

IMPACT Committee Report: Master Plan for Aging's Year 2 In Review

May 2023

After the release of California's Master Plan for Aging ("MPA" or "Plan") in January 2021, the California Department of Aging (CDA) appointed and convened the *Implementing the Master Plan for Aging in California Together (IMPACT) Stakeholder Committee* to provide guidance on implementation of the Plan. With diverse representation and expertise, the IMPACT Committee focuses on accountability, outcomes, and continued improvement toward the realization of the five bold goals of the MPA:

- **Goal 1:** Housing for All Ages and Stages
- **Goal 2:** Health Reimagined
- **Goal 3:** Inclusion & Equity, Not Isolation
- **Goal 4:** Caregiving that Works
- **Goal 5:** Affording Aging

Now two years into the implementation of the Plan, the IMPACT Committee has prepared this report to provide feedback on MPA implementation to date and to provide recommendations for moving forward. The report is divided into two sections. The first section highlights five important successes from the second year of MPA implementation:

- Community Engagement
- Local Jurisdictions
- All of Government Approach to Aging
- Positive Changes in Policy and Programs
- Roll-out of new MPA initiatives

The second section provides three high level recommendations for the continued implementation of the MPA. Those recommendations are:

1. Building a home care system that works for all Californians
2. End older adult homelessness in California
3. Use the MPA to advance equity in aging

Section 1: Feedback on Year 2 of MPA Implementation

Overall, the second year of implementation of the MPA has been very positive. The CDA leadership team and committees were able to dive deeper into the work of implementing initiatives while also working broadly with stakeholders to determine the initiatives for years 3 and 4 of implementation. Significant budget investments were made in programs to support older adults and people with disabilities. Local engagement and support have been robust, laying the foundation for continued momentum and progress and keeping key aging and disability stakeholders engaged and excited.

Community Engagement

The aging and disability communities have been committed to the MPA since day one – even before day one. Older adults and people with disabilities themselves, community organizations, aging advocates, academics, service providers, and philanthropy were all very involved in the planning process, and they remain interested and engaged as we move into year 3 of implementation.

CDA and the Administration have done a very good job at harnessing the immense interest and willingness to participate in the MPA implementation. It is a testament to the team’s successful and ongoing community engagement, and how much the aging and disability communities are still excited and motivated to implement the MPA. One example is the nearly 1,000 individuals that came to the CA for All Ages and Abilities Day of Action in September 2022. That event was a critical organizing opportunity for the next few years of MPA implementation

Local Jurisdictions

Seventy-four local mayors or county supervisors and their jurisdictions also demonstrated support for MPA goals during this reporting period. At the beginning of 2021, top elected officials from 51 local jurisdictions, both municipalities and counties, had joined AARP’s Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities (NAFSC) and made a 5-year commitment to engaging local residents, including older adults, in planning and implementing an Action Plan to advance communities that are more livable for people of all ages and abilities. The age-friendly framework equips local leaders and residents with resources for assessing the needs of older adults related to housing and transportation options, access to key services and supports, and opportunities for residents to engage in civic and social community activities. By the end of 2022, an additional 23 jurisdictions enrolled in the NAFSC, and in support of the MPA, the State of California also joined the Network, becoming the 8th state in the U.S. to do so. Together, the 74 local jurisdictions represent over 22 million of the state’s total population.

Also, in 2022, the California State Legislature included a \$4.5 million line item in the state budget, which was signed into law by the Governor, to provide grants to jurisdictions that want to make the age- and disability-friendly communities commitment with a focus on rural, multicultural, tribal, and communities with populations under 200,000. CDA immediately moved to build an internal infrastructure to support the grant application and award process in 2023.

All of Government Approach to Aging

While CDA is leading the Administration on implementing the MPA, the MPA is not the plan of just one department or one agency. The MPA reflects the reality that all policy is aging policy, with MPA initiatives spanning nearly every agency across state government. This all of government approach has been key in making progress on the MPA’s goals, for example CDA’s participation on the Behavioral Health Task Force and funds received to address behavioral health needs of older adults.

Positive Changes in Policy and Programs

While we still have many years left to implement the MPA, we must recognize and applaud the investments that have already been made in just these first two years. The Administration and the Legislature were able

to leverage the MPA and the positive budgets of the past two years to make specific investments that are improving older adults' lives right now.

There have been billions of dollars in new investments. The state has made health care more affordable by expanding Medi-Cal coverage to more than 330,000 undocumented older adults and eliminating the asset test for older adults and people with disabilities who qualify for the program, which the state estimates will help almost 18,000 people upon full implementation in January 2024. The state has increased the economic security of the poorest older adults by increasing the SSP for people on SSI. The maximum monthly Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/ State Supplementary Payment (SSP) grant for an individual is \$1,133.73 and \$1,927.62 for a couple. There are over 560,000 older adults receiving SSI in California. The state has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in new housing opportunities through the Community Care Expansion program, and the state has expanded funding for a number of aging services.

All of these investments make a tangible difference in the lives of older adults and people with disabilities, and despite the more difficult budget outlook the state has this year, we must maintain these important investments, which serve as the building blocks for future MPA initiatives.

Rollout of New MPA Initiatives

The IMPACT committee commends CDA for the rollout of the new 2023-2024 MPA initiatives. We appreciate that CDA convened the advisory committees, partners, and stakeholders in September for the CA for All Ages and Abilities Day of Action to start the process of getting input on the new initiatives and was able to incorporate much of that feedback into the new initiatives. Additionally, the announcement event in January and the inclusion of partners and community members was greatly appreciated.

The IMPACT committee is also pleased to see the creation of the MPA Implementation Tracker, which was something that we and other committees had requested. The committee requests an explanation from CDA on how the initiatives in years 1 and 2 that were not completed, but not included in the year 3 and 4 initiatives, will continue to be tracked. We also seek additional information on initiatives that are active, but do not have an update. And finally, we request clarification from the Department on what criteria is being used to deem an initiative complete.

In the [2023-2024 initiatives](#), there is a new set of designations for initiatives: deliver, analyze, and communicate. We would note that many of the new initiatives are more focused on “analyze” rather than deliver, with many of the deliver initiatives being programs already underway and not new programs. We encourage the state to define a clear pathway to turning ‘analyze’ initiatives into ‘deliver’ initiatives.

Section 2: Recommendations for Continued Implementation of the MPA

To accomplish the Plan's bold goals, these next years of implementation must be clearly focused on the big issues that older adults and people with disabilities in California face, and equity must be made a principal focus.

Building A Home Care System that Works for All Californians

The majority of older adults and people with disabilities want to live at home, even as their needs for care

change – but California lacks an affordable, inclusive, and equitable system to support them. Right now, too many Californians cannot afford in-home care. Many people – especially those with complex needs and people of color – are forced to receive their care in institutional settings, like nursing facilities. With adequate funding, California can build a system that everyone can afford, is easy to navigate, and whose services are accessible at the time and in the settings people prefer.

It's time to get serious and build a robust, comprehensive system for providing care to older adults and people with disabilities at home and in their communities. We appreciate that the 2023-2024 initiatives include specific investments in building on our long-term services and supports (LTSS) system:

- **Initiative 18:** Continuing to evaluate options for a universal LTSS benefit
- **Initiative 19:** Continuing work on the home and community-based services (HCBS) roadmap
- **Initiative 20:** Implementation of the HCBS settings rules
- **Initiative 23:** Implementation of the California Community Transitions program and the Community Living Fund
- **Initiative 24:** Continuing to expand access to the Assisted Living Waiver, HCBS Alternatives Waiver, Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), Community-Based Adult Services (CBAS) and Multi-Purpose Senior Services Program (MSSP)
- **Initiative 57:** Assess community living and LTSS needs of LGBTQ+ older adults
- **Initiative 70:** Plan for a statewide web portal on aging and disability services
- **Initiative 81:** Utilize data to better understand unmet needs of family caregivers

While these initiatives are all important steps to build on our LTSS system, we need more firm commitment to move forward a universal LTSS proposal. Additionally, many of the initiatives are focused on analyzing or studying proposals, but we need more clarity on how these will turn into new programs or benefits for older adults and people with disabilities. We would also recommend that the LTSS initiatives have more of an intersection and focus on equity, especially given the disproportionate impact on caregiving and homecare responsibilities on women of color. Finally, any investments in our LTSS system must have a focus on supporting, training, and building the workforce needed – both for unpaid family caregivers and the paid workforce.

With strong investments in at-home care and support, California can lead the nation to ensure everyone can get the help they need to live with dignity as they age and prevent aging into poverty.

End Older Adult Homelessness in California

Older adults are the fastest growing part of the homeless population in most parts of the state. In some counties, older adults now make up half of the homeless population and significant numbers of older adults who are homeless experienced homelessness for the first time after age 50. Since 2017, the number of unhoused older adults over the age of 65 has increased by more than 163%. The primary drivers of the surge in older adult homelessness in California are unsustainable rent burdens and an inadequate supply of affordable, accessible, and stable housing. Black older Californians face a substantially higher risk of homelessness. Thirty-six percent of people experiencing homelessness of all ages report disabling conditions, and that percentage is much higher for older adults experiencing homelessness.

While we appreciate that there have been significant budget investments in addressing homelessness over the last several years, none of this money has been specifically targeted to older adults and the unique issue of older adult homelessness. We need dedicated attention, dedicated strategies, dedicated funding for older adults experiencing homelessness as well as dedicated funding and strategies to help older adults who are at risk of imminent homelessness to remain housed. Once older adults become homeless, it is much more difficult and expensive to rehouse and stabilize them. The committee urges CDA and the Administration to focus on homeless prevention as a key strategy to meeting the goal of ending older adult homelessness.

One specific type of support the IMPACT Committee recommends is creating a targeted rental subsidy program that will provide very low-income older adults and people with disabilities with the support they need to attain and maintain housing.

We appreciate that in the 2023-2024 initiatives, initiatives 1 and 2 are specific to addressing the crisis of older adult homelessness. However, we seek a stronger commitment to ensure that these initiatives are implemented. Specifically, for initiative 2, which commits to analyzing the rental subsidy program that the IMPACT Committee has been recommending, we are formally requesting CDA and BCSH provide specific timelines and deliverables for this research. Rental subsidy programs are already a proven model to stabilizing housing for older adults, and preventing homelessness. The longer we wait to implement a statewide program, the deeper we will fall into the crisis of older adult homelessness. Analysis of the programs and proposed expansions should be prioritized.

Additionally, part of the crisis of older adult homelessness has been fueled by economic instability for older adults. For ten years, the SSP program was dramatically cut, resulting in less cash resources for older adults. But also in those ten years, rents have dramatically increased, and the cost of living has skyrocketed due to historic levels of inflation. However, older adults on SSI/SSP have been stuck on a fixed income that is inadequate to keep up with the rising costs of housing. In the initial MPA initiatives, there was a commitment to increase grant amounts over time to the FPL and then the Elder Index; that language has been removed in the 2023-2024 initiatives. We implore CDA and the administration to take this investment seriously and reinstate this goal in the year 3 and 4 initiatives given that it is a key piece to preventing and ending older adult homelessness.

The number of homeless older adults in California is a tragedy – a preventable tragedy. We know we can fix this problem, but we must be serious about investing the resources and attention needed.

Use the MPA to Advance Equity in Aging

The work to implement the MPA must have a continued and increased focus on racial equity, and on the intersection of race and ethnicity with gender identity, sexual orientation, disability and other identities. For generations, systemic racism and the resulting inequities in health care, housing, and access to wealth and resources have kept people of color, women, LGBTQ+ individuals, those living with disabilities, immigrants, and those with limited English proficiency from accessing the full array of opportunities and supports provided to other groups. And when people from these communities age, these challenges become even greater due to the compounding effects of the discrimination they have faced throughout their lives and the new, unique impact of ageism.

Equity needs to be embedded in all the investments of the MPA, including our specific recommendations on building up our LTSS system and addressing older adult homelessness. We appreciate that there are a number of equity focused initiatives in the 2023-2024 initiatives, including:

- **Initiative 25:** Supporting older adults transitioning to community living from incarceration
- **Initiative 52:** Using the Executive Order on equity to expand MPA equity-based initiatives
- **Initiative 57:** Assess community living and LTSS needs of LGBTQ+ older adults
- **Initiative 63:** Explore opportunities to support aging farmworkers
- **Initiative 79:** Partner with Caregiver Resource Center and Area Agencies on Aging to ensure that assessments of family caregiver programs track equity metrics
- **Initiative 82:** Develop a statewide caregiver equity roadmap and strategy

The IMPACT Committee seeks additional information and specific details on the timeline and deliverables for all equity initiatives.

In Year 3, we strongly recommend that California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS) and CDA implement a more robust and intentional racial equity strategy in the highest priority initiatives:

- Build a home care system by developing and implementing the HCBS roadmap (Initiative 19)
- End older adult homelessness by implementing a targeted rental subsidy program and increasing SSI/SSP grant amounts (Initiative 2 and 91)
- Invest in the caregiver workforce to ensure good jobs and good care (Initiative 82)

For each of these three high priority initiatives, we recommend a multi-prong equity approach. We believe this approach is critical to ensure that equity is truly “baked in” to the Master Plan.

First, CDA should develop a racial equity analysis of the current situation to assess and articulate the disparate impact on communities of color and the intersectional experiences of older Californians of color. With this analysis in hand, CDA (and implementing departments and agencies) should do the following:

- Establish an **equitable and transparent process** for the development of the strategy or initiative by meaningfully engaging diverse communities in the design, implementation, and evaluation.
- Create **clear goals and outcome measures** that advance racial equity within the initiative and are both bold and achievable.
- Develop a **strategy for allocating sufficient resources** within the initiative using equity-focused tools and indicators.
- **Collect data** on the development and implementation of the initiative that allows for continual evaluation of the racial equity impacts and make this data publicly accessible.

Furthermore, advancing equity requires elevating the voice and lived experience of impacted communities, and the MPA stakeholder process should be evaluated with this in mind. The Equity in Aging and Disability Advisory Committee should continue its important work and should be given a leading role in the rollout of the three initiatives above. The Committee should be actively engaged in the implementation of this framework in quarterly meetings and more. All other MPA committees, including the IMPACT Committee, should also integrate equity into their work using an analysis framework like the one above.

Finally, future reporting on the MPA should focus specifically on how initiatives undertaken are advancing equity for older adults with disabilities, older adults of color, LGBTQ+ older adults, older women, older immigrants, and older adults who are limited English proficient.

Conclusion

The IMPACT Committee is grateful for the Governor's leadership to date and for the work of CDA and other agencies and departments to implement the MPA over the past two years. We value the role of the Governor as a thought leader in this area, and welcome him being a vocal and visible champion for older adults. For instance, with May being Older Americans Month and June being Elder Abuse Awareness Month, the Committee would welcome engagement from the Governor to uplift the work of the MPA during these events and elsewhere.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback and recommendations via this report and our continued meetings. Much has been accomplished over the first two years, and considerable work remains to meet the growing and evolving needs of California's aging population. California's work on the MPA continues to be the gold standard nationwide, and it is a testament to the collective work of stakeholders and government that many other states are working to replicate California's model. We look forward to encouraging accountable execution of the Plan; leveraging opportunities; and partnering with the Legislature, Administration, and other community stakeholders to build a California for all ages during this third year of implementation and beyond.