

# SENIOR UPDATE

Issue

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2026

## THE EYES AND EARS OF ALAMEDA COUNTY SENIORS

### Page 3

**The Area Agency on Aging (AAA)** coordinates and supports aging in place at home aided by services which make independent living a viable option for older adults. We partnered with Public Health for the Happy Heart Campaign, providing life-saving blood pressure screening and free blood pressure monitors.

### Page 8

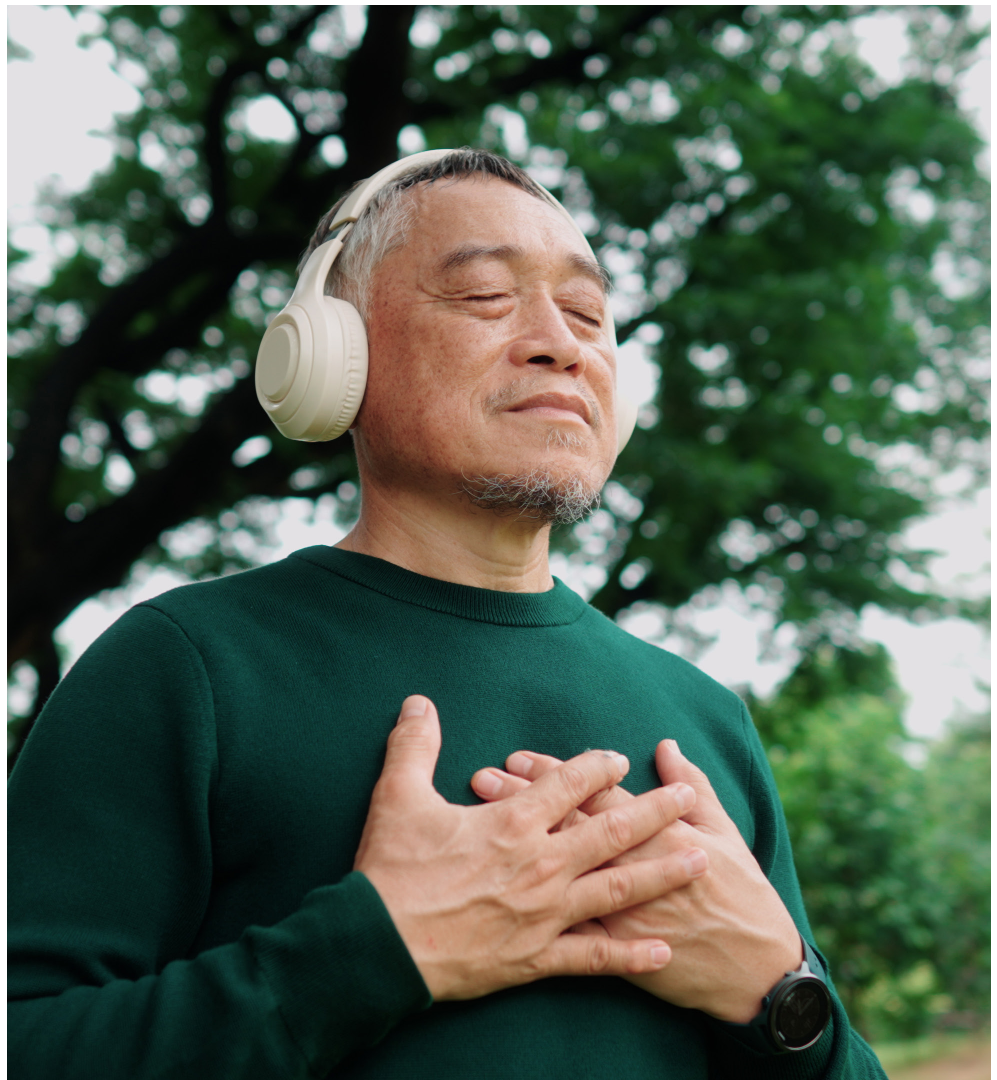
**June is Elder Abuse Awareness Month.** By 2040, 1 in 5 Americans will be over 65, increasing vulnerability and risks for elder abuse. The State of California recognizes eight types of abuse, and state lawmakers are changing laws to make prosecution of elder abuse cases easier. Learn how to identify risks for and signs of elder abuse, and what to do if you suspect elder abuse.

### Page 14

**Mental Health Awareness Month.** Mental health is essential to your overall health and quality of life. Connection is protection, and you don't have to carry the weight of "not-so-good" days alone. Connecting with others, whether in person or virtually, can reduce stress and anxiety, and remind us that we're not the only ones feeling what we're feeling.

### Page 16

**May is Older American's Month.** Every May, the Administration for Community Living (ACL) leads the nation's observance of Older Americans Month, a time to recognize older Americans' contributions, highlight aging trends, and reaffirm our commitment to serving older adults. The 2026 theme, *Champion Your Health*, focuses on prevention, wellness, and personal responsibility as cornerstones of healthy aging.



### May 2026: Mental Health Awareness Month

This campaign aims to educate the public about various mental health disorders and promote the importance of mental health care and support. It encourages open conversations, reduces stigma, and advocates for accessible mental health services for all

# Spotlight

## In this issue...

Spotlight.....	2
ACA Vision Statement.....	3
AAA Quarterly Update.....	4
Featured Content	
Identifying and Preventing Elder Abuse in Alameda County .....	8
Older Americans Month: Champion Your Health in 2026.....	16
Healthy Living / Healthy Aging	
Heart Healthy Recipe: Pinto Bean and Roasted Veggie Tacos.....	7
Senior Fitness Tips .....	13
Mental Health Awareness Month .....	14
Senior Friendly Events.....	18
Helpful Resources.....	19
Announcements.....	20
Upcoming ACA Meetings.....	20

### About Senior Update...

The Senior Update is a newsletter which provides support, information, and education to Alameda County adults aged 50 and over. The Senior Update is published quarterly by the Alameda County Advisory Commission on Aging (ACA) in collaboration with the Area Agency on Aging (AAA), and The County of Alameda Social Services Agency, Department of Adult & Aging Services.

**To subscribe to The Senior Update by email or US Mail, please call the Senior Information & Assistance Line at (510) 577-3530 or log onto <https://t.ly/4dOZy>**

## The Advisory Commission on Aging

### Welcome Commissioner Helen Mayfield

“What I have learned through the years as part of life is to share and care for others, support when needed through love, respect and compassion. I was a care provider for my parents as they aged. I have one son, four grandchildren, five great grandchildren. I have volunteered for more than 50 years in support of children, teenagers, young adults/adults, seniors from diverse communities in Southern California (Watts, South Central), Washington State (West, East) and the East Bay. My volunteerism in the art world (Watts Simon Rodia Art and Cultural Center), diverse/faith-based communities, civic groups and being part of family has greatly enriched my life and knowledge. I look forward to working with the ACA over the next two years to better the lives of older adults in Alameda County.”



## We Need Your Voice! How to Join the Advisory Commission on Aging

The County of Alameda Advisory Commission on Aging (ACA) is a federally mandated advisory council. Our mission is to promote the dignity, independence and quality of life of older persons and the disabled through programs, services, advocacy and information.

### Qualifications:

Per the Older Americans Act, membership in ACA shall be composed of: (a) a majority of persons 60 years or older; (b) service providers; (c) members who reflect the geographic, racial, economic, and social complexion of the area they represent; and (d) at least one member who represents the interests of the disabled.

**Term (Seats)** Four (4) years; maximum of two (2) terms.

**Maximum Number of Members:** 21

### Meeting Dates/Time:

Scheduled for the 2nd Monday of each month from 9:30-12:00 noon.

### How to Apply:

Log onto <https://www.acgov.org/bnc/#/vacant-seats>, then click “Apply For a Seat on This Board” to complete application. We strongly suggest you follow up with an email to Ms. Stephens-Pierre (see below) to help us track your paperwork.

To learn more information about meetings, agenda items, etc., please contact Jennifer Stephens-Pierre, Director, Area Agency on Aging, 510-577-1966 or email [jspierre@acgov.org](mailto:jspierre@acgov.org).

# ACA Vision Statement

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The Alameda County Advisory Commission on Aging (ACA) acts in an advisory and oversight capacity for the Area Agency on Aging (which channels local, state, and national funds to agencies that serve seniors and oversees their operations). *We envision an Alameda County where every older adult ages with dignity, independence, and equitable access to the resources and care needed to thrive.*

We have 11 out of 21 seats filled currently, and we represent all areas of Alameda County. Our members range from former CEOs to social workers to business consultants and finance professionals!

**ADVISORY COMMISSION ON AGING**



**ACA**

**COUNTY OF ALAMEDA**

The ACA has been working with Catherine Payne, Social Services Staff Development Specialist, on a vision statement for Alameda County seniors. Our diverse perspectives and backgrounds have informed our work, but there is a surprising amount of agreement as to what constitutes successful and fulfilling aging. We all want to maintain our independence and feel valued in our communities. We want to have access to the things we need. And we want to feel safe and be well.

As Commissioner Johnny O'Brien stated: "my vision for aging in Alameda County is that every older adult feels safe, heard, and respected with the freedom and equitable support to age independently and with dignity."

Commissioner Regina Guillory shared that "the goal of the ACA Advisory Commission is to identify, address, and deliver solutions in a timely, effective, and collective manner."

Per Commissioner Priscilla Banks: "through engagement, support, and wellness initiatives, we aim to provide opportunities for lifelong learning, social interaction, and active participation." And Commissioner Dori Ellis added that "all seniors in Alameda County should have a sense of belonging in their communities and access to supporting services with dignity and ease."

Finally, Commissioner Michael Goetz summed it up nicely with: "We want to live in a county where aging is celebrated, empowering residents to maintain health, exercise personal choice, and find contentment in their daily lives."

*What is your vision for aging in Alameda County?*

Join us at an upcoming Commission meeting by sending an email to [aaa@acgov.org](mailto:aaa@acgov.org) for a Zoom link to meetings, or check out [How to Join the Commission](#) as set out on the bottom of page two at left.

# Area Agency on Aging

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## Year in Review: Area Agency on Aging (AAA)

This past year, the Alameda County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) touched the lives of approximately 80,000 older adults and caregivers. A few examples include:

- A 104-year-old “regular” enjoyed socializing while eating nutritious meals at one of our congregate meal programs.
- A caregiver was able to go to their own doctor’s appointments thanks to respite care for their loved one.
- A woman used her fall prevention training to keep upright after tripping on something outside - to cheers of “nice save!” from young onlookers.
- A man who had never used the stove in his senior apartment attended AAA’s CalFresh Healthy Living classes and learned to prepare healthy meals and snacks to help control his blood pressure and diabetes.



*Deborrah Cooper (center), Area Agency on Aging, Program Specialist, guides participants at the Mastick Senior Center on using the “fruits and vegetables wheel” for meal planning.*

2025 was also the year that the AAA:

- Accepted a national award on the County’s behalf for Healthcare Career Pathways. This innovative partnership recruits, trains, and assists disadvantaged job seekers in becoming Certified Nursing Assistants, helping address the shortage of healthcare workers for older adults.

# AAA Quarterly Update

- Implemented a new electronic card system that enabled about 1,550 older residents to buy fresh vegetables and other nutritious foods at the County's farmers markets.
- Led the Board of Supervisors, Advisory Commission on Aging, and volunteers from County staff and the community to deliver 50 holiday baskets to isolated, homebound older adults.

## February Happy Heart Month Initiative

by Deborah Cooper, Program Specialist - Senior Health & Nutrition



The AAA partnered with the Public Health Community Health Services Nutrition Services unit to promote the Happy Heart initiative with a "Lower Your Blood Pressure!" educational and informational event on February 23rd and February 26th. Blood pressure measures the total amount of force your blood pushes against the walls of your arteries. It measures two numbers and is presented as two figures,

one over the other. Systolic (top number) measures the pressure of your blood on the artery walls as your heart beats; the Diastolic (bottom number) measures the pressure when your heart rests between beats. Ideal blood pressure is 120/80 or below.

High blood pressure means your heart is working much harder than it should be. Left untreated, high blood pressure significantly increases the risk of having a heart attack, stroke, brain aneurysm, heart failure, kidney failure, clogged arteries creating blockages in the legs, and dementia. High blood pressure also can lead to sexual dysfunction and vision problems, including blindness.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for most racial and ethnic groups in the United States (1 in every 5 deaths). But the good news is that you can lower your risks with education, screenings, and by making healthy food choices.

The Happy Heart initiative is a countywide effort to promote heart health. To augment the nutritional education component of Happy Heart, AAA held two free blood pressure screenings in the Eastmont Mall Self-Sufficiency Center.

Blood pressure checks were administered by friendly and supportive public health nurses (Michelle Burke, Aileen Haxo, Cynthia Fong, Cassidy Chase, Susana Chan and Delia Harewood). Participants with readings in Hypertension Zone 1 or above were provided a free portable blood pressure monitor (used at the wrist), to help them monitor their blood pressure daily at home or work.

Though one high reading isn't necessarily indicative of hypertension, testers were advised



# Area Agency on Aging

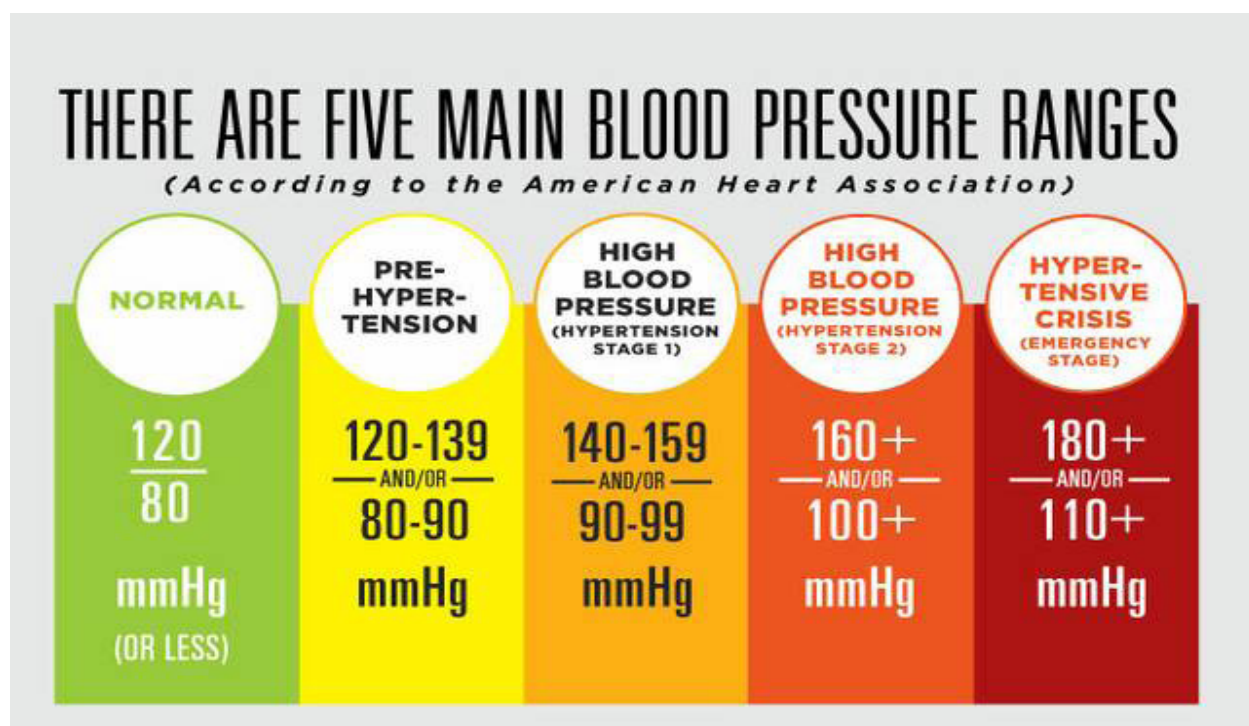
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to see their physician if readings taken over a period of time continued to be higher than optimal.

The Happy Heart program focuses on promoting consumption of more fresh, whole foods - like fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, and foods rich in calcium, potassium, and magnesium - simple but powerful ways to support heart health and manage blood pressure. As many people with above-normal blood pressure are sodium sensitive, nurses shared that most of the extra salt we consume comes from processed, packaged, and restaurant foods and suggested making other choices whenever possible.

A total of 132 members of the public and county staff visited the Happy Heart blood pressure station over the two days it was held. Surprisingly, more than half the participant readings were above the recommended 120/80 by at least 8 points, with 30% of readings above 130/89 (Stage 1 hypertension) and 10% of readings in the Stage II hypertension category. Shocked, almost everyone reported feeling no symptoms at all (typically shortness of breath, headache, chest pain or blurred vision). This lack of symptoms is why hypertension is referred to as "the silent killer."

Though the graphic below sets out standard ranges for blood pressure adopted by the medical community, what's ideal or even normal can vary from person to person. Certain medical conditions or medications could affect what your personal blood pressure goal should be. Be sure to ask your doctor what the best range of numbers is for you, and how you can reach it.



# Healthy Recipe

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Jazz up your next Taco Tuesday night with this vegetarian recipe which features roasted vegetables for a delicious medley of color, taste, fiber and nutrition. Recipe from [EatRight.Org](http://EatRight.Org).

## Pinto Bean and Roasted Vegetable Tacos

Makes 4 servings/ 2 tacos each

### Ingredients:

- 1 (16-ounce) can pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 Tablespoons chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 Tablespoons yellow onion, chopped
- 1 small jalapeño pepper, seeded and minced
- ½ teaspoon garlic, minced
- Cooking spray
- 1 medium yellow squash, sliced into coins
- 1 medium zucchini squash, sliced into coins
- 1 small yellow onion, sliced
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 8 (6-inch) corn tortillas (try a low carb tortilla to reduce carb count)
- ½ cup prepared green salsa
- ½ cup (2 ounces) crumbled queso fresco cheese
- 1 medium tomato, chopped



### Instructions:

1. Before you begin: wash your hands scrubbing with soap for 20 seconds.
2. Heat oven to 400°F (204°C).
3. Puree beans and broth in food processor or blender until smooth. Heat olive oil in a small skillet over medium-high heat. Sauté chopped onion and jalapeño pepper for 4 to 5 minutes or until tender. Add garlic and cook 1 minute more. Add bean puree and stir until well combined. Cook for 4 to 5 minutes or until heated.
4. Line baking sheet with aluminum foil. Cut the coins of squash and zucchini into quarters. Spray yellow squash, zucchini and sliced onion with cooking spray. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake approximately 20 minutes, flipping sliced vegetables halfway through cooking time.
5. Heat tortillas. Spread approximately ¼ cup bean mixture onto each tortilla. Top with approximately ¼ cup squash and onions.
6. Finish each taco with 1 Tablespoon salsa, 1 Tablespoon cheese and chopped tomatoes.

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### Per Serving

Calories: 309; Total fat: 7g; Saturated fat: 2g; Trans fat: 0g; Cholesterol: 5mg; Sodium: 444mg; Total carbohydrate: 53g; Dietary fiber: 11g; Sugars: 9g; Protein: 13g

# Featured Content

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## Identifying and Preventing Elder Abuse in Alameda County

by Deborah Cooper, Program Specialist - Senior Health & Nutrition

Elder abuse is a largely hidden yet growing problem in the United States. As the population of Alameda County, as well as the nation ages, the need for education and interventions against elder abuse also increases.



Elder abuse is defined by law as *“an act or omission, which results in a serious physical or emotional injury to an elderly person or financial exploitation of an elderly person; or the failure, inability or resistance of an elderly person to provide for himself or herself one or more of the necessities essential for physical and emotional well-being without which the elderly person would be unable to safely remain in the community.”*

### The State of California Recognizes Eight Types of Abuse

1. **Physical Abuse** – The use of physical force that may result in bodily injury, physical pain, or impairment; or any physical injury to an adult caused by other than accidental means.
2. **Neglect by Others** – Failure to provide the basic care, or services necessary to maintain the health and safety of an adult: this failure can be active or passive.
3. **Sexual Abuse** – Sexual contact with a non-consenting adult or with an adult considered incapable of consenting to a sexual act.
4. **Financial Abuse** – The illegal or unethical exploitation and/or use of an elder’s funds, property, or other assets.
5. **Mental Abuse** – Verbal or emotional abuse includes threatening significant physical harm or threatening or causing significant emotional harm to an adult through the use of: Derogatory or inappropriate names, insults, verbal assaults, profanity, or ridicule; or harassment, coercion, threats, intimidation, humiliation, mental cruelty, or inappropriate sexual comments.
6. **Abandonment** – the desertion or willful forsaking by anyone having responsibility for care.



# Elder Abuse Awareness

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7. **Isolation** – Preventing the individual from receiving mail, telephone calls, or visitors.

8. **Self-Neglect** – Refusal or failure to provide himself/herself with adequate food, water, clothing, shelter, personal hygiene, medication (when indicated), and safety precautions.



The California Association of Area Agencies on Aging (<https://elderabuseawareness.c4a.info>) reported that there are an estimated 202,549 cases of reported elder and dependent adult abuse PER YEAR in California. Adult Protective Services (APS) alone receives more than 15,000 reports of elder and dependent adult abuse per month, and reports are increasing.

In Alameda County for the years 2023 through 2025, APS received an average of 9,839 reports of abuse (ROA) each year with: (a) an average of 70% (6,888) ROAs screened in as appropriate for investigation (APS calls these cases “referrals”); (b) an average of 1,663 (17%) ROAs were related to existing cases and were merged with already open referrals; and (c) an average of 1,288 (13%) of ROAs were evaluated out as not meeting APS criteria for opening as a referral or investigation. However, elder abuse in general is significantly underreported; for every case known to programs and agencies, 24 are unknown. In cases involving financial abuse, only one in 44 cases is known to APS or law enforcement.

## Major Abuse Risk Factors

Risk factors identify situations that may increase the likelihood of perpetuating abuse against an older adult, or that senior experiencing abusive treatment. Understanding and addressing the risk factors can help identify opportunities for prevention.

- *Cognitive and Physical Decline:* Dementia, Alzheimer’s, and physical frailty make seniors unable to defend themselves or report abuse.
- *Dependency on Caregivers:* High reliance on family for daily needs can create scenarios for manipulation.
- *Caregiver Stress and Burnout:* Caregivers with mental health issues, substance abuse, or financial strain are more likely to commit abuse.
- *Social Isolation:* Lack of external contact allows abuse to go unnoticed.
- *Institutional Failures:* Understaffing and lack of training in nursing homes/long-term care facilities.

# Featured Content

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## Self-Neglect is a Serious Issue We Don't Really Talk About

Nationwide, self-neglect is a serious and reportable component of elder abuse that often goes unrecognized and unreported. A survey conducted by the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers (<https://www.aginglifecare.org/>) found that self-neglect among seniors is the most common form elder abuse encountered by care managers.

Self-neglect in older adults is a poorly understood problem with dire public health implications. Although lacking a standardized definition, self-neglect is characterized by profound inattention to one's own health, hygiene and physical safety - specifically a failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, or health care for oneself.

**Self-neglect is a complex issue.** There are many issues which may impact an older person's ability to take care of themselves including dementia, depression, illness, poverty, and isolation. If an elder is deemed clinically capable of making their own decisions, even if there are signs of self-neglect, they have the right to choose to refuse offered help, and protective services providers (such as the County of Alameda's Adult Protective Services Department) are bound by law to honor and respect that decision.

For elders who are deemed capable of making their own choices, there may be a societal and psychological element at play. For example, abuse of minor children and animals often capture major social and media attention, because they are expected to be protected since they're small, weak, and unable to care for themselves. But an aging adult has different internal and societal pressures for maintaining self-care.

As adults, these seniors have spent their adult life caring for themselves and possibly being responsible for the care of others. Adults advancing into a phase of life where they need assistance to remain independent can experience an ego-crushing blow to their identity, sense of mastery, and self-esteem which could make asking for help emotionally and psychologically challenging.



# Elder Abuse Awareness

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Many older adults who experience a decline in their ability to take care of day-to-day matters fear that acknowledging they need help will result in a loss of independence and possible placement in a nursing home or other long-term care facility. The truth is that, by accepting assistance, an older person will become more capable of maintaining their independence and ability to age in place at home. The goal of the Alameda County Area Agency on Aging is to provide and coordinate services to elders and others with our community partners, governmental agencies and caregivers, enabling area seniors to continue living at home and in the communities they know and love.

## California Enacts New Law to Fight Elder Abuse

In 2026, California is strengthening its elder abuse laws to make it harder for negligent facilities to avoid accountability and easier for victims to pursue justice.

As of October 2025, Assembly Bill 251 (AB 251), authored by Kalra, is chaptered as Chapter 433, Statutes of 2025. It amends Section 15657 and adds Section 15657.02 to the California Welfare and Institutions Code. AB 251 allows courts to apply a lower standard of proof when a skilled nursing or residential care facility destroys or conceals required records relevant to an elder abuse claim.

These reforms expand victims' rights, close loopholes that have shielded bad actors, and clarify how courts should respond when evidence is lost or institutional neglect is hidden behind poor documentation. For families facing suspected nursing home abuse or dependent adult mistreatment, these updates affect how elder abuse claims are investigated, proven, and litigated statewide.

The new elder abuse legal rights of 2026 don't just change how cases are argued in court; they also impact how facilities respond when abuse or neglect is raised.

For victims and families, this means:

- Stronger investigations. Facilities know missing or mishandled records will not protect them, which often leads to better cooperation and faster responses once concerns are raised.
- Leverage for negotiation. Families are not limited by facility-controlled paperwork and can still show what happened to their loved one without complete records.
- Improved case outcomes. Claims have a clearer path to accountability and compensation for medical bills, pain and suffering, or wrongful death.

# Featured Content

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- Less stress for families. More time is spent getting answers and accountability, rather than just getting basic information, leading to faster case resolution.

The policy changes aim to clarify and strengthen elder abuse claims.

## June is World Elder Abuse Awareness Month

World Elder Abuse Awareness Month serves as a reminder that aging with dignity and safety is a right, not a privilege. Raising awareness is the first step toward prevention. World Elder Abuse Awareness Month is more than a campaign against harm—it's a celebration of the value and contributions of older people. Elders enrich our communities with their stories, knowledge and wisdom, and resilience. They are parents, teachers, veterans, family and community leaders, and volunteers. Protecting them is not just a moral duty; it is an affirmation of their enduring worth.

## How to Report Abuse

If you suspect elder self-neglect or other abuse of an Alameda County resident age 60 years and older, or a dependent adult between ages 18-59 (who for mental or physical reasons cannot protect their rights or carry out typical daily activities), please reach out to Adult Protective Services (APS).

APS services are provided to everyone, without regard for income, and acceptance of assistance is completely voluntary. Elder abuse reports may be submitted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by mail, online (<https://alameda.my-adrc.org/Information.aspx?InformationID=6>) or by phone at 510-577-3500 or 1-866-CALL-APS (922-2275). If the situation is an emergency, please call 9-1-1 or your City's police department.

If you are an aging adult and find you need a little help in order remain living in your home, call the Area Agency on Aging's Senior Information and Referral line to find out what help and resources are available for you at 510-577-3530.

Together, we can create a county where older adults live free from fear and full of respect. Let Elder Abuse Awareness Month be a call to action: to protect, to advocate, and to honor the older adults who have helped build the world we know today.



# Senior Fitness Tips

Want to **get moving?**  
Try different types  
of exercise!



## Aerobic

Aerobic exercises improve the health of your heart, lungs, and circulatory system.



## Muscle-strengthening

Muscle-strengthening exercises can help you stay independent and prevent fall-related injuries.



## Balance

Balance exercises help prevent falls and can improve stability.

To learn more about older adults and exercise, visit: [www.nia.nih.gov/exercise](http://www.nia.nih.gov/exercise).

Here are some effective strategies to help you get started and stay committed to your exercise routine:

- **Set realistic goals:** Start by setting achievable goals that align with your current fitness level. This will keep you motivated and prevent feelings of overwhelm.
- **Choose activities you enjoy:** Find exercises that you enjoy doing, whether it's walking, swimming, dancing, or playing a sport. This will make your workout sessions more enjoyable and increase the likelihood of sticking to them.
- **Gradually increase intensity:** Start at a comfortable intensity and gradually increase it over time. This will prevent injuries and allow your body to adapt to the new physical demands.
- **Create a schedule:** Set aside specific times during the week for your exercise sessions. Treat these appointments as non-negotiable commitments to yourself.
- **Find an exercise buddy:** Exercising with a friend or joining a group class can provide accountability and social support, making it easier to stay motivated.
- **Listen to your body:** Pay attention to how your body feels during and after exercise. If something doesn't feel right or causes pain, modify or switch to a different activity. Consult with a healthcare professional if needed.

In addition to these tips, consider incorporating variety into your exercise routine. Trying different exercises not only adds excitement but also challenges different muscle groups, leading to greater overall fitness gains. When implementing these suggestions, remember that everyone's journey is unique. What works for one person may not work for another. It's essential to find what resonates with you personally and makes you excited about staying active. Remember that consistency is key, and every small step counts towards improving your health and overall well-being.

# Healthy Living / Aging Well

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Mental Health Awareness Month is one full month each year (May) that's dedicated to shining a spotlight on mental health conditions, concerns, disabilities, and treatments. It's 31 days committed to educating, having genuine conversations, and opening up about how these issues affect us 24/7/365. The theme for 2026 is "Stigma grows in silence. Healing begins in community."

Mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It is more than the absence of a mental illness. Mental health is essential to your overall health and quality of life. Self-care can play a role in maintaining your mental health

and help support your treatment and recovery if you have a mental illness.

Self-care means taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical health and mental health. This can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness, and increase your energy. Even small acts of self-care in your daily life can have a big impact. Self-care is the ultimate act of self-love.

Most people have, at one point or another, struggled with their mental health. It can be challenging and disheartening when it feels like nothing is working – no matter what you do, you are still feeling down, depressed, or anxious. Unfortunately, there is no magic button that you can press and instantly feel better. However, you can get help, and working with a mental health professional is often the first step toward feeling like yourself again and living the most fulfilling life possible.

## The 5 C's of Mental Wellness

*Reprinted with permission of Triumph Behavioral Health (<https://www.triumphbh.org>)*

There are many different ways to define what it means to be mentally well, and the 5 C's of Mental Health is just one of these frameworks. However, therapists believe that when their clients exhibit each of the 5 C's, they are well on their way toward feeling mentally healthy again.

### Competence

In terms of mental health, competence refers to the feeling of being capable of coping with the challenges and obstacles life throws your way. If you feel competent, you believe that you can achieve your goals. There are many different opportunities to exhibit competence in your life, including in the workplace, at home, and in your hobbies or activities. People who are struggling with their mental health often do not feel well-equipped to handle everyday life, let alone succeed on a larger scale. Part of mental wellness is believing in yourself and feeling like you have the tools to handle whatever life throws your way. You can also develop coping skills and a mental health toolbox through therapy or behavioral health care.

# Your Mental Health

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## Confidence

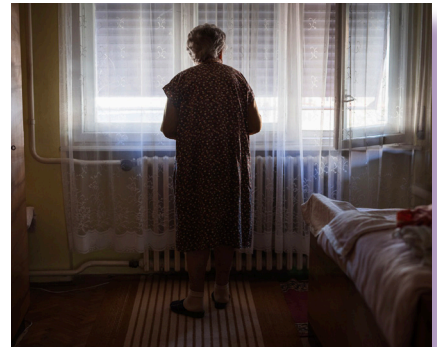
When you have confidence, you believe in yourself and have a positive self-image. You know your worth, and you also believe you can grow and improve over time, continually working toward the person that you want to be. When you do not feel confident, it can be hard to take risks or even advocate for yourself. You might feel as though you are not worthy of close relationships or any of the positive things life has to offer. However, building confidence in yourself is an important part of your mental health. You are worthy, you are loved, and you do deserve the best that life has to offer. Therapy is a great setting to work on building confidence.

## Character

When you have character, you demonstrate ethical behavior. You take responsibility for your actions, and you adhere to the values that are important to you. Furthermore, you understand these values and have a well-developed idea of your priorities and moral code. There are many activities you can engage in to identify your values, including online tests or value sorts. Once you know what your values are, you can work on living into those values each day. Discussing your values with your therapist can also help you identify areas where you are shining as well as places where you can improve your value-driven life.

## Connection

This one is pretty straightforward! Connection simply means feeling connected to others. You have supportive relationships and belong to a community in which you feel seen and cared for. When you are struggling with mental health concerns, it can be tough to reach out to those around you. However, humans are wired for connection – and facing life's hardest moments on your own can lead to loneliness and even increased anxiety and depression. Fostering a strong social network is important for mental health. When you have connection in your life, you are also well-positioned to employ the final C on this list, caring.



## Caring

Exhibiting caring means that you show compassion and empathy. You display concern both for yourself and others, and you are invested in the well-being of other people, particularly those you care about. Caring comes in many forms. Maybe it is calling a friend on their birthday, sending a letter to an aging parent, or even just praising a coworker for a job well done. When you exude caring into the world, you will help lift up those around you... And the favor might just come back your way in time!



**Our Senior Information & Assistance Line can help connect you to mental health, telephone assurance and friendly visitor programs throughout Alameda County. Please call us at 510-577-3530.**

# Featured Content

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## Champion Your Health in 2026



CHAMPION YOUR HEALTH: MAY 2026

Every May, the Administration for Community Living (ACL) leads the nation's observance of Older Americans Month, a time to recognize older Americans' contributions, highlight aging trends, and reaffirm our commitment to serving older adults.

The 2026 theme, *Champion Your Health*, focuses on prevention, wellness, and personal responsibility as cornerstones of healthy aging. It encourages taking an active role in managing your own health, advocating for yourself, accessing preventive care, and making informed decisions that support independence.

Join The County of Alameda Area Agency on Aging in highlighting the importance of evidence-based approaches, self-management, and community partnerships that empower individuals to lead their healthiest lives.

### A 30-Second Balance Test Can Indicate How Well You're Aging, Study Shows

Testing your balance by standing on one leg may indicate how well you're aging, according to a study published in the journal PLoS One.<sup>1</sup>

Researchers evaluated 40 participants over the age of 50 by testing their grip strength, knee strength, balance, and other physical movements. The balance test that involved standing on one leg for 30 seconds proved particularly challenging for older participants compared to other movements.

Maintaining balance on one leg involves coordination between muscle strength, the nervous system, and multiple sensory inputs, so doing it well indicates overall stability and a lower risk of falls. The study adds to growing evidence that balance can reveal important insights about overall health, including how strong someone is. This connection is especially true for older adults. As we age, muscle mass and strength begin to decline, which can begin to affect the body's functional capacity.



### Why Balance Is Important for Healthy Aging

Poor balance can increase the risk of falls, which can lead to serious injuries in older adults. Balance also relies on the nervous system's ability to process sensory information, meaning poor balance can be a potential warning sign of issues with proprioception or neurological conditions.

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1 Rezaei A, Bhat SG, Cheng CH, Pignolo RJ, Lu L, Kaufman KR. Age-related changes in gait, balance, and strength parameters: a cross-sectional study. PLoS One. 2024;19(10):e0310764. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0310764

# Older Americans Month

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Good balance supports activities of daily living, which are a part of maintaining independence as individuals age, whether it's walking, climbing stairs, or reaching for objects. The more balance and strength that older adults can preserve, the less likely they are to experience falls or injuries and keep their independence.

The primary movers are the muscles doing the majority of the work — they move the load and are often where you really feel the exercise. Smaller stabilizer muscles support the skeletal structure, including joints, and are crucial for maintaining balance, proper posture, and overall movement efficiency. Strengthening these muscles can reduce the risk of injuries, improve athletic performance, and enhance daily activities by making them more manageable and less tiring. For older adults who spend a lot of time at sitting, emphasizing stabilizer muscle health can mitigate common aches and pains associated with sedentary lifestyles.

## How to Test and Strengthen Your Balance at Home

If you want to test your balance, it's important to make sure you won't fall. The easiest and safest way for an individual to assess their balance on their own would be standing on one leg close to a sturdy surface with their hands hovering above the surface just in case they need to grab something to hold onto because they begin to feel unsteady. Anyone with known balance issues should make sure they have someone close by to provide assistance.

If you notice your balance is lacking, try exercises like yoga, core strengthening movements, compound movements like squats or pushups, or heel raises to improve it. Be mindful of how much movement each side of your body gets, as imbalances can occur if one side is used more than the other (such as always reaching with your right hand). To correct this, consciously use your non-dominant side throughout daily activities.

Older adults or those experiencing severe balance issues should avoid self-guided balance exercises and instead consult a qualified healthcare professional to develop a safe and effective treatment plan which might include physical therapy and/or a home exercise routine.

Alameda County's recently updated **Fall Prevention Guide** is available in PDF format, which we will be happy to email you upon request. The guide lists fall prevention education programs, classes and services throughout the county. Call us at [510.577.3530](tel:510.577.3530) or email your request to [seniorinfo@acgov.org](mailto:seniorinfo@acgov.org).



# Senior Friendly Events

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**Saturday, April 11, 2026 9:00AM-12NOON.** COMMUNITY SHRED AND E-WASTE EVENT. Join AARP Fraud Watch Network, AARP California, and local partners for a FREE drive-through shred and e-waste disposal event to combat fraud and identity theft. Individuals (not businesses) are invited to safely dispose of outdated bank statements, medical records, and other sensitive paperwork, as well as old electronics. Event location is 34800 11th Street, Union City. For info and registration log onto <https://www.aarp.org/events/details.community-shred-e-waste-event.xmn78js6t8h>.



**Friday, April 17, 2026 11:00AM-1:00PM.** STRIKE OUT SCAMS EVENT sponsored by AARP California. Join AARP California and enjoy free bowling and bites while learning how to stop scams before they strike. Space is limited, registration is required. Event location is 98 Broadway, Oakland in Jack London Square. For more info log onto <https://www.aarp.org/events/details.strike-out-scams-bowling-in-oakland.nqn44c5p6dh>



**Saturday, April 18, 2026 10:00AM-3:00PM.** SPRING HEALTH FAIR sponsored by the Vietnamese Community Center of the East Bay (VACCEB). Free health check-ups including COVID and flu shots, bone density screening, vision exams, HIV and HCV screenings, and more. No photo ID or health insurance needed. Event location is 198 East 14th Street, San Leandro. For more info log onto <http://www.vacceb.org>, email [info@vacceb.org](mailto:info@vacceb.org), or call 510.891.9999.



**Saturday/Sunday May 9-10, 2026 10:00AM-6:00PM.** HAWAIIAN MAY DAY FESTIVAL. Featuring Hawaiian and Reggae music, ethnic food and arts & craft vendors from all over the world. Pre-sale tickets available until April 15th. Event location is Alameda County Fairgrounds in Pleasanton. For more information log onto <https://www.kumuhulaassociation.com>, or email [kumuhulaassociation@gmail.com](mailto:kumuhulaassociation@gmail.com).



**Monday, May 11, 2026 1:30PM-3:30PM.** PUBLIC HEARING: AREA PLAN UPDATE. Seeking participation (in person or online) from County residents 55+ to help complete the County's 2026 Area Plan Update. Event held in person at the new Veteran's Service office, 22225 Foothill Blvd in Hayward; details will be posted on our website soon.



**Wednesday, May 20, 2026 10AM-11:30AM.** DEMENTIA AND ALZHEIMERS WEBINAR. Speakers: Lisa Skinner, host of *The Truth, Lies, and Alzheimer's* television show, personal stories from patients and caregivers, and reps from Alameda County Alzheimer's organizations. More info and registration at <https://t.ly/dementia>.



**Friday, June 5, 2026 10AM-12NOON.** SENIOR SCAM SEMINAR hosted by Asm. Liz Ortega. The event is free and no pre-registration is required. Event location is Dublin Civic Center, 100 Civic Plaza Dr. Cll Asm. Ortega's office in Hayward at (510) 583-8818.

# Helpful Resources

## Pacific Center for Human Growth



Founded in 1973, the Pacific Center for Human Growth is the oldest LGBTQIA+ center in the Bay Area, the third oldest in the nation, and operates the only sliding scale mental health clinic for LGBTQIA+ and QTBIPOC people and their families in Alameda County.

Older & Out is a free facilitated support group for LGBTQIA+ older adults aged 55+. Groups are held on in Oakland on Mondays at the LGBTQ community center, virtually on Tuesdays, and at the North Berkeley Senior Center on Fridays. Groups contain a maximum of 12 spots per group, and are held weekly for 8 consecutive weeks with the same group members.

A new group series starts every 10 weeks. To join and/or learn more information, call **510.548.8283** or email [olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org](mailto:olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org). Find a complete schedule of social and other events for seniors at <https://www.pacificcenter.org/older-adult-services>

## Dublin Senior Center Activities



If you live in or are willing to travel to the Tri-Valley Area of Alameda County, check out the dozens of activities held at the Dublin Senior Center. There are fee-based and free classes, as well as in-person and virtual programs. Offerings include bridge, Mah Jong social, Senior Karaoke, ping pong, bingo, line dancing, ballroom dancing, Jazzercise, Tai-Chi, chair yoga, Walking to Wellness, caregiver support, and lots more.

Hours of operation are Mon-Fri 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; Sat 9:00 a.m. to noon. Most senior activities are “drop-in” (no pre-registration required), but registration in person or online is easy. Fee based classes range from \$3-5, or you can purchase a Convenience Pass (10 visits=\$30; 20 visits=\$60. For residents of Dublin, the Senior Fee Assistance program is available to seniors, 55 years and older, whose household income level meets specific requirements.

To register for classes or for more information log onto <https://www.dublin.ca.gov/1053/Senior-Center> or call **925-556-4511**

## SPECTRUM Community Services: Six Programs to Help Seniors



Spectrum Community Services enhances the quality of life for older adults and residents experiencing low income

in Alameda County. Since 1986, Spectrum has continued to respond to the community’s current needs and now offers six programs to help accomplish that mission:

- (1) Meals on Wheels- Home delivered meals & wellness checks for homebound seniors;
- (2) Senior Meals- Congregate meals in a group setting;
- (3) Fall Prevention- Strength/ balance exercise classes;
- (4) Connect- Supportive services enriching the lives of Meals on Wheels clients past meals;
- (5) LIHEAP- Low-income energy assistance program;
- (6) Weatherization- Energy saving home upgrades and appliance assistance.

For more information on Spectrum services and locations of congregate meal settings call **510.881.0300**, or log onto <https://www.spectrumcs.org>.

## ADRC: Alameda County Aging & Disability Resource Connection



An Aging and Disability Resource Connection

(ADRC) is a collaborative THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA system that serves as a single entry point for information and assistance with long-term services and supports (LTSS) for people of all ages, incomes, and abilities. In partnership with the Center for Independent Living (CIL), and Community Resources for Independent Living (CRIL), the County of Alameda Area on Agency created this “No Wrong Door” system which seeks to streamline access and reduce barriers to services.

The ADRC provides objective, unbiased guidance, advice, and connections to various public and private programs, helping individuals and families make informed decisions about care, access needed services, and coordinate transitions from institutions back to the community.

For more information or to find a resource log onto <https://alameda.my-adrc.org/> or call the ADRC hotline at **510-257-5936**.

## Upcoming Meetings

### Advisory Commission on Aging

- Monday, April 13, 2026 - 9:30 AM
- Monday, May 11, 2026 - 9:30 AM
- Monday, June 8, 2026 - 9:30 AM

Email [aaa@acgov.org](mailto:aaa@acgov.org) for a Zoom link to meetings.

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# ANNOUNCEMENTS

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## Alameda County Veteran Services Office Relocation



### *Alameda County Veteran Service Office Celebrates Soft Opening of New Standalone Facility in Hayward*

On February 17, 2026, the Alameda County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) celebrated a significant milestone with the soft opening of its first standalone facility at 22225 Foothill Blvd in Hayward. The event brought together county and city officials, community partners, and local Veterans to honor the expansion of services supporting those who served in the United States Armed Forces.

The ceremony featured remarks from several officials, emphasizing the CVSO's vital role in connecting veterans and their families with benefits, resources, and advocacy. The Social Services Agency Director, Andrea Ford; Assistant Agency Director, Faith M. Battles; Supervisor Elisa Marquez, District 2; and County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO) Anthony Simpson delivered keynote remarks before the official ribbon-cutting, symbolizing a new chapter for Veteran services in Alameda County. The standalone center is built to improve accessibility, increase appointment availability, and create a welcoming environment tailored to veterans' specific needs.

The new location will offer a variety of services, including claims assistance, benefits counseling, outreach, and support for dependents and survivors. The Hayward site will boost the county's ability to connect with Veterans throughout the region, especially those who encounter barriers in navigating the complex federal and state benefits system.

The facility will continue preparing for full operations ahead of its official grand opening in late March/early April.

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## Seniors Can Get CalFresh Benefits Even if You Receive SSI/SSDI

CalFresh provides monthly food benefits to qualified seniors with low-income that prior to 2019 they were ineligible to receive. The CalFresh program:

- Is the largest food program in California
- Can help buy nutritious foods for a more nutritious and varied diet
- Provides food benefits you can use at grocery stores and farmers' markets
- The CalFresh Expansion program provides monthly food benefits to low income seniors (aged 60+) even if they are receiving SSI or SSP



Funded by USDA SNAP, an equal opportunity provider.

Reach out to either of our CalFresh community-based organizations for more information and personal assistance applying for CalFresh. Call Open Heart Kitchen at (925) 237-9352 or the Vietnamese Community Center of the East Bay at (510) 891-9999. To apply online log onto <https://benefitscal.com>.

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ADVISORY COMMISSION ON AGING



**ACA**

COUNTY OF ALAMEDA



Alameda County  
**Social Services Agency**  
A safety net. A way forward.