

Department of Disability and Aging Services (DAS)

Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

DATE: Wednesday, May 21, 2025

TIME: 10-11:30am

PLACE: 1650 Mission St. 5th Floor, Golden Gate Room

To protect the health of the Advisory Council members, DAS staff, and members of the public during the COVID-19 health emergency, the DAS Advisory Council will continue to hold meetings remotely. Members of the public are encouraged to also participate in the meetings remotely.

Members Present: Allen Cooper, Margaret Graf, Chris Dillon, Beverly Karnatz, Tia Small, Lisa Cook, Diane Lawrence, Harry Breaux, Juliet Rothman, Daisy Jimenez, Morningstar Vancil.

Members Absent Excused: Ivy Chang, Marcy Adelman, Darlene Ramlose.

Welcome: Call to order 10:03 am and welcome all Council Members and guests.

Roll Call/Secretary

Motion to approve the March 19, 2025 Meeting Minutes: Approved.

Public Comment: None.

Director's Report, presented by Executive Director Kelly Dearman:

In April, Director Dearman participated in a Social Security panel alongside Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, where community members shared personal stories about how cuts to Social Security would impact their lives. Additionally, Director Dearman took part in a palliative care workgroup held at OnLok in partnership with the 30th Street Senior Center. The event, which marked National Healthcare Decisions Day, focused on providing families with tools to initiate important conversations around advanced healthcare planning.

The Mayor finalized his proposed city budget yesterday. It has now been submitted to the Controller's Office, and the Board of Supervisors will have the month of June to review and finalize it before the start of the new fiscal year on July 1. Notably, \$1.5 million in cuts were made to contractor allocations, while \$1 million in previously uncommitted funds were restored to the Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAS) budget. DAS is actively working to balance its budget under these constraints.

Governor Newsom has proposed a \$5 billion reduction in statewide spending. Key elements of the proposal that impact older adults include:

- Freezing enrollment in Medi-Cal for undocumented adults beginning January 2026
- Instituting Medi-Cal premiums for individuals with unsatisfactory immigration status
- Reinstating the Medi-Cal asset test (\$2,000 for individuals, \$3,000 for couples)
- Limiting In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) overtime and travel hours, reducing the cap from 66 hours/week to 50 hours/week

At the federal level, the proposed budget includes the dissolution of the Administration for Community Living (ACL), whose programs and oversight would shift primarily to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), except for food-related services. This change could undermine the coordination and effectiveness of senior programs established under the Older Americans Act, which has supported older adults for over 60 years.

The “skinny budget” proposal outlines a 22.7% cut to non-defense discretionary spending, while increasing defense spending by 13%. Programs facing significant reductions include:

- The Older Americans Act
- State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Other essential services for older adults, caregivers, and individuals with disabilities

As May is both Older Americans Month and Older Californians Month, Director Dearman extended her heartfelt thanks to the Council for their continued dedication and advocacy on behalf of older adults in our community.

President’s Report by President Dr. Allen Cooper:

Dr. Cooper reported on his attendance at the recent TAC quarterly meeting, which featured two key presentations:

1. Aging in Rural Communities
The first presentation focused on the unique challenges of aging in rural areas. SCAN Health Plan is providing targeted grants to organizations that are specifically established to address these rural aging issues through strategic planning and program development.
2. Threats to Medicaid Funding
The second presentation addressed serious threats to Medicaid at the national level. Currently, California covers approximately 50% of Medi-Cal spending and offers additional benefits such as dental and vision care—services not typically covered under the national Medicaid program. A federal proposal aims to cut \$880 billion from Medicaid in support of a larger \$1 trillion tax cut package. These reductions would significantly undermine the state’s ability to provide essential healthcare services to vulnerable populations.

Presentation from Amber Crist from Justice in Aging:

Amber Crist provided an overview of Justice in Aging, an organization founded in California in 1972 that is dedicated to fighting senior poverty through policy advocacy and education.

Ms. Crist highlighted the importance of Medi-Cal for older Californians:

- 2.3 million older adults rely on Medi-Cal for services not covered by Medicare, including dental, vision, hearing, long-term care, and transportation.
- 1.75 million use Medi-Cal to pay their Medicare premiums and out-of-pocket expenses.
- 900,000 adults receive long-term services and supports (LTSS) through Medi-Cal.
- Two-thirds of nursing home residents in California are Medi-Cal beneficiaries.

Ms. Crist discussed current threats from Congress:

- A new tax bill aims to extend and expand the 2017 tax cuts, which would be financed through budget reconciliation, allowing passage with a simple majority.
- Cuts would primarily impact Medicaid and SNAP, though Social Security is exempt from this process.

Key proposals under discussion:

1. Reduced Medicaid Funding to States - States like California may be forced to cut optional benefits such as IHSS, Assisted Living Waiver, CBAS, dental, vision, and hearing services.
2. Stricter Eligibility Requirements for Medicaid Expansion Groups - Proposals include a work requirement and eligibility redeterminations every six months.
3. Cuts to Medicare and Long-Term Care - Including a cap on home equity limits for eligibility (set at \$1 million, with no adjustment for inflation).
4. Restrictions on Immigrant Coverage - Federal changes could force California to end Medi-Cal coverage for undocumented immigrants.

Justice in Aging warns that these changes will disproportionately harm older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers, while benefitting the wealthiest Americans. Ms. Crist encouraged advocacy, particularly targeting moderate Republicans, and provided a toll-free number to reach Congress: 866-426-2631.

Ms. Crist also discussed proposed changes at the state level:

- Reinstating Medi-Cal asset limits to \$2,000 (individual) and \$3,000 (couple) beginning January 2026.
- Paused enrollment for new Medi-Cal applicants also starting in January 2026.
- IHSS overtime and travel hours would be reduced.

Other Federal Concerns include:

- The proposed elimination of the Administration for Community Living (ACL) would shift its programs to the Administration for Children & Families and CMS, threatening the continuity of:
 - Ombudsman programs
 - Adult Protective Services (APS)
 - Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP)
 - Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

Ms. Crist also warned about the return of aggressive estate recovery, especially in states where enforcement is already harsh. While California has historically minimized this, that could change under budget pressure.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

A. Site Visits– Juliet Rothman

Juliet emphasized that site visits are a vital part of the Council’s oversight responsibilities. These visits provide an additional perspective on how Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAS) programs operate and offer councilmembers firsthand insight into how City funds are being used. While originally conducted in person, virtual site visits—focused on assessing and evaluating websites—emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic and remain a useful tool.

Choosing Your Site - Mike compiled a list of sites along with contact information.

- Supervisor Appointees: Consider selecting a site within your district, as oversight there is part of your role.
 - You may also choose a site you’re familiar with, one that serves people you know, or one that may be convenient to visit now or in the future.
- Once you make your selection, notify Juliet.

Virtual or In-Person First? Juliet recommends beginning with a virtual visit, as it provides general background about the center, the types of services offered, and staff contacts. This also helps prepare you for the in-person visit, where you can refer to the website in your conversations with staff.

What to Observe - For both virtual and in-person visits, navigation and accessibility—both physical and digital—are critical areas to evaluate. During in-person visits, Juliet typically observes one or more activities and stays for lunch, speaks with the site director and other staff about operations and any challenges and engages with participants to hear their experiences firsthand

Documentation and Reporting - After your site visit, please complete the Site Visit Form, available on the DAS website. Once filled out, email the form to Juliet and Ravi.

Next Steps - Alan asked that each councilmember review the list and, by the next meeting, choose two sites to visit over the course of the year. Let Juliet know if you'd like to shadow another member for your first visit.

Beverly raised concerns about participant photographs on websites and suggested evaluating whether sites represent a diversity of cultures in their programming and materials. Juliet recommended reviewing site activities through the lens of cultural diversity, including language, food, and events. Mike Zaugg noted that while all sites are open to the public, some serve specific cultural groups and may not feel universally welcoming. There is an ongoing effort to balance cultural specificity with non-discriminatory access. Margaret added that discrimination can be felt upon entering a space if the dominant culture and language create a sense of exclusion. Morningstar responded that the sites she's familiar with have clear signage and guidelines ensuring non-discrimination in all directions.

Old Business: None.

Reports from the Field:

A. Joint Legislative Process Review - None

Announcements/Reminders

Margaret was involved in a Community Living Campaign Resource Fair at the Hall of Flowers in GG Park. 26 vendors, huge attendance. An upcoming event is Art with Elders, 6/8/25 at Laguna Honda Hospital.

Juliet shared that she recently attended a resource fair where she facilitated a powerful discussion with individuals living with early-stage Alzheimer's. The conversation focused on their personal experiences, including what it felt like to receive the diagnosis and navigate the diagnostic process. She found the discussion to be deeply moving and insightful.

Juliet also announced that she has received two grants: a microgrant and a larger grant from AARP. The funding will support a new initiative called Accessible Community Teams, which she envisions implementing at the neighborhood level. These teams will be dedicated to assessing and improving accessibility within their local communities.

Adjournment: 11:39am

Next Meeting: Wednesday June 18, 2025