

**Contra Costa County Advisory Council on Aging
Health Work Group Minutes
Thursday, February 11, 2021**

Call to Order: Susan Frederick called the meeting to order at 9:30 am.

Present: Dennis Yee, Jim Donnelly, Susan Frederick, Frances Smith, Caitlyn Sly, Jennifer Doran, Fred Adams, Brian O’Toole, Sara Shafiabady, Kathie Thompson, Terri Tobey, Nancy Leasure

Absent: Joanna Kim-Selby, Nuru Neemuchwalla, Lenore McDonald

Staff: Anthony Macias

Approval of Agenda/Minutes:

- Approve Today’s Agenda_– Jennifer moved to approve the agenda, Brian seconded, unanimously approved.
- Approve Minutes of January 14, 2021 meeting - Nancy moved to approve the minutes, Frances, seconded, unanimously approved.

Presentation:

Nicole Howell, Ombudsman Services of Contra Costa, Solano and Alameda

- She said that March 16, 2020, Medicare issued a directive that there should be no visitors to congregate facilities, including Ombudsmen.
- In August, Ombudsman allowed to return to facilities. Staff tested once a week, wear N95 masks, face shields, PPE.
- CVS and Walgreen’s delivered vaccines to long-term care facilities.
- The roll-out did not go smoothly due to challenges.
- They are making good progress now: 80-90% of residents and 60% of staff have been vaccinated.
- Ombudsmen did town halls to educate families and facilities.

- Friendly visitor programs are very helpful, because “isolation is lethal”. She would like to see more trained volunteers.
- Google Home devices, such as Alexa, would be helpful; she is thinking about how they can be used in 6-bed facilities.
- Susan mentioned the use of robotic pets to ease loneliness.
- Nicole said her mantra is “Do whatever you can wherever you are.” Its time to think how we deliver services to seniors to nourish body mind, and spirit.
- She is interested in a Health Care Career Pathway, a certified nurse assistant program.
- Susan wondered how we can attract people to careers in nursing homes.

- We need to change how long-term care and support services are paid for. We need to raise standards for long-term care.

Legislation: Nancy Leasure

The Legislative Work Group met and asked us to look at the following California Legislature bills:

AB 98. Health Care: Medical Goods: Reuse Redistribution. Would establish a 3- year pilot program in Counties of Contra Costa, Napa, and Solano to facilitate the reuse and redistribution of durable medical equipment and other home health supplies.

AB 383. Mental Health: older adults. Would establish an Older Adult Mental Health Services Administrator to oversee mental health services for older adults.

SB 48. Dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Requires internists, family practitioners, physician assistants, and clinical social workers to complete 4-10 hours of medical education on the special needs of patients with dementia.

SB 56. Medi-Cal: eligibility. Would extend eligibility for full-scope Medi-Cal benefit to individuals who are 65 years of age or older, and who are otherwise eligible for those benefits but for their immigration status.

SB 107. CalFresh. Would authorize counties to implement any method of telephonic or electronic signature that is supported by county business practice and technology.

SB 221. Health care coverage: timely access to care. Would codify regulations adopted by the Department of Managed Health Care and the Department of Insurance to provide timely access standards for health care service plans and insurers for nonemergency health care services for treatment of mental health and substance use disorders.

Dementia/Alzheimer's: Jennifer Doran

Studies show that, worldwide, people with more education are less likely to get dementia. In 2020 there were 121 unique therapies and 136 trials to halt disease onset or progression. Forest fires may be a contributing factor to dementia by encouraging growth of amyloid plaques. Epigenetic factors to dementia can be alleviated by exercise and diet. Half of Alzheimer's cases are mild; 1/3 are moderate, and 19% are severe.

Nursing Homes: Fred Adams

CANHR says nursing homes use strategies to maximize their bottom line. They send residents who don't have "good" insurance out too early. They may discharge patients without written notice or without right to appeal. They are required to send discharge notices to the Ombudsman program. They may discharge patients to the hospital, then deny them the right to readmission. They may place patients in facilities that are equipped to take care of them. They may run out of Medicare coverage and are told they have to leave.

Senior Mental Health: Susan Frederick

Susan attended a Suicide Prevention Committee, which is trying to raise community awareness to erase stigma and devise strategies to prevent suicide. Recent reports indicate that suicide prevention funding is underused. There are a number of myths about suicide. The COVID19 pandemic increases isolation, which probably increases suicide attempts.

Discussion:

In her work, Sarah sees suicides, homicides, and drug overdoses.

Jim said Adult Protective Services sees more abuse, less reporting of abuse.

Susan adjourned the meeting at 11:16 am.

Minutes Reported by Nancy Leasure