



AREA AGENCY ON AGING
San Benito & Santa Cruz Counties

FOSTER GRANDPARENT/SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM
Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara & Santa Cruz Counties

PROJECT SCOUT
Tax Counseling Assistance

AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE CONNECTION
Navigating the San Benito County Senior & Disability Services Network

AREA AGENCY ON AGING ADVISORY COUNCIL

Wednesday October 14, 2026

10 a.m. – 12 Noon

Hybrid in-person - Zoom Meeting
Seniors Council Conference Room
175 Westridge Dr., Watsonville, CA

Guests can also join via Zoom
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86490817703>

Meeting ID: 864 9081 7703
One tap mobile
+16699006833, 86490817703# US (San Jose)

Dial by your location
+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)
Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/k6W3Ygvu>

AGENDA

- 10 a.m. 1. Welcome, Call to Order and Introductions
2. Additions & Deletions to the Agenda
3. Receive Announcements from Advisory Council Members
4. Comments from Members of the Public on Items Not on the Agenda
- 10:10 5. Approve minutes of the September 2026 Advisory Council Meeting

175 Westridge Drive, Watsonville, California 95076 www.seniorscouncil.org
PHONE: AAA – (831) 688-0400 • FG/SCP – (831) 475-0816 • SCOUT – 1-877-373-8297 • FAX: (831) 688-1225

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MONTEREY, SAN BENITO, & SANTA CRUZ COUNTIES & YOUR PRIVATE DONATIONS**

- 10:15 6. Committee Reports
- A. Advocacy Committee
 - a. State & Local Funding
 - b. Candidate Forum(s)
 - c. California Senior Legislature Report
 - B. Triple A Council of California
 - C. Community Committees & Commissions
- 11:05 7. Executive Director's Report
- A. Staffing Update
 - B. Master Plan for Aging Local Playbooks
 - C. Hollister Update
 - D. Operations & Service Providers
- 11:25 8. Program Reports (written)
- A. Aging & Disability Resource Connection (ADRC)
 - B. Volunteer Coordination Project
 - C. Project SCOUT
 - D. Foster Grandparent/Senior Companion Program
- 11:50 9. Miscellaneous Correspondence & Other Items
- 12 noon 10. Adjourn

Next Meeting:

Joint Board & Advisory Council meeting

Date: TBD (12-2, 12-3, 12-9, or 12-10)

9:30 am to 12:30 pm

Location TBA

Questions, Clarifications or Additional Information:

If you have a question or wish clarification or additional information about any agenda item or attached materials, please telephone Seniors Council Executive Director Clay Kempf at 688-0400 ext. 115 before the meeting. If you get voicemail, please leave a detailed message so that a response can be made.

Distribution of Materials:

If you have information to share with members of the Board, a table or other suitable space will be provided on which you may make it available. It is the wish of the Executive Committee that meetings not be disrupted by distribution of paperwork or other items.

Accessibility:

This organization attempts to make meeting content understandable in languages other than English. All Meeting rooms are accessible for people with disabilities. If you wish to discuss reasonable modifications or accommodations for language or disability, please contact the Seniors Council office at 688-0400 at least 48 hours before the meeting.

Seniors Council Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Seniors Council to enable older persons to function with independence and dignity in their homes and in the community to their fullest capacity.

Area Agency on Aging Mission

To provide leadership in addressing issues that relate to older Californians; to develop community-based systems of care that provide services which support independence within California's interdependent society, and which protect the quality of life of older persons and persons with functional impairment; and to promote citizen involvement in the planning and delivery of services.



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AREA AGENCY ON AGING ADVISORY COUNCIL
(Held in person at Watsonville office with hybrid Zoom broadcast)

September 16, 2026

MINUTES

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Steve Clark (City of Scotts Valley)
Tara Ireland (Empowered Aging; AAA Service Provider)
Mindy Sotelo (San Benito County Board of Supervisors)
Mark Johannessen (At-large, Seniors Commission)

ALTERNATES PRESENT:

Sandy Brown (alternate J. Cummings) [ZOOM]
Regina Kelbert (alternate K. De Serpa)
Jacques Bertrand (alternate S. Westman)

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Stephanie Auld (Representative of Persons with Disabilities)
Kimberly De Serpa (Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors)
Justin Cummings (Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors)
Susan Westman (City of Capitola)
Gabriela Trigueiro (City of Santa Cruz)
Ari Parker (City of Watsonville)
Angela Curro (San Benito County Board of Supervisors)
Scott Freels (City of San Juan Bautista)

VACANCIES: Representative of Persons with Low Income; CSL Rep.; At Large Rep.

STAFF PRESENT:

Clay Kempf, Seniors Council Executive Director [ZOOM]; Zach Johnson, Seniors Council Administrative Services Officer; Britt Bassoni, ADRC

OTHERS PRESENT:

Antonio Rivas (Seniors Council Board).

1. Welcome, Call to Order and Introductions

Acting Chair Steve Clark called the meeting to order at 10:04 AM. Introductions were skipped.

2. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda

None.

5-1

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3. Receive Announcements from Advisory Council Members

Tara announced retired senior volunteer Nick has been recognized at national level.
Tara also announced upcoming Fall & Fire Safety workshop September 23, and later in Live Oak.
Steve shared that CBDG has been approved. Will help fund half-time admin staff at SV Seniors Center and kitchen refurb, program development.

4. Comments from Members of the Public on Items Not on the Agenda

None.

5. Consent Agenda

Advisory Council members were referred to minutes of the August 2026 AAA Advisory Council meeting.

MOTION, Kelbert/Sotelo, to approve the minutes of the August 2026 AAA Advisory Council meeting. **PASSED.**

6. Committee Reports

- A. Triple A Council of California – Clay referred to memo in packet. Membership no longer requires travel to Sacramento. Group discussed appointing a member from AC as alternate. Added to agenda for next meeting.
- B. Advocacy Committee
 - a. State & Local Funding – Plan to call attention to local historical funding levels (2008-09) and compare with current levels, which are lower in both relative and absolute terms. Will also include United Way which no longer provides senior funding. Has dropped to about \$12 per senior from \$34.
Seniors Council weighing several legislative advocacy options at state level. Intrastate Funding Formula update proposal continues to be revised, still stands to benefit our AAA. Clay will be writing letter to CDA with our recommendations. Group discussed proposal to increase unspent funds allowance, and equity in Santa Cruz County.
 - b. Candidate Forum(s) – Zach provided an update on plans for District 2 and 3 City Council forums. Tentatively scheduled for October 6 following lunch. Mindy suggested adding second day of forums for District 5 Supervisor and Mayoral races.
 - c. California Senior Legislature –

7. Executive Director Report

- A. Staffing Update – Hilary is leaving the Seniors Council, replaced by Rosy Segura. Recruit for Chris Greenwood's replacement, Juan Rodriguez, pending clearance by FBI, hopefully to be resolved shortly.
- B. MPA Local Playbooks –
- C. Hollister Update – Pauline Valdivia Memorial Community Center repairs nearly completed, City claims; definite progress observed. Group discussed budget challenges and interactions with City of Hollister. Group observed that Hollister has not been represented in AC meetings, and discussed ways to increase involvement.
- D. Operations and Service Providers
Seniors Council will be applying for Scotts Valley grant.
CORE update report pending for later in September. Discussion of challenges and goals, as well as metrics for success.

8. Program Reports (written)

- A. FGP/SCP –
- B. ADRC –
- C. Volunteer Coordination Project –
- D. Project SCOUT –

9. Miscellaneous Correspondence & Other Items

In packet.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at

Minutes prepared by: Zachary Johnson

Next Meeting: OCTOBER 14



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Date: 10-9-26

To: Seniors Council Board of Directors, AAA Advisory Council

From: Clay Kempf, Executive Director

RE: Advocacy Report

Our Advocacy Committee had another productive meeting last month, and furthered our focus on specific efforts, roughly falling into the categories of local efforts and communications, and state-level advocacy around promoting the goals and ideals of the Master Plan for Aging while countering the continued threats presented by SB 1249 implementation.

STATEWIDE INFLUENCE

Last week I was appointed co-chair of the California Association of Area Agencies on Aging (C4A) Legislative Committee, joining Morningstar Wagoner of PSA-16 (Inyo-Mono) in that role. Morningstar has committed to compiling written material and setting up meeting times & dates if I lead the policy and strategy efforts and chair the meetings, making the role much more palatable and using each of our skills in the most effective manner. Kathy Mossburg, C4A's hired lobbyist, announced her upcoming retirement, so it will be a last chance opportunity to work with Kathy. She'll be a huge loss, but I'll get to work closely with her one more time before we lose her skills and camaraderie. The appointment of Wayne Norton to the California Commission on Aging couples nicely with Pam Arnsberger being a member of the statewide Aging & Disability Resource Connection Advisory Group gives us a multi-pronged team in efforts to influence state policy, and, at some point, budget decisions. Christina Mills leadership and advocacy work as the Executive Director of C4A continues as another influential aspect of our state efforts.

C4A remains active in other related efforts besides state policy and budget. These include developing internal policy priorities, facilitating easier identification of which bills we endorse or oppose from other organizations, and of course, in developing new and ongoing training modules to enhance the skills of all AAA staff, including directors, planners, fiscal personnel, etc. Patty and I are both registered to attend the annual C4A conference in Garden Grove in November, just down the road from Disneyland and my

6.A-1

old home in Anaheim. Wayne will also be in attendance as part of the Commission on Aging.

We continue to focus a lot of our state efforts around mitigating the problems in SB 1249 and regulatory changes being pushed by the California Department of Aging. Among those are various aspects of changes to the Intrastate Funding Formula, the de-designation process of existing AAAs, a statewide standard of uniform core services, increased and more detailed reporting requirements for those core services (without additional funding, or, in the case of two of them, without any state funding whatsoever), and various other efforts of questionable effectiveness is improving services.

Unfortunately, countering the negative impacts of SB 1249 has resulted in the loss of effort towards achieving the goals of providing more and better services to older adults that the Master Plan for Aging (MPA) envisioned and described.

LOCAL JURISDICTIONAL FUNDING & SUPPORT FOR PROGRAMS SERVING OLDER ADULTS & PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The **County of Santa Cruz** is revisiting their Community Program Funding (CORE) and has engaged in public meetings and fairly extensive discussions regarding the proposed changes. Led by supervisors Justin Cummings and Kim DeSerpa, and staffers Sandy Brown and Regina Kelbert, a 50-page report was included in the September 29, 2026 Board of Supervisors meeting packet. Page one of that report lists the recommended Board actions, and is included in your packets.

The overarching goals of the CORE revisions are moving forward with lots of input but little disagreement from our County Supervisors. The two main points are:

- 1) Prioritize the funding for safety-net services; Food & Nutrition, Housing and Homelessness and Health
- 2) Streamline and increase the transparency of the application process

Additional key aspects where agreement exists includes prioritizing the funding to Seniors; People with Disabilities, Children & Families, and other vulnerable people, including people of all genders, and regardless of immigration status

Still to be determined is when this new direction will be implemented. The original goal was to use these guidelines for the 2027-28 fiscal year and pre-empting the current funding cycle by one year, but the Board has decided to revisit that decision in November. Other more nuanced aspects of the report are also under discussion, with different perspectives expressed by different supervisors. The most extreme perspective comes from Supervisor Manu Koenig, who proposed complete elimination of all community program funding as step one of addressing the County's budget challenges. None of the other supervisors expressed any interest in that option.

The **City of Santa Cruz** currently partners with the County on their Community Program funding process, and we are unclear of their future plans. We have heard that the City has its own sub-committee working on a revised process, but we aren't aware of what will or won't change.

Wayne Norton and I met with **Hollister** City Manager Anna Cortez to discuss our role as a quasi-government agency and why local governments are expected to contribute to our operating expenses. The meeting was productive and I think Anna understands our role better now. It had been explained in writing previously, but an interactive dialogue is so much easier to understand. The result was that the City would reconsider providing funding for us after the first of next year, but prior to that they will discuss the cessation of rent for the offices we occupy at the Pauline Valdivia Memorial Center. That rent relief will also include Martha's Kitchen. During the discussion, I shared that equipment in the center's commercial kitchen is actually owned by us and the California Department of Aging, and that the back wing of the building was at least partially paid for by 1985 Senior Center Bond Act funds via the AAA, Food & Nutrition Services & Jovenes de Antaño. No rent has been required during the highly disruptive bathroom remodeling of the past four or five months.

It's worth noting that the **City of San Juan Bautista** (population 2,128) with annual city revenues under \$3 million provides free use of their Community Center for activities such as the senior lunches and social activities provided by Martha's Kitchen and the Mary Velasco Sellen Senior Center.

Meanwhile, we've been researching local public funding for senior service agencies since 2008, and the funding is about 78% of what it was at that time. Adjusted for inflation, the dollars only have 38% of their original buying power. Coupled with the doubling of the 60-plus population, available funding per senior is about 20% of where it was in 2008! In non-adjusted dollars, Santa Cruz County and City are about 90% of their former levels, Watsonville is at 75%, and Capitola at 31%. United Way has completely and intentionally eliminated all funding for older adults. The research includes the County of Santa Cruz, United Way, and the cities of Capitola, Scotts Valley, Watsonville, and Santa Cruz.

San Benito County has adopted a method by which they commit to providing ongoing funding for the AAA, senior meals, senior legal services, and long term care ombudsman that is tied into County revenue and inflation, resulting in past year increases to each program. While these increases have been relatively small, they send a very strong message that the County is committed to serving its older adults and that they clearly view community-based organizations as partners in that effort. This approach is the strongest commitment and arguably the most progressive of any of our local jurisdictions. However, the amounts allocated are relatively small compared to the County or the City of Santa Cruz.

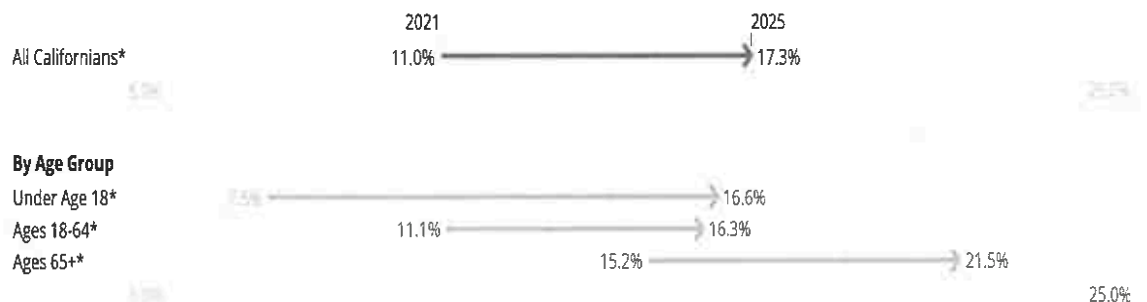
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Other cities, including Hollister, Scotts Valley, Capitola and Watsonville take a more random approach than in the past, and have little consistency in funding amounts or process. To their credit, Scotts Valley, Watsonville and Capitola rejected the CORE model, but as a result, county-wide strategic partnerships regarding community program funding is nearly non-existent. Contributing to this lack of cohesion is the loss of the coordinated efforts once led by the now-defunct Human Care Alliance (HCA).

A recent report from the California Budget Project reported that 21.5% of **older adults in California live in poverty**. For all Californians, the percentage is 17.3; children under the age of 18 come in at 16.6%.

Poverty Increased for All Age Groups in California From 2021 to 2025

California Poverty Rates Under the Supplemental Poverty Measure, 2021 to 2025



Note: Changes in poverty rates between 2021 and 2025 for starred groups are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Source: Budget Center analysis of US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey public-use microdata • Download image



News Nation reports that **nationally**, for five straight years, more older Americans have slipped into poverty, and the programs (Social Security and Older Americans Act) keeping even more of them afloat are on a countdown.

The poverty rate for Americans 65 and older jumped to 15.4% in 2025, the highest of any age group, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's annual poverty report. That is up from 9.4% in 2020 and represents more than 10 million people.

Seniors are the only group whose poverty rate has risen every year since 2020. All other age groups saw a dip in 2021 before creeping up again. The seniors' jump was also the largest increase among all age groups.

MESSAGING

Our Advocacy Committee continues to develop details on how our local network of service providers can provide both positive and challenging messages to our local governments and communities, hopefully highlighted by local press. We are about to

6. A-4

roll out our first message of several to come; highlighting Funding Shortfalls. A draft handout that Zach put together is included as part of this report.

In the queue for follow-up messages are Collaborative Efforts (among providers and/or in partnership with communities); and Food, Safety & Shelter.

Our goal remains to provide a 1-3 page informational item and/or talking points for each topic to be shared as a consistent message under public comments at City Council meetings. We'll need not only our own Board members and staff, but also the staff (and Board?) of other organizations to share these messages if we're going to succeed. We also want to encourage creative ways cities and others can provide support beyond the checkbook; for example, by promoting or co-sponsoring events, reducing rents, etc.



**County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors
Agenda Item Submittal**

**Item 9
26-33750**

From: Board of Supervisors - Third District and Second District
Subject: CORE Subcommittee Final Report and Recommendations
Meeting Date: September 29, 2026

Formal Title: Consider final report and recommendations of the CORE Subcommittee, and take related actions

Recommended Actions

1. Accept and file the final report and recommendations of the CORE Subcommittee;
2. Approve the following service priorities to guide funding in this cycle: Safety-net services: Food and Nutrition, Housing and Homelessness, and Health and priority demographics of Seniors, People with Disabilities, Children and Families, and other vulnerable people, including people of all genders, and regardless of immigration status;
3. Approve funding set-asides under the Food and Nutrition category, by directing up \$1.5 million on a three-year funding cycle;
4. Approve maintaining \$1.5 million to the Housing for Health Division (H4H) under the Housing and Homelessness category, for continued administration as directed for the most recent CORE funding cycle;
5. Approve the new CORE application and a three-tiered funding structure;
6. Direct staff to contract with the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County (CFSCC), running from Q4 2026–Q2 2028 for up to \$80,000 from the CORE budget to provide application review and related services;
7. Designate an Ad Hoc Board Subcommittee that would assist with review of the preliminary recommendations of the Community Foundation and County staff, submit their recommendations to the full Board during each application cycle, and provide recommendations for program improvement when necessary;
8. Approve eliminating the third-year County funding of the current cycle, with the exception of the H4H set-aside, and direct the HSD to send letters to the current CORE programs to alert them of this change and the information for the next application round; and
9. Initiate the application process for the next round of funding on a timeline that will allow for final decisions to be made by the Board of Supervisors on or before the first meeting in May 2027.

Executive Summary

The CORE Subcommittee (Subcommittee) reviewed the current CORE process, solicited extensive input from the nonprofit community, consulted with the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County, and now proposes a series of recommendations to

Funding Crisis in Senior Services

Absolute funding

has **FALLEN 17%**

since 2008...

2008-09	2025-26	% Change
\$1,525,520	\$1,264,551	17.1% DECREASE

...But the Older
Adult Population*
has **GROWN 55%**

2008-09	2025-26	% Change
44,250	68,399	54.6% INCREASE

* Age 60 and over

Funding has not kept up with inflation OR population growth

Seniors in Santa Cruz are getting less in both absolute and relative terms

- **The Crisis Is Only Getting Worse** -
Local Leadership Must Act NOW to Protect Our Seniors

Comparison by Area: The Problem is Broad

	Prior Funding Levels			Current Funding Levels			
Jurisdiction	2008-09 funding	Dollars per Senior (over age 60)	Adjusted to 2026-27 Value	2025-26 Funding	Adjusted to 2008-09 Value	Dollars per Senior (over age 60)	Dollars/Sr (2008 dollar value)
Watsonville	\$65,212	\$1.47	\$98,996	\$49,000	\$32,278	\$0.72	\$0.47
Scotts Valley	\$26,564	\$0.60	\$40,324	??			
Capitola	\$160,774	\$3.63	\$244,055	\$50,000	\$32,937	\$0.73	\$0.48
United Way	\$56,294	\$1.27	\$85,454	\$ -			
Santa Cruz (County & City)	\$1,216,676	\$27.50	\$1,846,914	\$1,097,15	\$722,731	\$16.04	\$10.57
# Aged 60 & above (County)	44,250			68,399			
(per CDA/DoF)							
CPI Change				51.80%			
Totals	\$1,525,520	\$34.48	\$2,315,744	\$1,264,55	\$833,002	\$18.49	\$12.18



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Date: 10-9-26

To: Seniors Council Board of Directors, AAA Advisory Council

From: Clay Kempf, Executive Director

RE: Executive Director's October Report

STAFFING UPDATE

Rosy Segura is quickly learning our fiscal systems as she replaces long time Fiscal Specialist Hilary Minugh, and we're all enjoying Rosy's participation in our team. Juan Rodriguez was finally approved as the new Program Coordinator for FGP/SCP, so we have two new friendly faces in the office!

A big thank you goes again to FGP/SCP Program Coordinator Monica Alvarez, whose workload nearly doubled while we waited for the results of Juan's background check.

MASTER PLAN FOR AGING (MPA) LOCAL PLAYBOOKS

We continue to promote and share the content of our MPA Local Playbooks throughout our PSA. Next steps for the workgroups and for the overall evolution of the playbook is to develop a report that highlights the community's progress on achieving the goals outlined in the playbooks. From there, we'll discuss our next steps, and methods for adding new and emerging needs to the playbooks. The biggest challenges, of course, are how to keep the information fresh and engaging, and, on the grander level, will the next Governor of California embrace and promote the plan once he takes Gavin Newsom's seat. Funding for the effort, of course, remains missing, and remains an internal challenge that we need to solve.

The Santa Cruz County Seniors Commission wants to actively participate in the delivery of the goals in the Santa Cruz Playbook, and we are, of course, supportive of their interest and involvement. Zach and/or I attend most of their meetings and we share any updates that we have.

HOLLISTER UPDATE

Much of the information regarding the City of Hollister and the Pauline Valdivia Memorial Center is included in our Advocacy Report, but we do have some breaking

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7-1

news. The Center was unexpectedly closed today, due to plumbing problems, despite the five-month project to remodel the bathrooms. As a result, no congregate meals were provided and our ADRC offices were not accessible to any walk-in clients. Additionally, our planned forum for the open Board of Supervisor's seat had to be cancelled at the last minute. We continue to work with the City to improve how updates about the building status are received, as despite recent messages regarding this very issue improvements are still needed. Leah Calderon's office has been moved into the building, and all of us (including City staff) are optimistic that her onsite presence will improve things. Leah and I are scheduling a meeting to share what activities regularly occur and how we might add additional future activities.

OTHER AGENCY OPERATIONS

As previously reported, we submitted a small grant for Scotts Valley tax preparation assistance via Project SCOUT. Our biggest funding challenges remain how to continue the operation of our volunteer engagement program in San Benito County as part of our AAA programs and deficit, and the funding of our Foster Grandparent & Senior Companion Programs. More details will be shared as part of the Finance Committee Report.

We're also disappointed that we were not accepted as part of the Giving Tuesday programs in Monterey County (we proposed FGP to be included), and more recently had Project SCOUT rejected in Santa Cruz County. The latter was especially disappointing, as the selection process is conducted by the Volunteer Center, who we have a long-standing relationship with and also provide funding to. Project SCOUT has two paid staff and approximately 30 volunteer tax preparers, and it seemed like a natural.

We're still planning on highlighting our own direct service programs in coming months as part of a "Board Enrichment Series" that Advisory Council members can certainly join. These presentations will take place after some of our Board meetings and can be viewed remotely as well as in person. We have moved the start date to January as a result of needing to reschedule our in-person meetings with several of our banking institutions to update our check signers to this month.



ADRC of San Benito County Staff Report – October 2026

ADRC No Wrong Door Network program staff have completed update work on the San Benito Aging & Disability Resources Directory for 2026. The print-copy update is the first since 2024, but the digital directories, available at <https://sanbenitoadrc.org/resource-directory/>, have been continually updated during this time, and both the English and Spanish version available via the URL are always the most comprehensive and up-to-date versions available. An added benefit of the on-line digitized versions of the Resources Directories is that one is able to print just the section or sections needed, in a PDF format, saving resources and otherwise supporting changing needs for resources and service information.

Now that the update has been completed, staff have turned their attention to distributing both the English-language version, as well as the recently printed Spanish-language version. If you know of interested individuals or organizations that would either like a single copy, or copies in bulk, please contact either Leanne Oliveira or Crystal Ortiz at leanneo@seniorscouncil.org or crystal@seniorscouncil.org respectively, or call (888) 637-6757.

ADRC No Wrong Door program staff continue to assist individuals from their office location inside the Pauline Valdivia Memorial Community Center (PVMCC), and are very, very pleased to share that the construction and remodeling of the bathrooms and plumbing has been completed! One particularly welcome aspect of the completion is that access to the building can now be had through the front door, on the West Street side of the building. Lastly, it goes without saying that access to new accessible and indoor restrooms is also welcome by both meal and recreation program participants, but also by Martha's Kitchen and Seniors Council ADRC staff.

As they were even prior to the start of the renovation project this past Spring, ADRC site staff continue to assist with everything from simple information or referral requests to complex and more work intensive person-centered case management or transition assistance needs. At least a couple of the advantages stemming from working directly with ADRC staff is their comprehensive knowledge of area service supports, especially in the older adults and disabilities service realms, and ADRC staff's willingness to help in creating and initiating a collaborative care plan, in which the consumer can and is encouraged to take an active role in addressing their needs. ADRC staff are skilled in determining potential eligibility and in helping to complete applications for assistance, with the goals of effectively addressing and resolving consumer needs where possible.

As discussed previously, the ADRC program has submitted a balanced budget to CDA this year and has already received approval for it, however the current financial situation is extremely tight and the budget has incorporated into it only very minimal office supplies, no advertising or promotion, and no staff training -- although we will still pursue on-going no-cost training options. Additionally, we have had to reduce staff hours, and organizationally, we have suspended both merit-based raises and cost of living increases in an effort to further reduce expenses. Obviously, such a pared back budget and reduced hours will likely result in a reduction of service capacity, the potential inability to retain quality staff, and greater and longer-term program instability. The challenges confronting our efforts to diversify funding support are many, at a time when many other non-profit organizations and programs

8.A-1

are also confronting their own funding challenges, making grant and foundation support spaces crowded and more competitive than ever.

ADRC management staff are currently working to complete FY26/27 Quarter 1 Service Data Reporting for CDA. ADRC staff also completed State Program Data Reporting for the FY25/26 service year earlier this summer, and although some service delivery numbers were down by category, increases in service numbers were also seen. For the ADRC's first full year without the I&A support data provided by former Core Partner Jovenes de Antano, the number of individuals served with I&A support decreased somewhat. However, the ADRC saw year-over-year increases in Short Term Case Management, Person-Centered Option Counseling, and Transition Assistance services during the same period.

No Wrong Door (NWD) Network partners continue to be encouraged to provide data for the services they delivered to consumers in San Benito County, as part of the aforementioned Quarter 1 Service Data reporting, as well as for future quarterly ADRC reporting. As a reminder, ADRC hub site program staff never claim these data and these delivered services as their own, but instead use the reported data to shine a light on the efforts of locally-focused programs and organizations - - as a part of the NWD Network - - to help meet the service needs of older adults, individuals living with disability, and caregivers, and to help them navigate complex service systems to access the support they need to live safely and successfully in their community of choice. The ADRC is by definition our local collaborative of NWD service providers working in a coordinated and communicative manner, and for the benefit of consumers, as well as those participating programs and organizations. Data sharing on behalf of the ADRC is indicative of the strength of our local partnerships, and can also be a leverage in pursuit of additional and expanded funding opportunities.

The ADRC serves all individuals, families, and caregivers regardless of income, ethnic origin, or immigration status, per the statute and regulation which created the ADRC No Wrong Door Network federally and within the State of California. Additionally, and as an on-going focus of the ADRC in 2026 and 2027, we will continue to advance the connection and further the collaborative work being done between the ADRC of San Benito County, the Community Foundation for San Benito County, and the San Benito Connect – Volunteer Services Development Program, as this partnership benefits a number of local non-profit programs and organizations. Volunteers are at the core of community-based services provision, while at the same time, volunteerism represents an incredible opportunity for older adults and those living with disability to engage and serve others in need, thus increasing their own feelings of self-worth and self-determination.

8.A - 2



AREA AGENCY ON AGING
San Benito & Santa Cruz Counties

FOSTER GRANDPARENT/SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM
Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara & Santa Cruz Counties

PROJECT SCOUT
Tax Counseling Assistance

AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE CONNECTION
Navigating the San Benito County Senior & Disability Services Network

September 2026 Monthly Report

Corey Shaffer – Community Coordinator
Senior Services Planning & Volunteer Engagement

San Benito Connect / Volunteer Engagement

September continued to show growth in the San Benito Connect volunteer network. Four new agencies joined the platform and five new volunteer users registered during the month, bringing the network to a total of 77 registered users and 28 participating agencies. September activity also included 2 new agency needs submitted, 11 agency logins, 908 agency views, and 471 need views.

Continued outreach to local organizations to encourage participation in SBCVolunteers.org and increase the number and variety of volunteer opportunities available in San Benito County. Volunteer opportunities and participating agencies were also promoted through social media and community outreach.

Continued planning with Project SCOUT for a future Resource & Volunteer Fair to be held in conjunction with their Tacos & Taxes event. The goal is to provide attendees with access to community resources and services while also giving local organizations an opportunity to share their volunteer needs and connect with potential volunteers.

Planning also continued for Trick-or-Treat Streets on October 30, where SBC Volunteers will have a “Volunteer Superheroes” themed outreach booth. With approximately 4,000 pieces of candy needed for the event, a candy donation request was shared with staff and board members. The event will provide a fun opportunity to introduce SBCVolunteers.org to families and community members.

Community Partnerships & Outreach

Continued strengthening relationships with local agencies, nonprofits, and community partners throughout San Benito County while sharing information about senior services, community resources, and volunteer opportunities.

Outreach and preparation continued for upcoming community events, including the Annual Senior Resource Fair at the Mary Velasco Sellen Senior Center on October 8 and the Safe Streets Community Festival on October 24. These events provide additional opportunities to share information about senior services and promote SBCVolunteers.org directly within the community.

SUPPORTED BY FEDERAL, STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS, THE UNITED WAY, AND YOUR PERSONAL DONATIONS

8.B-1

Master Plan for Aging

Continued work related to the San Benito County Master Plan for Aging, including follow-up on priorities identified through community input and ongoing coordination surrounding goals and strategies for San Benito County's aging population.

The next Master Plan for Aging Workgroups Goals & Strategies Meeting is scheduled for October 29. Workgroups will continue developing goals and strategies based on the priorities and needs identified through the planning process.

Aging & Long-Term Care Commission

Participated in the San Benito County Aging & Long-Term Care Commission meeting on September 11. As part of ongoing partnership-building, helped connect Teen Kitchen Project with BenitoLink and conducted follow-up outreach with the YMCA regarding community programs and opportunities for collaboration.

Communications & Community Engagement

Continued developing and distributing the San Benito Seniors Connect newsletter, providing information about local senior resources, community events, health and wellness programs, educational opportunities, volunteer opportunities, and community partner updates.

The September issue highlighted a variety of local programs and resources and included a Volunteer Spotlight recognizing Robert Connolly and his volunteer service with the San Benito Agricultural Land Trust, along with recognition of Wayne Norton's appointment to the California Commission on Aging.

The September newsletter was distributed to 409 recipients, with a 50% open rate and 2% click rate, continuing to provide a direct way to connect residents with senior resources, community programs, events, and volunteer opportunities.

Social media continued to support outreach for both senior services and San Benito Connect. Current social media reach includes 284 followers on the Seniors Council Facebook page, 247 on Seniors Council Instagram, 167 on San Benito Connect Instagram, and 35 on San Benito Connect Facebook. Social media continues to provide an additional way to share community resources, events, and volunteer opportunities with San Benito County residents.

Upcoming Outreach & Program Development

October will include several opportunities for outreach and continued program development, including the Annual Senior Resource Fair on October 8, Aging & Long-Term Care Commission meeting on October 9, Safe Streets Community Festival on October 24, Master Plan for Aging Workgroups Goals & Strategies Meeting on October 29, and Trick-or-Treat Streets on October 30.

8.B-2



Congratulations Wayne Norton!

Our own Wayne Norton, a longtime member of the Seniors Council Board of Directors, was appointed to the California Commission on Aging by Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas. His years of advocacy for older adults — right here in Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties — will now help inform aging policy at the statewide level.

We're so proud of your leadership, Wayne!



5K Run/Walk at Southside Sand and Gravel

Saturday, September 12, 2026

8:00 a.m.
5632 Airline Highway, Hollister
Benefits the YMCA of San Benito County.
Scan the QR code or visit the link to register!

Caregiver Support & Education

Monthly workshops at the Community Foundation Epicenter in Hollister. Practical tips, valuable resources, and compassionate support for family caregivers.

2026 SCHEDULE

September 23
The Myth of Closure
1:30 PM – 3:00 PM
440 San Benito St., Hollister

For more info: (800) 624-8304

Alzheimer's & Dementia Education

Upcoming online classes in July, August & September. Topics include early warning signs, caregiving basics, communication, and healthy brain habits.

To register: (800) 272-3900 or visit alz.org/crf

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

AgeWatch

CALIFORNIA COMMISSION ON AGING

Spotlight on Leadership | August 2026

Events Happening in the Community

A full list of local events in September, including:

- Hollister Certified Farmers' Market
- Movies in the Park
- Rombauer Winemaker's Dinner
- Tacos for Tails
- End Summer Outdoor Boutique
- Crave Spooky sign paint and sip
- Hispanic Heritage Month
- Candles & Sound
- Farm Tour – Phil Foster Ranch
- Household Hazardous Waste Collection
- and more!

Tech Help Tuesdays at the Library

Free one-on-one assistance with your phone, tablet, or laptop.

Tuesday, September 15
10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

470 Fifth Street, Hollister

Bring your own device.
No appointment needed!

Chair Yoga at the Library

Gentle, relaxing yoga for seniors.

470 Fifth Street, Hollister

Thursdays
11:30 AM – 12:30 PM



Qigong & Tai Chi at the Library

Every Wednesday

10:30 AM Qigong
11:45 AM Tai Chi

470 Fifth Street, Hollister



Adult Knitting & Crochet Group

Every Tuesday & Friday

11 AM – 1:00 PM
(Barbara Room)

All skill levels welcome!
Drop-ins welcome.



Gavilan College Elder Care Skills & Support Program

Hands-on training for caregivers, healthcare students, and family members caring for older adults.

Saturdays
September 12 – December
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Hollister Campus

Learn practical skills.
Tuition information available.



GAVILAN COLLEGE
Community & Continuing Education

SBALT Ranch Days

Work days and/or hikes on Nyland and Rancho Larios protected lands near San Juan Bautista.

First Sunday of every month
9:00 AM – noon

Everyone is welcome!

San Benito Agricultural™

LAND TRUST

PRESERVE • PROTECT • PROMOTE

Volunteer Spotlight: Robert Connolly

Honoring a local volunteer making a difference through the San Benito Agricultural Land Trust (SBALT).

8.B-4

Visit www.sbcvolunteers.org to find volunteer opportunities.



Every Week

- **Mondays**
San Juan Bautista Farmers' Market
10 AM – 2 PM
- **Wednesdays**
Mary Velasco Sellen Senior Center Lunch,
Chair Yoga & Bingo (11 AM chair yoga)
Hollister Certified Farmers' Market
3 PM – 7 PM
- **Thursdays**
Trivia Night with Miguel Silva @ Vertigo
6:30 PM – 8:30 PM

Stay
Connected.
Stay Engaged.
Stay Informed!



California Budget
& Policy Center

Poverty in California Remains Steady, Among the Highest in the Nation

Latest Census Poverty Data Show Californians Continued to
Face Widespread Economic Hardship in 2025

September 2026 | By the California Budget & Policy Center

KEY TAKEAWAY

California's poverty rate remained among the highest in the nation in 2025, with nearly 7 million Californians lacking enough resources to afford basic necessities like food and housing. Poverty has returned to and exceeded pre-pandemic levels, while recent federal and state policy changes threaten to increase economic hardship further.

The latest poverty data show Californians continued to face widespread economic hardship last year, even before major federal cuts to vital programs took effect, underscoring the need for bold state action to

California Budget & Policy Center

9-1

prevent poverty from rising further.

In 2025, California's poverty rate remained essentially unchanged since 2024, at 17.3%, second only to Louisiana. The state's poverty rate has returned to, and exceeded, pre-pandemic levels, erasing the historic poverty reduction seen in 2021 following significant, but temporary, investments in the child tax credit, food assistance, and other key antipoverty public programs. New data show that nearly 7 million Californians — more than the populations of Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Jose combined — did not have enough resources to afford basic necessities like food and housing. These estimates are based on the Supplemental Poverty Measure, which provides a comprehensive picture of families' economic well-being, by accounting for both the cost of basic needs and resources from public supports.

The persistently high poverty level is especially concerning as California enters a new and more challenging policy environment. In 2025, the first year of the second Trump administration, Congress enacted far-reaching legislation, namely H.R. 1, the "One Big Beautiful Bill", which made historic cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid — CalFresh and Medi-Cal in California — amid other federal actions that threatened families' economic security, including the longest federal government shutdown in US history. These cuts affect programs that are central to California's safety net and have long played an important role in reducing poverty. CalFresh alone helps lift hundreds of thousands of Californians out of poverty each year.

The full effects of many recent federal policy changes are not yet reflected in the 2025 poverty rate. As cuts to food assistance, health coverage, and other public supports take effect over the coming years, California is likely to see poverty and economic hardship rise further. Understanding where poverty stood before these changes provides an important baseline for assessing their effects in the years ahead. This report examines how poverty in California has changed over time and how experiences differ across age and racial and ethnic groups.

Nearly 7 million Californians lived in poverty in 2025, according to new US Census data based on the Supplemental Poverty Measure — a more comprehensive reflection of economic well-being than the Official Poverty Measure. California's overall poverty rate declined slightly to 17.3% in 2025, down from 17.7% in 2024, though the change was not statistically significant. The child poverty rate declined to 16.6%, which was also not statistically different from the 2024 rate. The unchanged poverty rates remain above pre-pandemic levels and far above the historic lows of 2021, when expanded public supports helped millions of families make ends meet.

California's high poverty rate — and the steep declines achieved when public supports were expanded in 2021 — underscore the critical role public supports play in helping families meet basic needs and the

importance of ensuring eligible families can access them. In 2025, increased attacks and misinformation targeting immigrant and mixed-status families and the federal government shutdown disrupted access to key programs, including CalFresh, and created confusion around eligibility for many Californians. While the 2025 data cannot isolate the effect of the decline in CalFresh program participation we're already seeing, it underscores how fragile economic security is for millions of California families and how elevated the state's poverty rate remains above the historically low 2021 levels.

Poverty Increased Across All Age Groups, with Child Poverty Now More than Double 2021 Levels

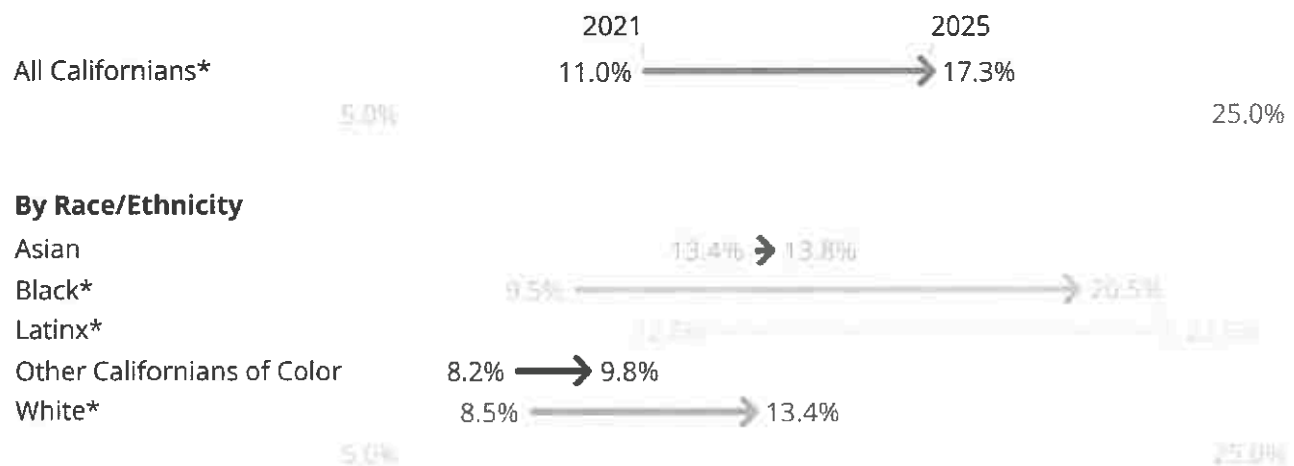
Poverty rose significantly across all age groups from 2021 to 2025, though rates vary among children, adults, and older adults. Notably:

- **Child poverty more than doubled since 2021, reflecting a weakened safety net and costs associated with raising children.** Child poverty has risen since 2021 from 7.5% to more than double that in 2025 at 16.6%. The end of pandemic-era safety net programs has directly contributed to this trend. For example, the expanded federal child tax credit (CTC) reduced child poverty by 4.3% in 2021. In 2024, the CTC kept just 1.8% of children out of poverty, a marked reduction from 2021. Costs associated with raising children (such as child care) also contribute to relatively higher poverty rates. Data from the RAPID Survey Project show that from November 2022 to July 2025, 56% of California families with children under age 6, on average, reported difficulty affording one or more basic needs. Without state action, recent federal attacks on programs that support families with children threaten to exacerbate child poverty.
- **At 21.5%, poverty remains highest for older adults in California.** This trend is largely due to higher out-of-pocket medical expenses for older adults. Chronic health conditions become more common with age, and managing these conditions often requires ongoing care, medications, and other health services that can add to out-of-pocket expenses. Recent state actions — such as reducing Medi-Cal asset limits — specifically puts older adults at risk for higher health-related expenses, further compounding the high poverty level among older adults.
- **Poverty rates for adults 18-64 are significantly higher in 2025, as compared with 2021.** Specifically, poverty for Californians ages 18 to 64 rose from 11.1% in 2021 to 16.3% in 2024. Many of the policies in H.R. 1, such as harsher CalFresh time limit rules and increased administrative hurdles to maintain Medi-Cal, will specifically target this age range. As a result, thousands of adults in California could lose access to food assistance and health care, likely resulting in increased poverty levels.

Black and Latinx Californians Continue to Face Economic Barriers, Resulting in Relatively High Poverty Levels

Poverty Increased for Many Californians of Color From 2021 to 2025

California Poverty Rates Under the Supplemental Poverty Measure, 2021 to 2025



Note: "Other Californians of Color" includes American Indians and Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, and people identifying with more than one race. Combining racial/ethnic groups limits interpretation of findings. However, these racial/ethnic groups have limited sample sizes and could not be reliably reported individually. Changes in poverty rates between 2021 and 2025 for starred groups are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Source: Budget Center analysis of US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey public-use microdata



Poverty increased for many Californians of color from 2021 to 2025. These increases were most pronounced for Black and Latinx Californians, further widening racial disparities in the state. For Black Californians, poverty rates have more than doubled in the last four years, rising from 9.5% in 2021 to 20.5% in 2025. Latinx Californians saw an increase almost as large, from 12.6% in 2021 to 22.6% in 2025. Such racial and ethnic disparities in poverty reflect generations of systemic racism that continues to

persist. Racial discrimination in housing access to banking, education, and taxation have all contributed to the racial income and wealth inequalities reflected in today's poverty estimates.

Recent federal and state actions will disproportionately harm Californians of color and immigrants and are likely to push more Black and Latinx Californians into poverty in future years. Federal cuts to Medicaid and CalFresh, as well as state policy choices to freeze Medi-Cal enrollment for undocumented Californians and eliminate dental benefits for certain groups of immigrants, will take health coverage away from millions of Californians, force families to delay or forgo care, experience food insecurity, and face greater risks of falling into poverty. Latinx Californians represent more than half of Medi-Cal enrollees and CalFresh participants, while Black Californians make up approximately 7% of Medi-Cal and 9% of CalFresh enrollees.

Without strong state policy interventions, the recent federal and state policy changes will widen racial and ethnic disparities, leaving Californians of color with fewer resources to stay healthy, build wealth, and achieve economic security. Protecting Medi-Cal, food assistance, and other supports while advancing more equitable tax policies is critical to ensuring all Californians can share in the state's prosperity.

2025 Previews Hardship Ahead for Californians Unless the State Takes Bold Action to Address Poverty

The quick rise of California's poverty rate to pre-pandemic levels shows that poverty is a policy choice. After the end of historic temporary investments in 2021, millions of Californians still struggle to afford basic needs. The new Census data show particularly high poverty rates among older adults and deep racial disparities that leave Black and Latinx Californians more likely to experience poverty.

The 2025 data preview the greater hardship ahead for California families if state leaders do not take bold action soon. Federal cuts to food assistance, health care, and other public supports that help lift millions out of poverty each year are likely to push poverty even higher and widen existing disparities as they begin taking effect. California has commonsense options to raise additional ongoing revenue to mitigate the harm of these cuts and make the investments necessary to reduce poverty in the long run. For example, state leaders could build on recent efforts to make corporate taxes fairer and redirect some of the billions of dollars California loses each year on tax breaks for profitable corporations to families and individuals struggling to meet basic needs. California has seen how quickly poverty can fall when families have the resources they need, and state leaders have the tools to continue building on hard-won progress.

Alissa Anderson, Hannah Orbach-Mandel, Kayla Kitson, Leslie Ortiz, Laura Pryor, Nishi Nair, Monica Saucedo, and Omar Morales contributed to this report.

^{^1} While this analysis displays Native Americans as a racial/ethnic group, the data does not specify Tribal citizenship, which reflects the political relationship between Tribal nations and the federal government. This analysis should be interpreted with that context and the known data limitations for Native Americans.



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