

## ***COA Brainstorming Meeting June 2025***

The annual 'Brainstorming Meeting' of the San Luis Obispo County Commission on Aging was held June 25, 2025. The event was well attended, the enthusiasm and participation of those involved was unsurpassed. The event was a huge success in both numbers and conversations. Approximately 35 Commission on Aging members and community partners filled the meeting room. After ground rules were explained and instructions were provided, the two-hour session began.

Participants shouted out ideas. The ideas were quickly written down on a whiteboard and then, as a united body, we organized the data. We created six main areas of concern and needs for our seniors. We spent the second half of the session creating sub-topics to prioritizing those concerns for seniors for our 2025-2026 focus. We discussed future presentations including our proposed communication to the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors, community senior advocates, and other helping agencies.

Listed below are the decided upon critical concerns and needs for our San Luis Obispo County seniors. These issues were expressed by the 35 Commission on Aging members and community partners who participated in the June 25, 2025, Brainstorming Meeting. Based on the Brainstorming Meeting's participants, the ranking order of the concerns and needs is by importance (with #1A and #1b tied for first place).

### **#1a. Health and Well-being (includes Medical)**

1. Improve/change SLO county 'rural-urban' status to provide seniors with better care and priority medical attention including:
  - a. timely access to medical appointments to prevent mild health symptoms from developing into critical or life-threatening conditions.
  - b. improved specialty services including geriatric specialist physicians and staff who honor our elders.
  - c. senior hording/mental health awareness, attention and focus, and action and funding for clean-up and/or relocation.
  - d. nutrition and hydration education, and weekly monitoring by specialists.
  - e. medication and drug interaction reviews for all seniors, and weekly medication management by qualified providers.
2. Ongoing nutrition/hydration services, education, and specialists for homebound and active seniors.
3. Paid or volunteer medical advocacy support to navigate
  - a. making/changing appointments,
  - b. filling out forms (including digital challenges),
  - c. accompanying seniors during healthcare visits (a 'Medi-Pal').
4. Funding and support for senior centers to provide seminars, classes, and programs related to senior education, information, health, socialization, suicide prevention, and well-being and more.

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5. Free classes for senior exercise, core strengthening and fall prevention, increase number of Medicare senior exercise programs in fitness centers and senior centers countywide (like Silver Sneakers).
6. Accessible venues and opportunities for senior companionship; including transportation from central locations (north, mid, south county) to scenic drives, lunches/dinners, group adventures – “Party Bus”!
7. Hoarding Task Force (mobile unit) to address, evaluate, and mitigate severe and harmful senior hoarding cases.
8. More access to healthy food and meals/hydration for homebound seniors – identify isolated seniors and provide senior-friendly monitoring and nutrition/hydration service.

## **#1b. Housing – Senior Friendly Low Cost, High Accessibility**

1. Housing Developer education, awareness, and mandates to build safe and accessible homes for seniors, at a cost they can afford, (not limited to):
  - a. walk-in showers, grab bars, eliminate glass shower doors (replace with shower curtains), shower-head extensions, and more.
  - b. single level entrance and interior, ramps and rails, easy open/close windows and doors, raised toilet seats and handrail options, and more.
2. Home Modifications for aging in place seniors to remain in their own (paid for) homes (no or low cost- use grants?).
3. More housing opportunities for homeless/low-income seniors; safe and secure, single level, dorm-style, co-op, shared opportunities, volunteer advocates and helpers to promote community supported living.
4. Medi-Cal Waivers and LTC (long term care insurance) assistance for ‘board and care’ homes, ‘assisted living’, and ‘senior living’ communities (to provide more subsidized housing options for secure senior living).
5. Aging in place community support; young volunteers (high school-college-young people clubs-or?) on call for household tasks, changing air filters, light bulbs, smoke detector batteries, yard work, minor maintenance etc.
6. Senior Foster Program - state subsidy for fostering a senior in private homes.

## **#2. Mobility and Transportation**

1. Door-to door reliable round-trip transportation to doctor appointments within SLO County. Low or no cost transportation to major medical facilities appointments outside of SLO County.
2. Lower rates for senior transportation (some county provided programs have recently increased rates). Need more options (including employee training) for safe, affordable, and senior-friendly travel.
3. Free/low-cost hop-on-hop-off vans/buses with low adaptive on/off steps and grab rails, that loop around the (north, mid, south) county daily and cover the county’s most popular senior

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stops like pharmacies, grocery stores, senior centers, medical centers, parks and recreation.

4. Senior Party Buses! Senior Destination Buses! (combat isolation) To bring seniors together and provide companionship opportunities, sightseeing inland county, along the coast, or specific destinations for fun and entertainment (casino, dancing, shows, plays...).
5. More 'SLO Village Movement' model communities, including free in-home services and transport door-to-door. <https://www.slovillage.net/> "SLO Village Movement is a non-profit, membership organization focused on empowering older adults to sustain independence and continue living lives of purpose and promise through social connection, personal growth, community-minded support, and helpful services."

## #3. Financial Assistance and Planning

1. Work with banks to provide complementary monthly financial planning:
  - a. assist senior to set up auto-pay if desired.
  - b. provide budget monitoring help for all seniors.
2. Request county government to advocate for Assisted Living Facility waivers for San Luis Obispo County seniors.  
<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/ltc/Pages/AssistedLivingWaiver.aspx>
3. Create and send out teams of 'Bankers without Borders' to visit **countywide** Senior Centers, Assisted Living and Skilled Nursing facilities, Veterans Centers, Churches, and rural/isolated areas to provide complementary financial planning, set-up auto-pay, and budget monitoring monthly.
4. Dedicated grant writers specifically focused on senior needs for aging in place or moving; costs of relocating (sorting, packing, unpacking, organizing, etc.), downsizing, hoarding maintenance, adaptive devices, safety home modifications (ramps, rails, grab bars, walk-in showers, doorway widening, etc).

## #4. Technology – Encouraged, Explained, Educated

1. Provide one-on-one computer and smart phone training at ALL Countywide senior centers, libraries, assisted living facilities, and Veterans centers. Utilize retired teachers and tech savvy people, request help from high school or college students, public libraries, anyone looking for community service opportunities.
2. Complementary 'life alert' tracking, fall monitoring systems with volunteer person to deliver, set-up, and instruct senior on use and maintenance, and follow-up monthly to check on equipment and senior's well-being.
3. Create easy to follow, step-by-step, senior-friendly, simple educational technology videos that seniors can watch at home, or at Senior Centers, Assisted Living and Skilled Nursing facilities, Veterans Centers, Churches, etc.

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## #5. Education and Communication

1. Senior One-Stop 'clearing houses (no wrong door' resource centers) where seniors can find answers and help in a 'one stop' visit. One-Stop Centers located in senior centers, community centers, churches, shopping malls/centers, libraries... and portable/mobile pop-up at resource fairs, assisted living, rehabs, retirement communities, and other events throughout the county providing:
  - a. information and assistance (with calls, forms, technology, financial info...),
  - b. County services information and explanations of services and benefits
  - c. guidance for independent living resources
  - d. triage for senior challenges and navigating health, housing and transportation issues
  - e. transportation hub for hop-on-hop-off adaptive vans/buses
2. Mobile educational classes and lectures monthly+ and methodically moving throughout the county (north, mid, south) providing support and information on senior needs, i.e.;
  - a. scam information/intervention,
  - b. how to use 211 if you are hearing impaired
  - c. public transportation support
  - d. fall prevention class/demo
  - e. chronic health condition management
  - f. preparing for end-of-life (POLST, Fiduciary, trusts-wills...)
  - g. budget/money management
  - h. medication education and management
3. Communication education for the young work force on how to effectively speak with seniors in person and on the phones (slow, clear, facing them, mindfulness of hearing and vision issues, patience and tolerance).