Cal PACE

A Message from the CEO: Winding Down the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Flexibilities

Operational flexibilities provided by the state during the COVID-19 public health emergency have helped PACE organizations adapt and find innovative ways to provide services to their participants. PACE organizations have used the flexibilities to make it easier for participants to enroll in PACE and avoid delays in obtaining access to needed services, to provide needed services via telehealth, and to deploy PACE center staff to participants' homes.

These adaptations enabled PACE organizations to provide services in a better and safer manner. When compared to California nursing home residents, seniors enrolled in PACE have been nearly 75% less likely to be diagnosed with COVID-19. And importantly, throughout the pandemic, enrollment in PACE in California has continued to grow.

Although hard to imagine only a year ago, the state and federal governments are now planning for the end of the public health emergency declaration. Last month, the California Department of Health Care Services released its plan to unwind key regulatory flexibilities that have been in place temporarily. Importantly, the plan allows PACE providers to continue to use telehealth as an alternative to face-to-face interactions, place participants in facilities outside of approved service areas, when necessary, use brokers for marketing, and receive direct referrals from hospital and facility discharge planners.

Moving forward, these flexibilities will help PACE organizations continue to adapt their services to best meet the needs of their participants. CalPACE continues to seek ways to extend other flexibilities that have proven vital to the success of PACE during the pandemic, including use of telehealth for eligibility assessments for enrollment in PACE and use of verbal enrollment agreements followed up by written confirmation.

We have learned a lot during the pandemic about how to more effectively reach, enroll, and serve frail seniors who need PACE, and we will continue advocating for flexibilities that build on our success. I look forward to partnering with all of you in the work ahead.

Peter Hansel
Chief Executive Officer, CalPACE

Legislative Priorities in Focus

CalPACE is supporting key bills this year which have the potential to increase the number of seniors and persons with disabilities who are eligible for Medi-Cal, provide funding for Adult Day Health Center improvements, and foster greater partnerships between PACE and affordable housing providers. Backed by bipartisan support, the good news is that all are continuing to move forward after passing the State Assembly.

- AB 1900 (Arambula) – This bill would reduce the share of cost amounts for medically needy people and families with too much income to qualify for free Medi-Cal. Eligibility would match the income limit for individuals who are over age 65 or are disabled. If passed, this will be the first time in 33 years that the "spend down" provisions for free Medi-Cal have been adjusted.
- AB 2331 (Calderon) – This bill requires the Department of Aging to administer a grant program to help adult day services programs, including those administered by PACE, adjust to ongoing threats from COVID-19 and address workforce shortages.

- **AB 2483** (Maienschein) – Requires the Department of Housing and Community Development to provide funding incentives to housing developers who set aside at least 25 percent of units for individuals experiencing homelessness and eligible to receive qualifying services such as PACE.

AB 1900 and AB 2331 have companion budget requests under consideration in final budget deliberations over the next few weeks. For real-time updates on these and other advocacy issues, please follow CalPACE on Twitter and/or Facebook.

State Budget Update

Governor Gavin Newsom's May Revise state budget revealed a record $97.5 state budget surplus. The revised budget builds on strong investments contained in the Governor's January budget release by including funding for additional programs that will benefit seniors and persons with disabilities:
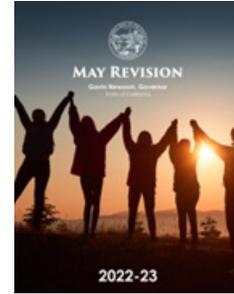
- $36.3 million in new funding to continue implementation of the Master Plan for Aging and to support important aging and community living - including $14.9 million to support California's Caregiver Resource Centers, $10 million for a Community Living Fund to help older adults and people with disabilities transition from nursing homes to independent living, and $4 million to develop a statewide plan to support the development of home and community-based services in underserved areas.
- $60 million for the Health Enrollment Navigators Project, a key investment to help enroll beneficiaries who are newly eligible for Medi-Cal and help current beneficiaries retain their Medi-Cal coverage.

The budget passed by the Assembly and Senate builds on these investments by adding other important initiatives that CalPACE has supported:

- $61.4 million for grants to adult day services providers to recover from COVID-19 and combat senior isolation
- $31 million to reduce share of cost requirements for seniors and persons with disabilities by increasing the Medi-Cal Maintenance Need Income Level.
- $137 million for health care workforce development, including expanded funding for loan repayment and scholarships for primary care and behavioral health providers and allied health workers.

New PACE Facilities Open in California

AltaMed PACE opened a new facility in Norwalk last month. The new 28,000-foot center offers comprehensive health services and care coordination, dental services, physical therapy, social services, meals, transportation, recreational activities, and medication management.

San Diego PACE Vista opened in March as a partnership of four organizations - TrueCare, Vista Community Clinic, Neighborhood Healthcare, and San Ysidro Health - serving 36 ZIP codes, including the communities of Del Mar, Poway, Escondido, Ramona, Fallbrook & Oceanside. The facility includes 17 patient observation rooms, a dental office, a lab, offices for physical therapy, and a large common area for social activities. There is even a four-chair grooming station for haircuts, beard-trimming and nail-trimming.

## On Lok Teams Up with Stanford University on TelehealthResearch

Stanford University researchers interviewed independent living community residents to better understand barriers to telemedicine and how to improve access and patient experience. Conducted in partnership with On Lok PACE of San Jose and Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System, the full study is available here.

Participants were asked to choose the biggest barriers to connect with health care providers through video visits. The largest reported barriers were hearing difficulties (35.7%), unfamiliarity with how to use technology or the internet (30.1%), not knowing how to connect to the telemedicine platform (29.7%) and language issues (26.5%).

Access to PACE Increasing in California

Data compiled by the National PACE Association shows PACE access to PACE is growing in California. Out of nearly 130,000 Californians estimated to be eligible for PACE care, 84% live in an area with a PACE provider, putting California among the top six states in access to PACE. Expanding access to PACE remains critical to meet the care challenges that come with our aging population while meeting the expectation Californians have to age at home in their communities.

Financially & Clinically Eligible Population - CA Potentially Served Estimate

20,216, 16%
109,287, 84%

■HSA with PO ■HSA without PO
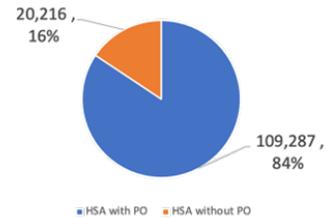
Announcements

The Center for Elders' Independence celebrated its 40th Anniversary. The organization has grown to currently serve more than 950 older adults through PACE. In honor of the anniversary, CEI hosted a community celebration in Oakland's Jack London Square on May 5 where its service to the community was recognized by Mayor Libby Schaff. It is also sharing on its Facebook page video stories of participants, caregivers, staff, and leaders that showcase PACE and their resolve to make seniors' lives better.

After a pandemic hiatus, On Lok hosted its annual gala –On Lok CELEBRATES – in person on May 26th. The event featured live music by Raquel Berlind & Trio Florencio, auction & fund-a-need emceed by Warriors "Hype Man" Franco Finn, and an after-party with music by DJ Lamont. Gala proceeds and donations support On Lok activities, classes, meals, and services to seniors in need.

CalOptima announced Michael Hunn as its CEO, in March. He first joined CalOptima last November as the organization's interim CEO. Previously, Hunn was president of The Hunn Group, providing advisory services to hospitals, health systems, physicians, and a variety of health care-related clients.

About CalPACE

CalPACE, the California PACE Association, is a 501(c)(6) association that is dedicated to the expansion of comprehensive health care services to seniors with chronic care needs through the Program of All-inclusive Care for Elderly (PACE). Through education and advocacy, CalPACE members strive to support, maintain, and safeguard the PACE model and promote high-quality comprehensive health care services to California's seniors.

CalPACE represents 23 operational PACE organizations in California. Our members and allied organizations provide and coordinate services to more than 16,000 participants through 69 PACE Centers and Alternative Care Settings in 22 counties.

Find a PACE Program