the growing need for affordable and reliable caregivers.

Caregiving and Aging Services Update

The meeting focused on several key topics related to caregiving, transportation, and affording aging in Santa Cruz County. Christina explained the trend of caregivers preferring companionship over physical care due to liability concerns. Stephanie emphasized the importance of rail transportation for caregivers and seniors, highlighting its impact on access to jobs and services. Steve shared updates on efforts to reduce rising costs of homeowners insurance and introduced a new PG&E program to help low-income customers. The group discussed strategies for communicating rights and responsibilities to clients and caregivers regarding ICE interactions. Zachary provided an update on the "Affording Aging" goal, mentioning progress on improving safety net services and application processes. The conversation ended with a discussion on next steps, including capturing actions and successes, and considering annual or semi-annual reports to share progress with elected officials and the public.