

ADULT SERVICES POLICY COUNCIL 2009-2010 ANNUAL REPORT

Introduction

The State of California Department of Finance estimates that in 2008 there were over 44,000 individuals aged 62 or older in San Luis Obispo County¹. Estimates by the US Census American Community Survey indicate that in 2007 34.5% of people over the age of 62 were living with a disability; further, 10.8% of adults under the age of 62 were also living with a disability.²

Many seniors and adults living with disabilities in San Luis Obispo County are challenged in obtaining food, shelter, essential medical care and other basic human needs. Unfortunately, State and County budget cuts have continued over the past year, and funding for social service and non-profit organizations has been cut to the bone. Local organizations have downsized considerably and some, notably Linkages Case Management, which assisted and supported families and caregivers caring for people with complex and multiple support needs, had its budget so severely reduced that it closed its San Luis Obispo office effective 7/1/2010. Alzheimer Day Centers also closed its doors due to funding problems; this closure represents a huge loss to individuals and families caring for loved ones with dementia related disorders.

Access to organizations still able to provide services is often hampered by transportation issues, poor health, age or disability issues, and lack of information about available resources. Some seniors and disabled adults are too proud to seek publicly funded help. Some have little or no social support and no one knows that they are ill, hungry or without adequate medical care. These are the invisible members of our community and often the most vulnerable.

Adult Services Policy Council

The mission of the Adult Services Policy Council (ASPC) members is to work together to find ways to meet the essential needs of an expanding senior and disabled adult population. As well as identifying unmet needs, ASPC works to address those needs and to coordinate efforts between agencies. Our members represent 45 public, non-profit and private services providers, boards and commissions, and elected officials who provide health and human services to and advocate for this target population.

¹ Data Source: State of California, Department of Finance, E-3 Race / Ethnic Population Estimates with Age and Sex Detail, 2000–2008. Sacramento, CA, June 2010.

² Data source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2007.

Monthly meetings have been used to educate the member representatives, including elected officials, on the needs of our target population, to provide input on community initiatives, to discuss common concerns, to determine needed action and to work together to solve problems.

Over the past year the ASPC members have heard invited presentations covering such diverse topics as:

- Area Agency on Aging Funding
- 5-1-1 Transportation
- San Luis Obispo Regional Rideshare
- Mental Health/Restorative Policing Programs (Mental Health Court)
- Hoarding
- H1N1 Information and Planning
- AIDS Consortium
- POLST Healthcare Directive
- Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program
- Caregiver Respite Programs
- Paso Robles Senior Center
- SSI Recipients in Residential Care Facilities
- County of SLO 2009-2010 Budget

ASPC continues to sponsor the Adult and Aging Multidisciplinary Team, which consists of program supervisors from Public Health, Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Services, Adult Protective Services, the Public Guardian, and the Sheriff's Department. The Team is available to meet with service providers, family members, neighbors, and consumers to help them develop and implement the best case plan possible.

ASPC continues to monitor the progress of the First Responders' training which prepares law enforcement and emergency services workers for working with elderly and dependent adults. The First Responders' training program was made possible by CBO funding. The results have been impressive. A total of 344 first responders were trained during FY 2008-2009; followed by 156 trained during Fiscal Year 2009 – 2010. As of July 31, 2010, 46 first responders have been trained in the new Fiscal Year.³

During FY 08-09, the ASPC endorsed collaboration with the First Responder Group for Elders and Dependent Adults to develop an ELDER DEATH REVIEW TEAM for the county. Elder Death Review Teams (EDRT) were authorized by the California legislature in 2001 and permit each county to establish an inter-agency elder death team to assist local agencies in identifying and reviewing suspicious elder deaths. The EDRT facilitates communication among persons who perform autopsies and the various persons and agencies involved in elder abuse or neglect cases. San Luis Obispo County public agencies and community partners developed a protocol for both elder abuse deaths and

³ Data Source: District Attorney's Office, County of San Luis Obispo

domestic violence-related deaths (DVEDRT). On September 18, 2009, the protocol was adopted; DVEDRT's mission statement is: "to review domestic violence related and elder abuse fatalities, strengthen system policies and procedures, and identify prevention strategies to reduce future incidents of domestic violence-related and elder abuse-related injuries and death". The first San Luis Obispo County elder death review was held on February 9, 2010, and was facilitated by the District Attorney's Office at the Sheriff's Office. Future death reviews are scheduled on a quarterly basis.⁴

FINDINGS 2009 - 2010

Over the past year, the ASPC has focused its attention on the following areas:

- Abuse of seniors and disabled adults
- Healthcare for low income adults and seniors with disabilities
- In Home Support Services (IHSS)
- Long-term Care Ombudsman Program
- Coordination of services and resources to avoid duplication of effort

Abuse

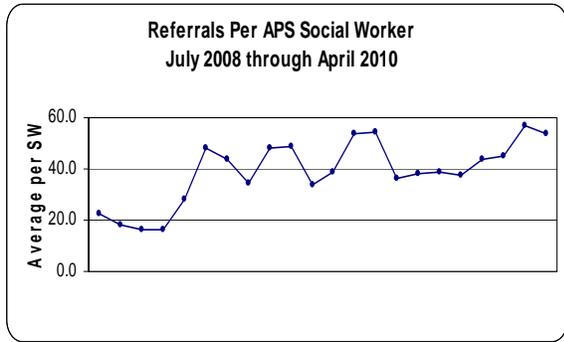
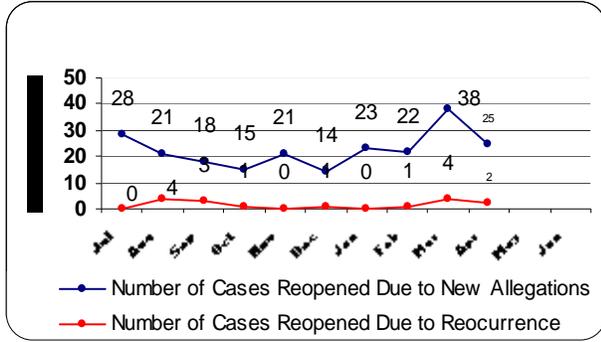
Elders and disabled adults increasingly are becoming the target of those who would take advantage of their vulnerabilities. There was an average of 89 referrals per month to Adult Protective services during the period of July 2009 through April 2010, the vast majority involving new allegations. During the prior fiscal year, APS received an average of 87.3 referrals per month. Budget cuts in late 2008 resulted in APS staff being reduced from 5.5 social workers to just 2, therefore social worker caseloads are higher and the potential wait for services is potentially longer.⁵

Law enforcement requests for prosecution of crimes against elderly and dependent adults in San Luis Obispo County have more than doubled since 2006. Based on District Attorney data, 253 criminal cases involving elderly and dependent adult victims were submitted by law enforcement agencies to the District Attorney for prosecution in 2009, compared to 129 cases in 2006.⁶

⁴ Data Source: District Attorney's Office, County of San Luis Obispo

⁵ Data Source: Department of Social Service, County of San Luis Obispo, Adult Protective Services

⁶ Data Source: District Attorney's Office, County of San Luis Obispo



At least 749 seniors lost significant funds, and in many cases their entire life savings, in the Estate Financial debacle that rocked San Luis Obispo County in 2009. The total reported losses to date in the case were \$638,382,701.78, with the majority of the 3000 investors being over the age of 65. Restitution was ordered by the court, however according to the County of San Luis Obispo’s District Attorney’s website “It is unlikely at this time that all victims will be fully compensated for their losses.”⁷

The District Attorney's Office has assigned specialized personnel to handle elder abuse cases and conduct outreach in our county. With our county’s higher than average senior population and recent cut backs to other senior services, we are concerned that further losses of elder services would result in a severely compromised safety net for victims of elder abuse and place in jeopardy community awareness programs designed to identify and prevent victimization.

Over the past several years, San Luis Obispo County District Attorney's Office for an Elder Abuse Advocacy and Outreach Project (EAAOP) has played a crucial role in training first responders and support agencies on our county’s First Responder Protocol for Incidents Involving Elders and Dependent Adults. In addition, EAAOP staff has served as key collaborative partners on the Adult Abuse Prevention Council and the First Responder Group for Elders and Dependent Adults. Over the past 10 years, the EAAOP has provided crisis and support services to over 3,000 elderly and dependent adult victims and family members and has conducted over 250 trainings and presentations in our community. The Project is an integral component of our county’s services for victimized elders and an invaluable resource for community awareness.

Healthcare

State budget cuts resulted in the County of San Luis Obispo revising its contract with the Community Health Centers, which provides primary healthcare to low-income seniors and disabled people in our community. ASPC members have monitored the subsequent financial challenges faced by the CHC and their efforts to continue to effectively provide services. Attention has also been focused on Public Health and Mental Health issues including preparations for an anticipated H1N1 pandemic, implementation of the federally mandated Physician’s Order for Life Support Treatment (POLST), hoarding, dementia, AIDS, and caregiver respite programs.

⁷ Data Source: District Attorney’s Office, County of San Luis Obispo

IHSS

The State of California budget problems have created a great deal of concern regarding the wellbeing of the nearly 1,700 elderly and disabled citizens who receive In-Home Support Services in San Luis Obispo County and the impact reductions would have on the 1,600 caregivers, many of whom are family members, who provide them with the assistance they need to remain safely at home rather than having to move into a costly long term care facility.⁸ As well as reducing cost of care, the IHSS program brings tax dollars into the County. Between July 2009 and April 2010, approximately \$1,549,880 in wages was paid to caregivers and in all but a very few cases, 50% of those wages were funded by federal tax dollars.⁹ This is a sizable contribution to our local economy. In addition, caregivers who work a minimum of 80 hours per month for two out of three consecutive months are potentially eligible for a health benefit plan. There is a cap on the number of providers who can enroll in the plan that limits the number of individuals who can enroll; at this time 277 caregivers receive this benefit.¹⁰

ASPC has monitored legislative actions that impact the IHSS program and have been updated on a monthly basis regarding the local IHSS situation. Initial reductions to the program proposed in 2009 have, for the most part, been delayed by court injunctions. Nonetheless, the concept of the “Good Neighbor” program was generated at an ASPC meeting and members are actively involved in developing and implementing the program which will provide assistance to seniors and disabled adults so they can continue to live safely and independently at home.

Long-term Care Ombudsman Program

During the past fiscal year, the Long-term Care Ombudsman’s program in California was all but decimated due to State budget cuts. Our local LTCO’s office receives no state funding whatsoever. Fortunately, thanks to a generous bequest, the San Luis Obispo office has been able to remain open and has continued to provide services to individuals residing in licensed care facilities, although there has been a loss of staff. The Long-term Care Ombudsman’s office has played a significant role in planning for patients who are displaced for a variety of reasons. Most recently, the office was involved in working with state and federal officials in making arrangements for mass relocation of patients staying in North County facilities that were closed with very short notice for illegal immigration practices. In addition, when several local care facilities closed in the past year due to financial problems, the Ombudsman’s office assisted in locating new residences for patients. ASPC has supported the Long-term Care Ombudsman’s office by monitoring legislative acts that impact the office, and by writing letters of support to legislative officials as needed.

Coordination of services and resources

ASPC is working in conjunction with Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) to develop, implement and maintain the “Good Neighbor” program. “Good Neighbor” is collaborating

⁸ Data Source: Department of Social Services, County of San Luis Obispo, In-Home Support Service

⁹ Data Source: Department of Social Services, County of San Luis Obispo, IHSS Statistical Report

¹⁰ Data Source: San Luis Obispo County Public Authority

with Wilshire Community Services, and will match volunteers with elders and disabled adults seeking assistance in daily activities such as transport, shopping, and home maintenance and repair, regardless of income levels. Given the likelihood of ongoing budget cuts to social service programs, this collaboration is necessary to ensure a valuable safety net to allow our senior citizens to remain safe and independent in their homes.

ASPC members continue to share information and resources that maximizes the effectiveness of our organizations by minimizing duplicate efforts and conserving available resources.

Goals for 2010-2011

The ASPC's focus in the coming year will include:

- Ongoing monitoring of legislative and budgetary actions
- Advocacy for seniors and disabled adults
- Identification of translation services which can be utilized to better individuals who speak languages other than English or Spanish.
- Implementation and sustainability of "Good Neighbor" program
- Serve as a resource to educate the community and inspire awareness and action that promote improvement in the quality of life for seniors and disabled persons.

The members of the ASPC thank the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors for its support and participation over the past year, and look forward to many productive years to come.