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Joelle Gallagher
Chair

September 11, 2024

Honorable Cynthia Smith
Superior Court of Napa County
825 Brown Street
Napa, CA 94559

RE: Napa County Grand Jury Response

Dear Judge Smith:

As required by Penal Code Section 933(C), enclosed are the responses to the Grand Jury's report, "Raising Awareness of Elder Abuse in Napa County"

The Board acknowledges the members of the 2023-24 Grand Jury for the time they have devoted to the reports.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joelle".

Joelle Gallagher
Chair, Napa County Board of Supervisors

cc: Foreperson, 2023-2024 Grand Jury
1754 Second Street, Suite D
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NAPA COUNTY
RESPONSE TO THE GRAND JURY REPORT
"RAISING AWARENESS OF ELDER ABUSE IN NAPA COUNTY"

August 20, 2024

INTRODUCTION

The report of the 2023-2024 Napa County Grand Jury, "Raising Awareness of Elder Abuse in Napa County" sets forth nine (9) findings and seven (7) recommendations to the Napa County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA). This response addresses those findings and recommendations with the goal of providing additional clarifying information about efforts made by HHSA and other relevant partner agencies and organizations prior to this report, already underway, and planned to improve the lives of older adults in Napa County.

FINDINGS

Finding 1. The Jury found that Napa County has many dedicated people in county agencies and nonprofits who are working hard to help the elderly age gracefully.

The Director of Health and Human Services Agency agrees with this finding. County staff in HHSA, the District Attorney's Office, the Sheriff's office, and those working across the network of community-based organizations are dedicated to improving the lives of older adults in Napa County. The Director appreciates the grand jury for their thorough assessment and investigation of the issue of Elder Abuse and their recognition of the hard work being done across the County to support older adults, respond to incidents, prevent elder abuse, and more broadly to provide support to aging gracefully.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Director of Health and Human Services Agency.

Finding 2. The Jury found that no one appears to be accountable for ensuring that all mandatory reporters know their responsibilities. Many do not have sufficient training to identify elder abuse. Many may not know the correct procedure for reporting elder abuse, exposing them to liability for failing to report.

The Director of Health and Human Services Agency partially disagrees with this finding. There is no single entity that has legal jurisdiction over mandated reporting and instead the law imposes this responsibility on various entities, employers, and professions.

California law mandates that certain individuals report known or suspected instances of elder or dependent adult abuse. Specifically Welfare and Institutions Code section 15630 provides in relevant part that, "Any person who has assumed full or intermittent responsibility for care or custody of an elder or dependent adult, whether or not that person receives compensation, including administrators, supervisors, and any licensed staff of a public or private facility that provides care or services for elder or dependent adults, or any elder or dependent adult care custodian, health practitioner, or employee of a county adult protective services agency or local law enforcement agency is a mandated reporter." Reports of known or suspected abuse of elder and dependent adults within long-term care facilities and community care facilities fall under the jurisdiction of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman and law enforcement. Instances of such abuse occurring outside of any of these facilities are the jurisdiction of the county office of Adult Protective Services (APS) and law enforcement.

In carrying out this reporting responsibility, a wide range of employers and professions need to ensure the completion of mandated reporter training and report known or suspected instances of abuse, including but not limited to health practitioners, clergy members, bank/financial institution employees, animal control and code

enforcement employees, etc. California law mandates that long-term care facilities, community care facilities, and residential care facilities, for the elderly provide such training. The State Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) or the State Department of Social Services (CDSS) is charged with reviewing each long-term care facility to ensure compliance with these training requirements.

Here in Napa County, our HHS Adult Protective Services (APS) program provides mandated reporter trainings in partnership with other agencies and institutions to help various employers and their staff comply with their legal obligations to know and report abuse. In Fiscal Year 2023-2024, our APS program conducted 13 trainings to local community-based organizations and law enforcement. In Fiscal Year 2024-2025, APS staff are planning to host a series of trainings for mandated reporters, inviting all known organizations who employ mandated reporters to help support their awareness and understanding regarding reporting processes and local contacts.

It is also worth noting that earlier this year, HHS took the initiative to request, and the Board of Supervisors approved, the addition of another supervisory position in the APS program. This increase in staffing allows our APS program to expand upon elder abuse awareness and education with the goal of providing support to the wide array of mandated reporters. Additionally, HHS recently posted a CDSS video regarding elder abuse on its website and shared the video link with agencies and institutions who employ mandated reporters.

Finally, although HHS is not charged with legal or regulatory oversight of those agencies, as previously noted in the response to Finding 1, the Agency is an active participant in a collaborative network of entities who work together to ensure that older adults are protected from harm and receive the support they need.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Director of Health and Human Services Agency.

Finding 3. The Jury found that the constellation of services available to the elderly is broad and complex making it a challenge for some people to find the resources they need.

The Director of Health and Human Services Agency agrees with this finding. There are indeed a wide range of services available for older adults in Napa County, and this very rich array means there is a continual need to ensure awareness of and support in navigating them. Fortunately, because of the strategic and thoughtful approach of the many providers of such services, there are also continual efforts to address this issue.

First, HHS helps to address this issue structurally by maintaining an integrated Comprehensive Services for Older Adults (CSOA) Division providing co-located services for older adults at a centralized location. Within the CSOA division, HHS administers distinct state funded and regulated safety net programs for older adults including In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS), APS, and Public Guardian Services. These services are enhanced by co-located and embedded services for older adults provided by our Behavioral Health Division and Self Sufficiency Services Division. However, it is understood that the needs of older adults are far-reaching and often span beyond directly administered County-run programs.

That leads to the second important point. This issue cannot be adequately responded to without highlighting the important and critical fact that Napa County is also part of two-county Napa-Solano Area Agency on Aging (AAA). By way of background, the California Department of Aging (CDA) contracts with and oversees local AAAs that coordinate a variety of services for older adults, adults with disabilities, informal caregivers and family caregivers. AAAs address the needs and concerns of all older persons at the regional and local levels through funding under the Older Americans Act. AAAs coordinate and offer services that help older adults (age 60 and older) remain in their homes and provide core services related to nutrition, health and wellness, caregiver support, legal assistance, transportation, and supportive services.

Our Napa-Solano AAA operates under a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement (JEPA) between Napa County and Solano County. Pursuant to the terms of the JEPA, the two counties agreed that the infrastructure needed to manage the AAA would be provided Solano County Health and Social Services who works in close partnership with Napa County HHS and community-based organizations. Further, an Oversight Board exists as part of the AAA's governance structure and that Board includes representatives from both counties' Boards of Supervisors. Napa County HHS provides a pro-rata share (based upon the population of older adults that reside in both counties) of the funding necessary to support the AAA's staff and program costs.

Noteworthy is the fact that AAA funded services include the provision of a service called "Information and Assistance," typically referred to as "I&A." Simply put, that service is specifically aimed at the very issue of assisting individuals to find needed services and resources. As part of our Napa-Solano AAA, the entity designated to provide I&A services in Napa County is Providence Community Health (throughout this Response, this refers to the entity formerly known as Collabria Care and hereinafter referred to as "Providence"). Unique to Napa County is the fact that the I&A program is enhanced by additional discretionary funding that this County provides directly to Providence through the intentional use of Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) funds. For over two decades, HHS has supported the County by carrying out a grant award process to help direct MSA funding to enhance community health, and most recently HHS aligned this funding to operationalize areas identified in our Community Health Improvement Plan and Napa Older Adults Assessment¹.

It is worth noting that Providence has been the recipient of MSA funds to provide I&A for Napa County for several years starting in Fiscal Year 2021-2022 through to present. The HHS Director is unaware of any other County using discretionary MSA funds to amplify the provision of I&A services in its community. The Director wishes to acknowledge the Napa County Board of Supervisors for setting these funds aside for over two decades to meet the County's most pressing needs. It is this type of forward thinking and investment of discretionary funding that has positioned the County well and HHS is proud to manage the process that helps to prioritize the use of such funds, including that they be directed toward older adult services.

Responses to subsequent findings and recommendations further explain how the County and HHS is working to continually address the issue of ensuring that people can find the resources they need in conjunction with critical partners.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Director of Health and Human Services Agency.

Finding 4. The Jury found that information sources and service delivery are often online. Ongoing efforts to get technology into the hands of the elderly is hampered by their lack of computer literacy resulting in a continuing need for in-person information and services.

The Director of Health and Human Services Agency agrees with this finding. Related to Finding 3, a challenge in accessing information about resources, highlighted in the recently published Napa Older Adults Assessment (NOAA), is providing information and access to low-income older adults who are isolated and lack convenient and immediate access to the internet. HHS has made significant efforts to increase digital access for older adults including in his past year, securing an Access to Technology (ATT) Grant to distribute tablets and broadband access to eligible older adults in Napa County.

ATT Grant funding supported the distribution of Claris electronic pads that have helped 143 older adults remain connected by providing them this device and two years of broadband access free of charge. HHS contracted with

¹ It is worth noting that the NOAA was supported by our Napa County Board of Supervisors and HHS through significant investments of both general funds and Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding and is being carried out through a consultant and Providence (formerly Collabria Care). The NOAA work commenced in early 2023 and runs through 2024.

Providence specifically because they are the County's "Information & Assistance" (I&A) provider, and it makes sense to continue our goal of enhancing service alignment for overall clarity of vision and purpose. Notably, every device distributed came with initial setup support and information to get further digital literacy support through ongoing 'tech help' offered by the Napa County Library at all three locations in Napa, Yountville, and American Canyon. As of March 2024, older adults have logged nearly 231,798 minutes on tablets distributed through the ATT grant.

Finally, since the County cannot guarantee computer literacy for all older adult residents, HHSa agrees that it is critically important to continue prioritizing in-person information and services. As we know, there is value in face-to-face support. Currently, HHSa programs universally maintain in-person services and provide information in a variety of formats and languages to meet the needs of this population. Since March of this year, over 2,000 clients have presented in person to receive services at our CSOA location. HHSa stands ready to meet and support them.

Additionally, HHSa has recently committed resources to launching a new video with the shared goal of further elevating I&A in Napa County and directing residents to a single entity and phone number, thereby decreasing reliance upon navigating online resources to determine what is available. Because Providence is our local I&A provider, we are, of course, working in partnership with their staff on its production. The goal will be to share this video on the County's social media platforms, post it on HHSa's website, and have our community partners do the same.

As is hopefully evident through this response, HHSa and our community partners are aware of the need to address the underlying issue of providing information about the panoply of services that exist in our community to support older adults, including aspects of the digital divide that has been identified in the NOAA, and together multiple strategies and solutions have and will continue to be explored.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Director of Health and Human Services Agency.

Finding 5. The Jury found that services such as Providence Home Health Napa "Caregiver Resources" and "Information and Assistance" exist to meet the needs of the elderly and their caregivers. These services appear to be underutilized.

The Director of Health and Human Services Agency partially disagrees with this finding. As stated previously, the Napa-Solano AAA funds Providence Community Health ("Providence," formerly Collabria Care) to serve as Napa County's "Information and Assistance" (I&A) program provider. Napa County bolsters the provision of I&A in our County through the discretionary application of MSA funds that have been awarded to Providence through a competitive grant award process managed since Fiscal Year 2021-2022. The competitive grant award process and contracts are managed by HHSa.

To provide some important context, in Fiscal Year 2023-2024, the I&A program – funded largely by the Napa-Solano AAA and Napa County and delivered by Providence – served 2,315 individuals with 2,023 of those being unduplicated. In addition, Providence assisted 181 unique individuals with connections to Napa County's Caregiver Registry. The current I&A program operated by Providence consists of two social workers and a program manager; HHSa provides office space for one of the social workers allowing for their co-location within our CSOA division.

HHSa having recently completed the MSA grant process, it is worth noting that Napa County has increased its funding to enhance the I&A program over the next three fiscal years to meet the growing demands and increased utilization of this resource; per Providence's submitted budget, 43% of the funding to support the I&A program comes from the County's award of MSA funding.

The reported data from this program suggest that I&A services are indeed being utilized, and undoubtedly there are more older adults to reach. To that end, Providence recently featured this service in their newsletter that is distributed to 5,000 community members and is shared several times a year to approximately 11,000 emails. Providence has indicated to HHSa that they are willing to test other avenues for advertising and outreach.

HHSa has also dedicated internal resources and initiated a project engaging Providence to work with us to produce a video that will highlight their I&A program as the entry point to understanding and navigating available older adult services in Napa County. HHSa plans for this video to be completed by September 30, 2024. The video will be widely disseminated so that older adults and their caregivers know where to go to find what they need with a broader understanding of the services available to them.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Director of Health and Human Services Agency.

Finding 6. The Jury found that more outreach is needed to make the community aware of elder abuse and available services.

The Director of Health and Human Services Agency agrees with this finding. In 2023, the Elder Abuse Task Force was created, currently co-chaired by HHSa's APS Program Manager, a member of the Commission on Aging, the District Attorney's Office, and law enforcement. One of the purposes of this group is to facilitate and support outreach and education regarding elder abuse. It is also worth noting that on June 28, 2024, the District Attorney's Office, Molly's Angels, local law enforcement, and HHSa partnered to host an event called S.A.F.E. (Seniors Against Financial Exploitation) in St. Helena. The event was focused on elder abuse, specifically financial elder abuse, and included a wide range of participants and programming. Surveys conducted at the conclusion of the event support its success in furthering education and awareness with the goal of keeping our older adult residents safe.

Finally, there are increased outreach efforts by HHSa and APS program staff, including that HHSa has recently engaged its new Communications Manager and APS Supervisor to work together to develop a flyer regarding elder abuse that will be included, for a fee, in the upcoming property tax mailing in partnership with our Napa County Treasure Tax Collector. The Director of HHSa appreciates the support of our Napa County Treasurer Tax Collector. HHSa's internal goal is to have a flyer finalized by the end of August 2024 for inclusion in the mailing that will be sent out in the September/October timeframe. To the extent this finding refers to "available services," the response to Finding 5 is incorporated by reference.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Director of Health and Human Services Agency.

Finding 7. The Jury found that an affluent population makes Napa County particularly vulnerable to elder financial scams. Experts predict that emerging artificial intelligence technologies will make financial scams a bigger problem. The best deterrent to this type of fraud is for potential victims to have the capability and strategies to identify them beforehand.

The Director of Health and Human Services Agency partially disagrees with this finding. According to CDSS data on APS reports across the state, financial abuse accounts for 35% of all allegations of abuse; this compared to only 33% of the 525 APS referrals received so far in 2024 being for financial exploitation. While financial abuse is second only to self-neglect as the most common allegation in Napa County, more data would need to be gathered and analyzed to determine the extent to which a relatively affluent population makes Napa County particularly vulnerable to elder financial scams. In fact, NOAA data suggests that low-income older adults (particularly those representing BIPOC population) experience financial abuse at a higher rate.

While more data is needed to understand root causes and risk factors, the Director agrees that the best deterrent for financial fraud is for potential victims to have the capability and strategies to identify the fraud beforehand. Unfortunately, in cases where an older adult is victimized through a scam, recovery of lost assets is uncommon. Therefore, the best way to address financial abuse of older adults is through education and prevention. Accordingly, the Director incorporates by reference the above response to Finding 6.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Director of Health and Human Services Agency.

Finding 8. The Jury found that the elderly population in Napa County is increasing. As the elderly population increases, the demand for resources needed to keep them safe will also increase. Additional social workers and mental health therapists will be needed in the county.

The Director of Health and Human Services Agency agrees with this finding. In 2040, it is projected that older adults 60+ will comprise 33% of the population compared to just 21% in 2020. Therefore, systems and services will have to respond to the needs of a growing older adult population. While additional social workers and mental health therapists may be a part of that response, and HHSA continually evaluates program staffing, a broader strategic approach to system design, service delivery, and coordination of services will also be needed to meet the coming need.

This is why HHSA continues to support work to operationalize priority areas identified in the NOAA. Through the previously discussed MSA grant process, Napa County awarded over \$3M to projects over the next three years that target focus areas identified in the NOAA. Through those contracted services, HHSA is strategically working to move the needle on transportation, housing, healthcare, information and assistance, community engagement and connectedness, and caregiver support to meet the needs of a growing older adult population.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Director of Health and Human Services Agency.

Finding 9. The Jury found that law enforcement training on how to identify and report elder abuse is limited.

The Director of Health and Human Services Agency disagrees with this finding and ultimately defers to law enforcement for their perspective. Through trainings delivered to organizations throughout the County, including directly to law enforcement agencies, HHSA APS is engaged with law enforcement regularly to support identification and reporting of elder abuse. As an example, in May staff delivered two trainings on elder abuse to the Calistoga Police Department.

The Napa County Sherriff's Office is deeply committed to combatting elder abuse with the support of the District Attorney's Office, and both offices participate on the Elder Abuse Task Force which is an outcome-focused group that convenes to support multiple facets of victim response, including preventing, intervening, and healing the trauma caused by elder abuse. More collaboration is planned as HHSA APS works to expand its trainings for mandated reporters, including law enforcement entities.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Director of Health and Human Services Agency.

Recommendation 1. By September 30, 2024, HHSA develop and annually distribute a simple, brief card or letter to all mandatory reporters in Napa County. This form would inform them of their reporting responsibilities, and how to report and link to online resources for additional information.

Response, Director of Health and Human Services Agency

The recommendation has been implemented. HHSA's APS Program staff are in the process of finalizing a trifold hand-held card that contains information on elder abuse, including how to identify signs of abuse, to whom reports are made, and the timeframe for reporting. This will be made available on HHSA's website and provided to organizations identified as mandated reporters throughout the County. This will be completed by September 30, 2024.

Additionally, as previously noted, HHSA has updated its website for APS to include a CDSS video that briefly describes the responsibilities of mandated reporters. A link to our website and this video will be sent with additional information to organizations identified as mandated reporters in the County. Additionally, the Napa County HHSA APS program is expanding mandated reporter trainings to increase their frequency and establish a clear schedule with its County- and non-profit-mandated reporting partners.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Director of Health and Human Services Agency.

The Board of Supervisors would like to ask Grand Juries to consider directly interviewing individuals and families with lived experience in the subject matter. The Board believes that the report would be strengthened by interviews with people who can directly speak to the impacts of elder abuse in their lives. Finally, the Board would also like to request that Grand Jury's reports note the source of their facts. While the Board understands the confidentiality of Grand Jury interviews, the sources of the Grand Jury's facts can be useful to further understand the report's subject matter.

Recommendation 2. By December 31, 2024, HHSA develop a "Healthy Aging Guide" for Napa County to aid the elderly, families, and caregivers in understanding how to better assess their needs and locate the available resources. Such a guide needs to go far beyond the simple list approach of the current Napa County Aging and Disability Resource Guide. HHSA should utilize county partners such as the Library and County Communications staff as well as other avenues to distribute this to the people who need the information.

Response, Director of Health and Human Services Agency

This recommendation has not yet been implemented. This recommendation will be implemented by September 30, 2024. This response also includes efforts that go far beyond, as explained below. First, the Director agrees with the Grand Jury's Finding Number 3 that it can be a challenge for older adults and their caregivers to identify available resources, as there exists a broad constellation of services that can easily become overwhelming without support. This finding is also supported by data collected through the NOAA indicating the need for additional resources designed to aid elderly families and caregivers in how to access services.

HHSA in collaboration with the Napa/Solano Area Agency on Aging, Healthy Aging Population Initiative (HAPI), and Providence, the County's I&A provider, produces the "Napa County Aging and Disability Resource Guide" referenced in this recommendation. This guide is currently being revised and represents a significant collaborative effort to produce a single source of reference for older adults and caregivers to identify what services are available. It is an extremely useful tool. HHSA will work with the above partners to distribute this guide in accessible locations, such as the Napa County Library.

However, a comprehensive, organized list of available resources alone is not sufficient to support all older adults in accessing the services that meet their needs. Therefore, as previously noted, the County has further enhanced the provision of I&A in our community through a separate contract with Providence. This contract builds upon the AAA contract for I&A services with Providence to serve as the gateway to navigating older adult services throughout the County. A unique feature of our County's I&A program is that it is partially operated onsite at HHSA where space is provided within our Comprehensive Services for Older Adults divisions. Co-locating this entry

point for navigating older adult services within HHSAs helps to centralize referrals and coordination with HHSAs' directly administered older adult programs.

HHSAs are also bolstering their support to increase awareness about I&A by committing resources to producing a video that helps direct older adults and caregivers to a single navigation point of contact and provides a brief overview of the rich array of services available in our community. HHSAs reached out to Providence to collaborate on the content of this video production. This should help to increase utilization of I&A and nicely supplements the Aging and Disability Resource Guide with easy-to-access personal system navigation and care coordination. HHSAs are targeting that both the updated resource guide and video will be completed by September 30, 2024.

Finally, the Napa-Solano AAA Executive Director, the Independent Living Center (ILC) for Napa County (the Disability Services and Legal Center), and Providence have jointly submitted a Letter of Interest to the California Department of Aging (CDA) to pursue the creation of an Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) for Napa County. The ADRC is a partnership model whereby AAAs and ILCs can collaborate, integrate resources, and develop efficiencies that help them respond to increasing consumer service needs and expectations, and higher service demands given the growing number of Californians seeking Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS). ADRCs are designed to develop coordinated networks to assist older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers in navigating the complex system of LTSS using a "No Wrong Door" partnership model. HHSAs are excited that the AAA, ILC, and Providence are pursuing an ADRC and look forward to the enhanced support to residents of our community.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Director of Health and Human Services Agency.

Recommendation 3. By December 31, 2024, HHSAs work in conjunction with the Commission on Aging, the Elder Abuse Task Force, and Healthy Aging Population Initiative (HAPI) to develop and implement a comprehensive communication plan aimed at both the elderly and the wider community. The objectives of this plan are to break down barriers for elder support, increase community engagement and inclusion, educate the community on recognizing and avoiding financial scams, and increase the awareness and understanding of elder abuse.

Response, Director of Health and Human Services Agency

The recommendation requires further analysis. HHSAs participate in the Commission on Aging meetings, Elder Abuse Task Force meetings, HAPI meetings and various NOAA workgroup meetings. HHSAs appreciate the ability to work in conjunction with these groups and individuals to enhance communication on these important issues.

The Director also incorporates prior responses which explain that Providence serves as the County's Information & Assistance (I&A) provider. Therefore, they are a critical and central player in the development of any communication plan since the goal is to direct residents to a single point of contact for older adult services and resources. Similarly, it is important for HHSAs to work in collaboration with our AAA Executive Director, particularly as an ADRC is being pursued to ensure alignment of messaging and effort. At the same time, consistent with HHSAs' prior Strategic Plan for 2020-2023 and our current Strategic Plan for 2024-2026, we have dedicated resources to building awareness of programs and services through increased communications.

In 2022, HHSAs began publishing a quarterly 'Be Well' publication and in 2023, HHSAs were fortunate to add a Communication Manager to support enhanced communications across all mediums. That position has been recently filled as of July 1, 2024. In the Summer 2024 Issue of 'Be Well,' an article was included that shared information about our APS program, elder abuse, and how to recognize and report suspected elder abuse. With June being Elder Abuse Awareness Month, it is a natural and appropriate time to elevate awareness through a targeted communication plan. HHSAs' Communications Manager will work with APS staff to carry out a multi-

media campaign to elevate awareness and understanding of elder abuse. It is anticipated that this will include radio spots, informational pamphlets, mailers, and a social media campaign.

As mentioned previously, HHS staff are already working with Providence to create a video that will be distributed online and through social media which will provide information on the I&A Program, how to access information, and where services are located. HHS also recently added an APS Social Worker Supervisor to enhance programming, including additional community outreach, communication, and education in collaboration with HAPI, the Commission on Aging, and the Elder Abuse Task Force. Finally, HHS is in the process of contracting with Wine Down Media to support agencywide communications about its many programs, services, and relevant topics, and focusing on older adults is necessarily included in that investment.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Director of Health and Human Services Agency.

Recommendation 4. HHS continues ongoing work with the District Attorney's Office and nonprofit organizations to develop and enhance scam awareness and promote prevention campaigns. The objectives of these campaigns are to assist the elderly to recognize and avoid potential scams and know how to respond if faced with one.

Response, Director of Health and Human Services Agency

The recommendation has been implemented. On June 28 of this year, the Napa County District Attorney's Office, along with Molly's Angels of Napa Valley, and HHS, hosted the S.A.F.E. (Seniors Against Financial Exploitation) workshop. This event highlighted the collaboration between agencies working to prevent and address financial exploitation of older adults in Napa County.

The morning session was open to older adults in the community and focused on financial abuse and scam prevention as well as healthy aging. Among the presenters were APS staff, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman, law enforcement, a gerontologist, and a panel of older adults who have experienced financial abuse. As mandated reporters, financial institutions play an important role in identifying and reporting abuse, and therefore, the afternoon session was geared toward staff from local financial institutions and focused on providing them information as to how to identify and report suspected financial elder abuse.

The event was a success with over 150 older adults in attendance and over 50 institutions represented. The feedback solicited about the event was very positive and there is interest in making this event an annual occurrence.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Director of Health and Human Services Agency.

Recommendation 5. Beginning July 1, 2024, Napa County HHS proactively increase their involvement in the California Master Plan for Aging to help shape future programs and be more aware of resources and grant availability.

Response, Director of Health and Human Services Agency

The recommendation has been implemented. By way of background, the California Master Plan for Aging (MPA) is a broad set of initiatives providing opportunities for local government agencies, AAAs, community-based organizations, and other healthcare providers to meet the needs of an aging population. The MPA sets forth five goals: *Housing for all Ages & Stages; Health Reimagined; Inclusion & Equity, Not Isolation; Caregiving that Works; and Affording Aging.* Within each of the five goals are four to six strategies that address Transportation, Elder Abuse, Caregiving, Income Security, and more.

First and foremost, it should be noted that HHSA has been at the forefront of providing the foundation to help shape these priorities for Napa County. As previously noted, HHSA worked directly with our community-based organizations and Commission on Aging staff to help bring the multi-year NOAA to fruition. Both the Director of HHSA and staff from the County Executive Office are part of the Project Oversight and Support Team and HHSA staff also participate in the Steering Committee, and over \$400,000 in total funds from the County and HHSA (through the strategic alignment of Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding) has been leveraged to make the NOAA possible in the first place. This work is being carried out thoughtfully in conjunction with our AAA Executive Director to help ensure alignment since the AAA plays a critical role and is required to develop a separate Four-Year Area Plan for Napa and Solano counties.

Second, HHSA also worked strategically and collaboratively to align the priority areas from its recently completed Community Health Assessment (CHA), done in conjunction with Providence, with the NOAA. Both the CHA and NOAA were presented to the Board of Supervisors on April 24, 2024. The presentation highlighted the fact that five priority areas emerged through our CHA and NOAA, consisting of *Housing, Economic Stability, Access to Health Services, Racial Equity & LGBTQ Inclusion, and Behavioral Health*, and within those areas, issues that were further elevated by the NOAA included Transportation, Fall Prevention, Food Access, Access to Dental Care, and Communications/Digital Inclusion. Noteworthy is the fact that these areas align with the priorities in the MPA.

Beyond an obvious alignment with our CHA and NOAA to the MPA, is the fact that HHSA, using the CHA and NOAA, is developing a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) with the input of community stakeholders. Our CHIP is being operationalized through the launching of a multi-pronged funding opportunity leveraging MSA, MHSA, and Opioid Settlement Funds resulting in 36 contracts to community-based providers. A total of approximately \$10.8 million in contracts that span two and three years each are directed specifically at community health, with \$3 million of the \$5 million in MSA funds directed at services for older adults. HHSA presented a summary of these investments and their alignment to our CHA, NOAA, and CHIP to the Board of Supervisors on June 4, 2024. This evidences that HHSA is aware of the available resources and has been very involved in addressing the priority areas in the MPA vis-à-vis our local work on our CHA, NOAA, and CHIP.

Further, a critical program within HHSA is our IHSS program. Effective May 2024, with the unanimous support of our Board of Supervisors, HHSA was able to increase the wages paid to our IHSS providers to \$20 per hour for the essential caregiving support they provide to older and disabled adults allowing them to remain in their homes. This was a significant increase from \$17.45 per hour and reflects the strategic investment by the County to help bolster caregiving resources in our community, including the provision of care by friends and family, all in alignment with the goals and strategies of the MPA.

HHSA also works collaboratively with Solano County as part of our Napa-Solano AAA. The Director of Napa County HHSA, in partnership with the Director of Solano County Health and Social Services, prioritized the recent addition of a new position within the AAA to enhance the staffing infrastructure. The additional staffing, which we anticipate being filled within the next six months, will help our AAA assist with the MPA work in Napa County, explore and develop new programs, including creation of an ADRC, and, as both counties have discussed, assist in writing grant proposals relating to aging services for both Solano and Napa County.

Finally, with this new Fiscal Year 2024-2025, HHSA added an HHSA Management Analyst position to the Agency. This position will report to the Director of HHSA and among the many Agencywide priorities, this position will be dedicated part-time to help bolster the support of the NOAA work, work with the AAA Executive Director and Deputy Director of HHSA-CSOA division, and community-based organizations to help support the provision of older adult services in Napa County. It is this type of forward thinking, marshalling of resources, and overwhelming investment in services by HHSA and the County that positions us well to continue meeting the needs of our aging population.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Director of Health and Human Services Agency.

Recommendation 6. Beginning July 1, 2024, law enforcement establish periodic training that reinforces how to recognize and report elder abuse.

Response, Director of Health and Human Services Agency

It has been clarified by the Napa County Grand Jury that this Recommendation is not directed to the Director of Health and Human Services Agency. Therefore, no response is provided.

Recommendation 7. By September 30, 2024, HHSA develop plans for hiring additional social workers and mental health professionals to meet the growing demand of the increasing elderly population.

Response, Director of Health and Human Services Agency

This recommendation has been implemented. While we recognize that the growing elderly population will require increasing staffing to meet their needs, we already have the requisite mechanisms in place to increase that staffing as circumstances change. Since 2017, HHSA has expanded the number of APS social workers from four to seven. Just this year, an additional Social Worker Supervisor was added to support the growing unit and resource increased outreach, training, and education on elder abuse. Our caseloads in Napa County are consistent with comparable counties, and we continue to maintain excellence in timeliness standards. The Grand Jury astutely recognizes that responding to and preventing elder abuse exists in a broad context and array of services and therefore, responding to the needs of a growing older adult population requires more than planning for additional staffing.

By way of background, the mental health services directly provided by HHSA for older adults includes our Older Adult Full-Service Partnership (OAFSP) program where the overall goal is to divert adults with serious mental illness (SMI) to be maintained in the community living as independently as possible. HHSA also provides case management support to older adults who are conserved and non-conserved. Our OAFSP program provides clients with assistance with housing, linkage to employment and education, linkage to medical services, caregiving resources, social security, transportation, food resources, and any other identified barriers. The embedded unit within our CSOA division is staffed by a Supervising Mental Health Counselor, four Mental Health Counselors, and one Senior Mental Health Worker. Although there is currently one vacancy, HHSA, in conjunction with its Behavioral Health division leadership, continually evaluates staffing needs to ensure programs are appropriately and efficiently resourced. HHSA will bring forward any needed requests for staffing in the normal course of business.

It is worth noting that HHSA also supports the provision of mental health services to older adults through numerous contracts with community-based providers. As previously explained, one of the many funding opportunities HHSA has made available over the years has included MSA grant awards and Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for services supported by MHSA funding. Through the MHSA RFP process, HHSA has been intentional in supporting community-based programs that support mental health services to older adults reflected in contracts totaling almost a million dollars over the next two years. These programs include Molly's Angels Comprehensive Assistance and Resources for the Elderly (CARE) program which will reduce social isolation and depression among older adults through wrap-around supportive services, Mentis' "Healthy Minds, Health Aging" program that provides therapeutic intervention for adults 60 years of age and older, a contract with Mentis to help implement Napa County's Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention with benefits to older adults, and Up Valley Family Center's Senior Wellness Program providing individual and group counseling for older adults. While HHSA maintains staffing resources we are also continuously aligning and leveraging funding to meet the mental health and social service needs of Napa County's older adults in other ways.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the Director of Health and Human Services Agency.

CONCLUSION

The Director of Health and Human Services Agency would like to acknowledge the work of the Grand Jury. Their detailed observations and recommendations point to many important areas relevant to addressing the needs of our older adults. It is hoped that their concerns have been addressed in the discussion above, and we look forward to continuing this important work in conjunction with our partners.



A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

**NAPA COUNTY GRAND JURY
2023-2024**

April 24, 2024

FINAL REPORT

**Raising Awareness of Elder Abuse
in Napa County**

SUMMARY

If you live in Napa and you are not an elder, you probably know someone who is. The number of older Napers continues to grow. By 2030, one in three residents of Napa County will be over 60 years of age. As the number of elders increases, so does the need for additional elder care services and the potential for more elder abuse. Napa County needs an increased awareness and additional resources to reduce the incidence of elder abuse.

Elder Abuse is defined as an intentional or negligent act by any person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to an adult over the age of 60 years. The prevailing perception is that elder abuse is physical, but self-neglect is a common and often unrecognized form of abuse, as are financial scams that prey on the vulnerability of elders. The reporting of elder abuse is a civic duty. For some in the community—professionals in financial institutions, health practitioners, and clergy, among others—the reporting is mandated by law.

In Napa County, Health and Human Services Comprehensive Services for Older Adults (HHSA CSOA) is responsible for providing services and mitigating elder abuse for elderly Napers not living in inpatient (generally nursing homes) facilities. Additionally, there are several nonprofit organizations in Napa County that work in concert with HHSA and focus on providing needed services to the elderly. Many like-minded Napers work and volunteer to bring these services to the elderly.

The elderly who are no longer able to safely care for themselves are often cared for in inpatient care facilities. Inspections and licensing of inpatient facilities fall under the jurisdiction of the State. Locally, the Ombudsman's office, staffed primarily by volunteers, oversees, and advocates for the inpatient residents.

The Jury heard many concerns about the quality of care in privately operated inpatient facilities. However, the County has limited power to intervene. The Jury believes there may be opportunity for greater involvement and potentially a protective presence by the local nonprofits in inpatient facilities.

Most professionals involved in elder abuse believe that all manners of elder abuse are under-reported. More public awareness and community involvement are needed to protect our elders.

The Jury reviewed local Community Partner nonprofit organizations providing vital services to the disabled, elderly and those in need. The Jury found their contributions to be extremely valuable to the community.

The Jury found that while numerous services are available to the elders, their broad scope and complexity make it difficult for individuals to find the resources they need. As a result, the Jury

provided seven key recommendations, including the directive to develop a “Healthy Aging Guide” for the elderly, their families and caregivers.

GLOSSARY

(HHSA) Napa County Health and Human Services Agency

(APS) Adult Protective Services

(CSOA) Comprehensive Services for Older Adults

(N/SAAA) Napa/Solano Area Agency on Aging

(NOAA) Napa County Older Adults Assessment

(LTCOP) Napa County Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

(IHSS) Napa County In-Home Support Services

(LTSS) Long-Term Services and Supports, a Subcommittee of California’s Master Plan for Aging

BACKGROUND

According to the 2022 US Census, just over one in four (28%) of Napa County residents are 60 plus years old. By 2030, one in three (33%) residents of Napa County will be over 60 years of age.

California has made elder abuse a priority. In 2019, Governor Gavin Newsom signed Executive Order N-14-19 calling for the development of the California Master Plan for Aging. After an extensive effort, this plan was launched in 2020. The plan calls for “Five Audacious Goals.” One of these goals is “Inclusion & Equity, Not Isolation.” There are six strategies for achieving this goal including “Protection from Abuse, Neglect & Exploitation.”

Data from the California Department of Social Services, Napa County Health and Human Services Administration (HHSA) indicates approximately 160 cases per month. Some of these are carried forward from previous months, some are new cases, and some are closed. Napa County HHSA 2022 Annual Report shows 1079 cases of elder and dependent care abuse cases were reported and 971 cases were confirmed. This data excludes abuse in inpatient care facilities (generally nursing homes) where Napa County has no regulatory oversight. These cases are reported to the Ombudsman’s office and investigated at the state level.

Inpatient care facilities are regulated by the state. The Jury has limited jurisdiction to investigate the state’s regulation of inpatient care facilities. The Jury learned of many instances of less-than-optimal care in these facilities and a system of state oversight that is not working. People with a loved one in an inpatient facility believed the only way they could ensure quality care was a frequent physical presence. The Jury believes there is an opportunity for one of the nonprofits serving Napa County to have volunteers visit and build connections with individuals in inpatient care facilities. The visits could be particularly helpful to individuals who don’t have

enough presence of family and friends to monitor their care. The Jury proposes a nonprofit serving Napa County establish an alliance with inpatient care facilities to develop a voluntary “Open Door Program” that allows visitations. Participation in the program might offer patients and loved ones assurance of the quality of the care being provided.

The Jury experienced a high level of frustration resulting from its lack of jurisdiction over inpatient care facilities. A preliminary inquiry indicated significant quality-of-care shortfalls.

Based on jury interviews, the inpatient quality of care issue is not just a County of Napa problem but a systemic problem at the state level. The state oversight of these facilities is not working. While the Jury has no authority, the Jury requests that the Little Hoover Commission investigate state oversight of inpatient care facilities with the objective of improving the quality of care in these facilities. If the Little Hoover Commission is unwilling to take on this issue, the Jury requests that Mark Ghaly, California Health and Human Services Secretary, in his role as the Leader of California’s Master Plan on Aging, form a working group to investigate this issue and develop a comprehensive plan to improve the statewide quality of inpatient care.

Please see the appendix for a list of organizations in Napa County offering services to the elderly.

Elder abuse is believed to be significantly under reported. Often victims of elder abuse are reluctant to report abuse because they are embarrassed or fear that they will lose their independence. Some may be too isolated to report abuse or may be too reliant on their abuser to risk intervention. Estimates run as high as one in ten elderly or dependent care adults will be abused in any given year.

The 2022-24 Napa County Older Adult Assessment (NOAA), a comprehensive large sample survey, indicated 12% of older adults reported they were a victim of a fraud or scam and 8% reported they were a victim of emotional abuse or a crime.

Dependent adults fall under the same regulations and protections as elders. A dependent adult is someone 18 years or older with certain mental or physical disabilities that keep them from being able to perform typical activities or protect themselves. In this report, the term elder adult includes dependent adults.

The Jury conducted this investigation to raise awareness and identify opportunities for mitigating the incidence of Elder Abuse.

METHODOLOGY

This Report is based on interviews and an extensive review of state and local documents.

Interviews conducted include:

- Napa County Health and Human Services (4 interviews)
- Napa Ombudsman's Office (2 interviews)
- Napa County Nonprofits (4 interviews)
- Law Enforcement and District Attorney's Office (3 interviews)
- Medical Personnel associated with inpatient care (1 interview)

Documents reviewed include:

- Napa County Older Adult Assessment - A Comprehensive large sample survey conducted at the request of the Napa County Board of Supervisors the Napa County Commission on Aging, Napa County Health and Human Services Agency, Napa/Solano Area Agency on Aging and the Napa County Health Aging Population Initiative (HAPI). <https://communityhealthnapavalley.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/NOAA-FINAL-Report-for-Public-Distrib-1.23.24.pdf>
- Napa County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) 2022 and 2023 Annual Report as well as the Comprehensive Services for Older Adults 2021 - 2023 Strategic Plan.
- Napa County Aging and Disability Resource Guide
- California Penal Code: Elder, Disabled Adults - PEN § 368
- California Department of Social Services "SOC 242 - Adult Protective Services and County Block Grant Monthly Statistical Report" <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/research-and-data/disability-adult-programs-data-tables/soc-242>
- California Department of Justice Division of Medi-Cal Fraud and Elder Abuse training materials "Your Legal Duty...Reporting Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse"
- California Master Plan on Aging <https://mpa.aging.ca.gov/>
- University of Southern California Center for Elder Justice <https://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/national-center-on-elder-abuse/>
- US Census Bureau

DISCUSSION

The Jury explored the work and services of the local nonprofit organizations, as well as the contributions of individuals in the Ombudsman's office. We wish to commend their valuable contribution to the community and acknowledge the dedication of those who work diligently and volunteer so generously.

Definition of Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is defined as physical abuse, neglect, emotional/mental abuse, and financial abuse.

Physical abuse is physical force that results in injury or death, commonly recognized as: hitting, kicking, pinching, grabbing, burning, misuse of medicines (over or under-utilization), punching, choking, slapping, twisting, force-feeding, misuse of chemicals or physical restraints.

Elder neglect is the failure of a caregiver or responsible other to provide basic necessities, including nutrition, shelter, hygiene, clothing, necessary medical care and safety. If the elderly is neglected and there is no formal or presumed caregiver, then it is self-neglect.

Self-neglect is when an elderly person is unable to safely care for themselves at home and no caregiver has been identified.

Emotional abuse is intentionally causing mental anguish by threatening, terrorizing, humiliating, isolating, or demeaning a person.

Financial abuse is using an older adult's money or assets contrary to their wishes, needs, or best interests, or for the abuser's personal gain. Financial abuse includes undue influence when a person of trust manipulates and takes advantage of a vulnerable elder to gain control of money, property, or life either directly or through power of attorney, trust, marriage, adoption, or inheritance.

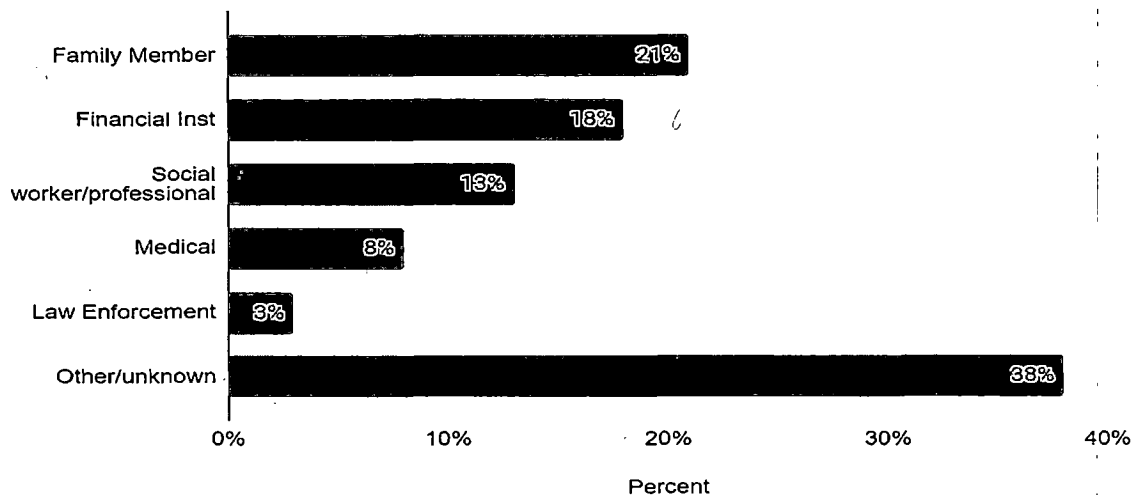
Elder abuse is defined in California Penal Code § 368.

The Reporting of Elder Abuse

Who Reports Elder Abuse?

In the NOAA survey respondents who said they experienced abuse or a crime reported that they told family members (69%), law enforcement (36%), a counselor, doctor or spiritual advisor (12%). Only 4% of respondents reported directly using Napa County APS.

Elder abuse is typically reported to APS by a family member or a "Mandatory Reporter."



Source: California Department of Social Services. The other/unknown percentage is most likely a combination of after-hours reporting, anonymous reporting, or cross reporting.

Who is a Mandatory Reporter?

California Welfare and Institutions Code § 15630 defines a mandatory reporter as a person who has assumed full or intermittent responsibility for the care or custody of an elder or dependent adult, a health practitioner, clergy member, employee of a county adult protective services agency, or a local law enforcement agency. A person in their professional capacity or within the scope of their employment, including those in a financial institution, who have observed or have knowledge of an incident that reasonably appears to be abuse are also mandatory reporters.

Failure to report an abuse is a misdemeanor.

Mandatory reporters who are close to the front line of abuse (social workers, ER doctors, etc.) know how to recognize abuse when they see it and know how to report abuse. Those a bit further from the front line may be unable to recognize abuse and unsure how to report it. The Jury found no person or entity accountable for informing these mandatory reporters of their responsibility to report abuse or how to report if they suspect it. Recent lawsuits filed in Los Angeles and San Mateo Counties accused major banking institutions of failure to protect elders in losses of more than \$2.2 million.

Elder Abuse is reported to Napa County Health and Human Services or law enforcement. If, after a preliminary investigation HHSA believes a crime has been committed, they will cross report to law enforcement. Generally, law enforcement will cross report to HHSA.

How is Elder Abuse Reported?

In Napa County, elder abuse is reported to Napa County Health and Human Services, Adult Protective Services (HHSA APS). Reports are made over the phone on a 24-hour hotline (707-253-4398 or 888-619-6913) or on-line. Elder abuse may also be reported to law enforcement. Law enforcement will generally cross report to HHSA APS if the abuse takes place in a non-inpatient facility. If the abuse takes place in an inpatient facility, law enforcement would generally cross report to the Ombudsman. If abuse appears to be of a criminal nature, APS or the Ombudsman would cross report to law enforcement.

When elder abuse is reported, the priority is to ensure the safety of the individual. The nature, the severity and the risk to the individual's safety dictate the speed of response.

When APS starts an abuse investigation, they first attempt to verify the abuse. If the abuse is verified, a social worker would marshal the appropriate resources to mitigate the abuse and arrange for the appropriate resources to yield a safe environment. Most (68%) elder abuse cases reported to HHSA APS are classified as self-neglect. This means the individual does not have the resources to ensure their own safety and no caregiver has been identified.

A Public Guardian/Conservator may be appointed if an individual is unable to provide their own basic food, clothing, and shelter needs. Additionally, if an individual is unable to manage their personal financial affairs or is susceptible to fraud or undue influence, a Public Guardian/Conservator may be appointed when there is no other trusted person available to act as conservator.

A request for a conservatorship can be initiated by Adult Protective Services or by a third party. Third parties include friends, family members, physicians, bankers, and law enforcement. An independent investigation is conducted to determine if conservatorship is necessary or if there are appropriate alternative services available.

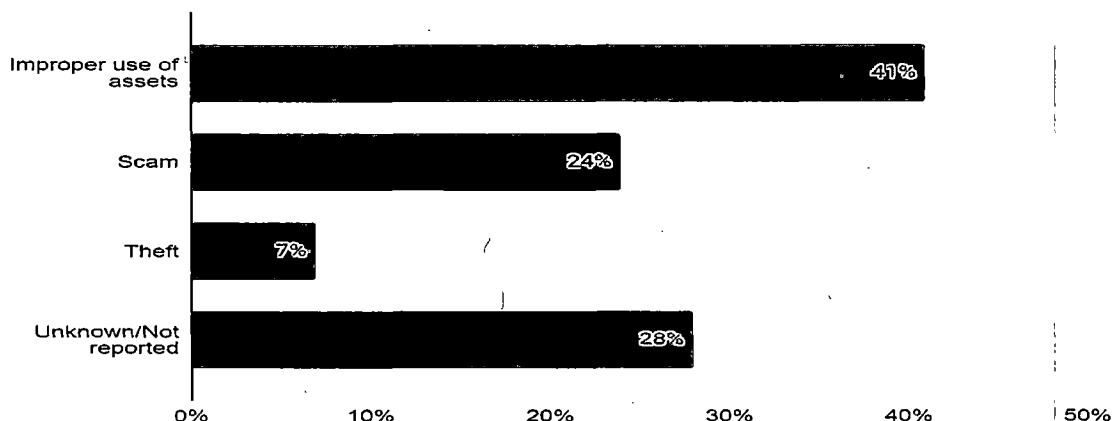
Criminal and Financial Scams

A relatively small percentage of elder abuse cases are severe enough to be considered criminal. Many of these are financial elder abuse. For a criminal case to be successfully prosecuted, law enforcement must have sufficient evidence that a crime has been committed and the perpetrator can be brought to justice. In many financial scams, the perpetrator can be difficult to track down, especially if the scam has taken place electronically and the perpetrator is not located in the United States.

Financial fraud and scams are a major elder abuse issue for Napa County. As noted earlier 12% of older Napa County citizens report being the victim of a fraud or scam. Financial elder abuse

reported to Napa APS indicates that improper use of assets is the most common form of financial abuse and scams are the second most common.

Financial Abuse Classification in Napa County



Source: California Department of Social Services. The other/unknown percentage is most likely a combination of after-hours reporting, anonymous reporting, or cross reporting.

Financial scams can be particularly damaging because recovery is usually minimal. If a scam is conducted by electronic means, tracking down the perpetrator and recovering funds are unlikely. As criminals become more sophisticated, potential victims have an increasingly difficult time recognizing and avoiding a scam. There is a strong belief among those interviewed by the Jury that financial scams in Napa County, with the advent of artificial intelligence, are becoming much more prevalent and sophisticated. The only sure way to mitigate financial scams is to prevent them from happening. Educating people on how to recognize and not fall victim to a scam is a strong community need.

The Role of Caregivers

Most elderly have a strong desire to remain in their home and live independently. At some point, most elderly will require some level of in-home care to maintain an independent lifestyle. The majority of elder abuse cases reported to APS are a result of insufficient care. Cases reported as self-neglect are, by definition, a result of insufficient care.

Napa is one of two California counties with a registered caregiver program for independent caregivers. To register, a caregiver must provide results of a current TB test and pass a criminal background check. The Napa County database lists fewer than 35 registered caregivers. Caregivers who work through an agency are not included in the caregiver registration program. The Alzheimer Association estimates 11.5% of individuals (3,330 people) in Napa County over the age of 65 have Alzheimer disease. Each of these individuals require some form of caregiving. The registered caregiver program appears to be underutilized.

In Home Support Services are available through MediCal if specific financial and medical conditions are met. The In Home Support Services (IHSS) program is administered by Napa County HHSA CSOA. In 2023 Napa IHSS had a 20.5% increase in new referrals and helped 1,571 older and disabled adults safely stay in their own home. In total IHSS provided nearly two million hours of in-home care. However, many people don't meet the MediCal insurance requirements. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that 14% of the US population over age 15 are an unpaid family or friend caregiver to the elderly. This would translate to approximately 15,000 people in Napa County.

Constellation of services for the elderly

Most people are ill prepared for the demands of aging or the role of caregiver. They lack clarity on what to expect, how to evaluate their situation, and how to assess their needs. They may face challenges managing the basics such as food, safe shelter, transportation, multiple prescriptions, medical equipment, and basic hygiene needs. As capabilities change due to declining physical and mental health, the emotional toll can also be high. Individuals can have difficulty navigating the resources and programs available and in determining what resources and services they can trust. Frequently, there is a lack of understanding of how to make the right choices for their care.

Elder Resources

There is a large constellation of resources and services available to older adults. Current resource guides are long and complicated and often require computer competency to navigate. The Napa County resource guide on the Napa County HHSA Comprehensive Services for Older Adults (CSOA) website is 50 pages long with 27 subcategories and nearly 250 hyperlinks. An assigned social worker will work with an individual and their family to identify resources from various agencies, businesses and nonprofits to help meet their needs. Even with a social worker's help, navigating this constellation of service can be daunting. An elderly person or care giver may lack the technical expertise to locate the right care solutions and make good care decisions on their own. Additionally, administrative requirements may significantly increase the burden in accessing many of these resources. Providence Home Health Napa, a nonprofit organization, recognized this need and established an "Information and Assistance" line to help the elderly maintain independence and their quality of life.

The complexity and subsequent navigational difficulty of long-term support services is recognized as a problem at the state level. The Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) Subcommittee of California's Master Plan for Aging's first objective is "A system that all Californians Can Navigate. Specifically, California will have in place an understandable, easy-to-navigate LTSS system that includes both home and community based residential options. Californians will know how to quickly connect to services they need, no matter where they live or their economic status. People will find what they need wherever they enter - whether through the healthcare system, the public benefits system, the disabilities system including Regional

Centers, or the community-based system”. Progress toward accomplishing this objective is not clear. The Master Plan for Aging January 2024 annual report references the most recent Long-Term Services and Supports Subcommittee stakeholders report from May 2020.

Simplifying and streamlining resource navigation remains a critical objective for the state. But a streamlined resource navigation system must tie to the local level where services are ultimately delivered. The county will need to make whatever the state delivers work locally. Engaging in the state's efforts sooner rather than later might help shape the outcome so that it increases the likelihood of success at the county level.

APS cannot force an individual to accept a service, an individual must consent. It is widely believed that elders are reluctant to report abuse or accept services for fear they will be removed from their home and placed in an inpatient facility. This is not true. APS cannot force an elder to accept a service or remove an elder from their home.

Providence Home Health Napa offers an “Information and Assistance” program that provides a gateway to services that assist the elderly in maintaining their long-term independence. Increasing the awareness and utilization of this program would undoubtedly result in better care. However, better integration of resources to the needs of individuals would also lead to improved care.

Strategies For Mitigating Elder Abuse

Based on interviews and research, five strategies for reducing the incidence of elder abuse emerge.

1. Breaking down access barriers to support and services to elders so they can maintain safe independent living arrangements before abuse can happen.
2. Promoting community engagement and inclusion to discourage isolation, so needs can be identified before the failure to meet these needs results in abuse.
3. Providing caregiver support and relief programs to encourage healthy relationships between caregivers and the elderly.
4. Educating the public on how to recognize and avoid financial scams.
5. Increasing community awareness and understanding of elder abuse through storytelling and reporting with the intent to encourage vigilance, reduce fear and stigma, and increase the utilization of services.

Napa County and Napa County nonprofits currently employ these strategies. Opportunities exist to increase the utilization of these strategies.

Strategy #1: Breaking Down Access Barriers to Getting Support

Barriers to getting support include:

- Lack of knowledge and ability to assess changing needs as a result of aging.

- Lack of awareness of the resources available and how to find them.
- Financial barriers limit access to resources.
- Physical barriers, most notably transportation to and from a resource.
- Technological barriers limit the ability to use and navigate the internet.
- Emotional barriers including the fear that accepting resources may lead to a loss of independent living and the feeling of not being deserving of services.

A large part of breaking down barriers is reaching and connecting with the elderly. The communication vehicle as well as the style and tone should be adapted to the elderly audience. For example, more traditional communication such as direct mail may be more effective than email blasts, social media, or websites.

Financial Barriers

HHSVA CSOD and Veterans Affairs have an excellent record in helping secure resources for those in need. Furthermore, several nonprofits in Napa County have an excellent history of delivering financial support as well as nutritional support. Often, a relatively small amount of money can make a big difference in someone's life. A minimal amount of assistance to help in an unexpected setback can stave off financial calamity and subsequent homelessness. There are likely opportunities to help the elderly find their way to services designed to break down financial barriers.

Physical Barriers

There are some excellent transportation resources available in Napa County. Molly's Angels in particular should be lauded for the work they do in addressing transportation issues. There needs to be greater understanding of physical barriers from the perspective of the senior citizen. For example, Vine Transportation may be able to transport a senior to the St. Helena Hospital bus stop. But the distance from the bus stop to the hospital may be insurmountable. Similarly, while transportation from one's home might be available, for some the distance from their front door to the end of their driveway to get on the bus may be too much. Gaps in service also exist such as a lack of a soft handoff when an individual connects from one service to the next, or the needed assistance at a final destination. Soft handoff practices need to be supported and encouraged.

A related physical barrier may lie in the delivery of food that may be difficult to open or requires preparation, including opening a can. Looking at issues from an individual's capability to receive and utilize the service and finding workarounds is critical.

Technological Barriers

Challenges to obtaining services online include lack of broadband access, the necessary device to navigate the internet, and knowledge of how to use the internet. Font size and poor vision can also be a barrier. Much effort is going into solving these issues by getting appropriate technology

into the hands of elders. These efforts should continue to be supported. However, more human interactions may be necessary depending upon the individual.

Emotional Barriers

The Jury identified three significant emotional barriers to receiving services: fear of loss of independence, feeling unworthy of support, and a sense of exclusion. These barriers may be present in the mind of the individual needing support. The key to effecting change is building a better sense of trust and inclusion through outreach programs. For example, over two-thirds of seniors have not used a Senior Center in the last five years. This would suggest an opportunity for outreach programs.

Strategy #2: Increasing Community Engagement and Inclusion

A primary cause of abuse is isolation. The NOAA survey reports that just over half (54%) of seniors said they felt excellent or good about the community making older adults feel welcome and almost four out of ten (39%) said they felt excellent or good about the community valuing older adults. These results suggest an opportunity for improvement. There are a number of excellent outreach programs supported by nonprofits in Napa designed to increase engagement and decrease isolation. These programs need to be promoted and supported thereby helping Napa citizens understand their responsibility to look out for one another and keep each other safe. Communication would also increase engagement and reduce isolation.

Strategy #3: Caregiver Support Programs

Caregivers often suffer from exhaustion, loneliness, isolation, and depression, especially when caring for a loved one with a long-term or chronic illness such as Alzheimer's disease. This can lead to negligent care and even abuse. Support systems for caregivers are crucial. Providence Home Health Napa Valley offers support services for caregivers. The extent to which caregivers who take advantage of these services is unclear. Widespread promotion that encourages participation in these services would lead to improved elder care.

Strategy #4: Educating the Public on How to Recognize and Avoid Financial Scams

Financial scams are a problem nationwide and the elderly are particularly vulnerable. Making sure banks and other financial institutions are trained to spot unusual activity and understand their responsibilities as mandatory reporters is an important way to mitigate financial scams. Teaching the elderly to be suspicious of attempts at drawing them into financial scams and providing a supportive way to vet any concerns would reduce the incidence of financial elder abuse.

Strategy #5: Increase Awareness and Understanding of Elder Abuse

Raising awareness of elder abuse awareness would result in greater recognition and reporting of abuse among the public and mandatory reporters. Greater awareness would diminish fear and embarrassment while encouraging the use of support services.

FINDINGS

- F1. The Jury found that Napa County has many dedicated people in county agencies and nonprofits who are working hard to help the elderly age gracefully.
- F2. The Jury found that no one appears to be accountable for ensuring that all mandatory reporters know their responsibilities. Many do not have sufficient training to identify elder abuse. Many may not know the correct procedure for reporting elder abuse, exposing them to liability for failing to report.
- F3. The Jury found that the constellation of services available to the elderly is broad and complex making it a challenge for some people to find the resources they need.
- F4. The Jury found that information sources and service delivery are often online. Ongoing efforts to get technology into the hands of the elderly is hampered by their lack of computer literacy resulting in a continuing need for in-person information and services.
- F5. The Jury found that services such as Providence Home Health Napa “Caregiver Resources” and “Information and Assistance” exist to meet the needs of the elderly and their caregivers. These services appear to be underutilized.
- F6. The Jury found that more outreach is needed to make the community aware of elder abuse and available services.
- F7. The Jury found that an affluent population makes Napa County particularly vulnerable to elder financial scams. Experts predict that emerging artificial intelligence technologies will make financial scams a bigger problem. The best deterrent to this type of fraud is for potential victims to have the capability and strategies to identify them beforehand.
- F8. The Jury found that the elderly population in Napa County is increasing. As the elderly population increases, the demand for resources needed to keep them safe will also increase. Additional social workers and mental health therapists will be needed in the county.
- F9. The Jury found that law enforcement training on how to identify and report elder abuse is limited.

COMMENDATIONS

The Jury explored the humanitarian work of local Community Partner nonprofit organizations providing vital services to the disabled, elderly and those in need. The Jury recognizes their invaluable contribution to the community and commend the dedication of all those who work diligently and volunteer so generously.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Jury recommends:

- R1. By September 30, 2024, HHSA develop and annually distribute a simple, brief card or letter to all mandatory reporters in Napa County. This form would inform them of their reporting responsibilities, and how to report and link to online resources for additional information.
- R2. By December 31, 2024, HHSA develop a “Healthy Aging Guide” for Napa County to aid the elderly, families, and caregivers in understanding how to better assess their needs and locate the available resources. Such a guide needs to go far beyond the simple list approach of the current *Napa County Aging and Disability Resource Guide*. HHSA should utilize county partners such as the Library and County Communications staff as well as other avenues to distribute this to the people who need the information.
- R3. By December 31, 2024, HHSA work in conjunction with the Commission on Aging, the Elder Abuse Task Force, and Healthy Aging Population Initiative (HAPI) to develop and implement a comprehensive communication plan aimed at both the elderly and the wider community. The objectives of this plan are to break down barriers for elder support, increase community engagement and inclusion, educate the community on recognizing and avoiding financial scams, and increase the awareness and understanding of elder abuse.
- R4. HHSA continues ongoing work with the District Attorney’s Office and nonprofit organizations to develop and enhance scam awareness and promote prevention campaigns. The objectives of these campaigns are to assist the elderly to recognize and avoid potential scams and know how to respond if faced with one.
- R5. Beginning July 1, 2024, Napa County HHSA proactively increase their involvement in the California Master Plan for Aging to help shape future programs and be more aware of resources and grant availability.
- R6. Beginning July 1, 2024, law enforcement establish periodic training that reinforces how to recognize and report elder abuse.

R7. By September 30, 2024, HHSA develop plans for hiring additional social workers and mental health professionals to meet the growing demand of the increasing elderly population.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

- Board of Supervisors: R1, R2, R3, R5, R6, and R7.
- Napa County Sheriff: R7.

INVITED RESPONSES

- Napa County Health and Human Services: R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, and R7.
- City of Napa Chief of Police: R6.

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| Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury. |
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APPENDIX

Napa County Agencies providing services to the Elderly

- Napa County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA)
- Comprehensive Services for Older Adults (CSOA) (a division of HHSA)
- Adult Protective Services (APS) investigates reports of abuse, provides support services, collaborates with Community Partners
- Napa County Public Guardian/Conservator/Administrator- provides mandated conservatorship services
- Veterans Services - local veterans advocate, assists in obtaining Federal benefits
- In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Assists eligible persons to remain safely at home, authorizes payment for care provider services.
- Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) - Provides complaint resolution and advocacy for residents in private care facilities. Maintains lists of local Residential Care and Skilled Nursing facilities
- Napa/Solano Area Agency on Aging (AAA) - responsible for planning and coordinating senior services
- Senior Centers- several locations throughout the County providing an assortment of services in health, recreational, and educational programs as well as meals, tax advice, informational, and support programs
- Vine Go Paratransit bus service by Napa Valley Transit Authority
- Registered Caregiver Program

Local Community Partners - Nonprofit Agencies

- Molly's Angels- Network of volunteers providing transportation, care calls, food redistribution, emergency food, and a wide range of assistance
- Share the Care - Manages a Stop Falls program, free durable medical equipment, home health supplies recycling and exchange program, home safety assessments, grab bar installation, home modification recommendations, dental care funding, friendly visitors, rides, well-being assessments, care/crisis management, and assistance with paperwork
- Community Action Napa Valley (CANV) provides Meals on Wheels, daily home-delivered meals and conversation, Food Bank monthly allotment, Senior Brown Bag Program, and Bi-monthly food allotment
- Providence- Community Health Napa Valley (formerly Collabria) offers Adult Day Health, PACE (Program for the All-inclusive Care of the Elderly), palliative and hospice care, and free caregiver training and education.
- Healthy Aging Population Initiative (HAPI) provides a variety of programs to help seniors remain living safely at home
- Elder Abuse Task Force- Coalition of County Representatives and Community Partners that collaborate on available resources and coordinate efforts among various agencies.
- Monarch Justice Center- provides advocacy, resources, and comprehensive support services for survivors
- Healthy Minds Healthy Aging - A prevention and early intervention program for early signs of depression and/or cognitive decline