

Kern County Commission On Aging

Judy Snyder, Chairperson
5357 Truxtun Avenue
Bakersfield, CA 93309
(661) 868-1054; (661) 868-1001 FAX



REGULAR COMMISSION ON AGING MEETING MINUTES

February 23, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.

Rasmussen Senior Center
115 E. Roberts Lane, Bakersfield, CA 93308
and via Zoom

OPENING

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Snyder called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

FLAG SALUTE & MOMENT OF SILENCE:

The flag salute was completed, and a moment of silence was observed.

ROLL CALL OF COMMISSION MEMBERS

*(*Chairperson, **Vice Chairperson, *** Parliamentarian, ****Secretary)*

Commission Members Present:

In Person – Susan Bodnar, Vivian Cao, Sonia Dhillon, Sherry Gomez, Anabel Griffin, Julie Juarez-Ceja, **Jan Lemucchi, Ellen Linder, ****Jeremy Oliver (non-voting), Yolanda Prado, Christie Ray, Miguel Salazar, Yarnell Sherrell, *Judy Snyder

Virtually – None.

Excused Absences: Barbara Goodlow, Norma Jackson, Jami Ward

SECRETARY OLIVER CONFIRMED A QUORUM WAS PRESENT IN PERSON.

Honorary Commission Members Present:

Stephanie Lynch

Aging and Adult Services Staff Present:

Laura M. Juarez – Office Services Coordinator

GUESTS:

In Person: Melody Morgan, Daniel Escobedo, Susanne Sparks, Frances Melvin, Jerry Boles, Jose Marroquin, Alicia S., Gonzalo S., Stephan Lewis, Daisy Neri, Gayla Hughes, Darwin

McCurdy, Floyd West, Marin C., Terry Ray, Catherine Vasquez, H. Edward Lynch, Desiree Ingalls, Rosalie W., Monica Fitzgerald, Sheila Roth

Virtually: Chad Acker, Sara Swertfager, Laura Rodriguez

CORRESPONDENCE:

None.

COMMENTS OF GENERAL INTEREST:

Public Comments: None.

Commissioner Comments :

- Commissioner Griffin shared information about Training for Homemaker Program through Dignity Health Care Program from March 9th through March 21st. For additional information, call Jeanette at 661-325-3016.

ACTION ITEMS:

- **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Motion made to approve January 26, 2026, Regular Commission on Aging meeting minutes as presented.
Motion: Lemucchi; **Second:** Juarez-Ceja; **Abstention:** Gomez ; **Objection:** None.
Motion carried.
- **APPROVAL OF HONORARY COMMISSIONER:** Motion was made to appoint Doris Duquette as an Honorary Commissioner.
Motion: Gomez; **Second:** Linder; **Abstention:** None; **Objection:** None.
Motion carried.

SERVICE PROVIDER PRESENTATIONS:

RASMUSSEN SENIOR CENTER – Desiree Ingalls

Desiree Ingalls reported for the month of January 2026 that they served 2,598 congregate meals, and 5,462 meals on wheels. There's been an uptake in congregate meals. They started a new music BINGO where they play songs instead of calling numbers. Chair Snyder thanked Desiree and the senior nutrition volunteers. She also shared that Rasmussen Senior Center will be getting new A/C units.

GENERAL SERVICES - PARKS AND RECREATION – Isaac Preston

Isaac Preston did not attend but provided a report which was read by Commissioner Cao:

Isaac will be requesting funding for the Lake Isabella Senior Center for a major maintenance request. He is hoping it gets approved.

VETERANS SERVICE – Jose Lopez

Jose Lopez reported this month marked a milestone for California Veterans. Governor Newsom signed SB694 into law which prevents unaccredited individuals and businesses from operating for profit in California in the preparation and submission of VA claims. This

is huge in that it protects our most vulnerable populations of veterans which are our elderly and disabled, as well as their dependents. The law goes into effect on 1/1/2027, so they have much work to do in the form of educating the community about what to do if affected by one of these illegitimate companies, how to report them to the attorney general's office, and continuing to provide quality service for all of Kern County's veterans and their dependents. If you or someone you know requires assistance, please call their office at: (661) 868-7300, or email Kernvets@kerncounty.com.

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES – Sara Swertfager, SPHN

Sara Swertfager attended virtually and reported the following:

Vaccination Updates:

- No new vaccination recommendations. Seasonal Flu and COVID vaccines continue to be routinely recommended. Two doses of COVID vaccine six months apart are recommended for adults 65 and older. RSV continues to be recommended once in a lifetime for adults > 75 years of age and high-risk individuals 50-74 years.
- To receive any of these vaccines through the Public Health Clinic, please call 661-321-3000 to make an appointment.

Highlights from 2025

- 178,510 Disease incident reports processed.
- 32,604 Laboratory specimens resulted.
- 10,850 Birth certificates issued.
- 30,411 Death certificates issued.
- 1,280,116 Pounds of food rescued by the Wast Hunger Not Food Program
- 140,805 Emergency 911 medical calls
- 33,479 Calls Received through call center and reception
- 582 Unpermitted food vendor cease and desists issued
- 1382 Unpermitted food vendor investigations conducted
- 12,303 Inspections conducted by the Environmental Health Program
- 7690 Patient clinic visits
- 2319 Emergency response and foster care medical referrals
- 1678 Mother and children served by our MCAH programs
- 290 Families provided car seat educations

PH Annual Campaign - Thrive Like a Poppy

- Health is a journey and Thrive Like a Poppy celebrates every step of it. This year-long initiative uses the life cycle of a poppy to spotlight essential public health services and seasonal wellness tips for every age, reminding our community that it's possible to thrive at every stage of life. Each quarter highlights a different phase of life using the visual metaphor of the poppy's life cycle: Seed (Infants), Sprout (Teens), Bloom (Adults), and Golden Petals (Seniors).

Please visit their website to get more information and see videos related to the campaign:
<https://www.kernpublichealth.com/healthy-community/annual-campaigns/thrive-like-a-poppy>

KERN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND RECOVERY SERVICES (BHRS) – Chad Acker

Chad Acker attended virtually and gave the following report:

Housing Program Changes (Effective January 1, 2026):

- KernBHRS will partner with Kern Health Systems, Anthem, and Kaiser to offer a new Transitional Rent benefit.
- Eligible members must:
 - Be enrolled in one of these Managed Care Plans.
 - Meet criteria for specialty behavioral health services.
 - Be experiencing homelessness.
- Transitional Rent provides up to 6 months of housing assistance.
- This funding must be used first before determining eligibility for any additional KBHRS housing support beyond the 6 months.
- Transitional Rent can only be used at:
 - Room & Board (R&B) facilities
 - Sober Living Environments (SLE)
- Transitional Rent cannot be used at:
 - Adult Residential Facilities (ARF)
 - Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly (RCFE)
- Emphasis is being placed on compliance with new requirements to ensure access to this funding.
- The goal is to improve housing stability to better support treatment and recovery.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (DHS) – Daisy Neri

Daisy Neri reported on the following:

Medi-Cal Policy Change regarding Reinstatement of Asset Limits for Non-Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) Medi-Cal Programs:

Effective January 1, 2026, the asset test has been reinstated for:

- Non-MAGI programs, including the
 - Medicare Savings Programs (MSP) and
 - Long-Term Care (LTC) programs,

The following Non-MAGI programs will continue to be exempt from property/asset limits:

- Pickle,
- Disabled Adult Child (DAC), and

- Disabled Widow/er (DW) programs.

Impacted Population:

- New NON-MAGI population
 - Individuals applying for Medi-Cal benefits under the affected Non-MAGI programs with an application date after January 1, 2026
- Existing NON-MAGI populations
 - Members with annual renewals due on or after January 2026.

The new asset limits are:

- \$130,000 for one person
- Add \$65,000 for each additional family member (up to 10 people)

Assets include:

- Bank accounts:
 - The available balance of all bank and credit union accts
- Cash:
 - Cash on hand is exempt when the client states that the cash on hand are processed from their current month's income. If not exempt, cash on hand is countable as property.
- Property:
 - Boats, motorcycles etc.
- Stocks, bonds and mutual funds
- Trusts
- Life insurance
 - The cash surrender value (CSV) of the life insurance policy for each individual
- Burial Plots
- Vehicles:
 - If the client has more than one vehicle, he/she may choose which vehicle is exempt.
- Business property:
 - Any property regardless of value, that is used in a business.
- Some assets don't count, like the home you live in, one vehicle, household items, irrevocable burial funds and certain savings, like retirement accounts.

Annual Renewals:

Members with annual renewals due on or after January 1, 2026, are required to report (self-attest) or provide verification of their assets as part of the eligibility determination.

Eligibility process:

- NON-MAGI RE packet provided:
 - Staff must attempt to contact the client to obtain a self-attestation of assets.
 - If contact is established with the client:
 - ✓ Capture self-attestation of all assets via narrative/journal entry.
 - ✓ Update CalSAWS property list page with the minimum necessary info to accept self-attestation

- ✓ No additional verification should be requested. Human Services Technician (HST) can proceed to process the MC Renewal.
- If contact is NOT established with the client:
 - ✓ Issue the new MC604 IPS available via CalSAWS with an MC 355 and allow 30 days to provide.

Eligibility must be approved for an Aged, Blind, Disabled (ABD) Long Term Care (LTC) and Non-LTC applicant who self-attests that the combined value of their assets is below the asset limits of \$130,000 for one person and \$65,000.00 for each additional person.

Asset Verifications Desk Guide provides the minimum necessary information to accept self-attestation.

Additional details will be provided once the AVP report for NON-LTC clients becomes available in CalSAWS in the coming months.

EMPLOYERS' TRAINING RESOURCE (ETR) – Peggy Langels

Not in attendance.

PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES – Catherine Vasquez

Catherine Vasquez appeared in person and gave the following report:

Home Access Grant

The Home Access Grant is an ADA grant to install wheelchair ramps, grab bars, and walk-in showers for low-income disabled persons. Owner-occupied and rental property are eligible if the property owner agrees to the work. An inspection is completed to determine specific needs, and all work is done by licensed contractors.

Home Improvement Loan

The Home Improvement Loan replaces air conditioners, heaters, roofs, electrical, plumbing, windows, insulation, floors, and paint. This program is available to low-income owner-occupied single-family residence. It is a zero interest, deferred payment loan that is due and payable in full when the owner no longer occupies the property.

If you know anyone interested in either program, please have them call the office at 661-862-5024.

INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER (ILC) – Laura Rodriguez

Laura Rodriguez attended virtually for Jessica Carrillo and reported the following:

Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC):

ILC is working to invite more agencies to become extended partners of the ADRC, including Redwood and other assistive living facilities throughout Kern County. ILC has an upcoming partnership with the Kern River Valley Senior Center in Lake Isabella for a presentation on how to hire a personal attendant. This event is scheduled for March 4, 2026, at 11:00 AM.

Anyone interested can RSVP by calling our center at 661-325-1063 or emailing us at: info@ilcofkerncounty.org.

Independent Living Center of Kern County (ILCKC):

ILCKC is once again hosting their annual Americans with Disabilities Act Conference, but this year there is a twist: they are expanding the event to a two-day conference, followed by an exciting casino night. They are currently seeking sponsorships and in-kind donations. If your agency is interested in becoming a sponsor or donating in-kind, please contact Jimmie Soto at 661-330-0611 or Jessica Carrillo at 661-325-1063.

VICTIM WITNESS PROGRAM – Kayla Pinkston

Kayla Pinkston was not in attendance but submitted a report about their Kern County Victim Services Unit (VSU) & Family Justice Centers. Jeremy Oliver read the following report:

Kern County Victim Services Unit (VSU) & Family Justice Centers:

- Victim Services Unit located at 1300 18th Street, Bakersfield, CA 93301
 - Phone number 661-868-5960
 - District Attorney Advocates can assist all victims of crime through the criminal justice process
 - Court accompaniment
 - Case Updates
 - California Victims of Crime Compensation application assistance
 - Prosecution & Law Enforcement Accompaniment
 - Victim Impact Statements and Restitution
- Family Justice Center also located at 1300 18th Street, Bakersfield, CA 93301
 - Phone number: 661-868-5950
 - Walk ins– 8am to 4pm
 - Assists Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Human Trafficking
 - Partners on site include:
 - Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance (GBLA)
 - Open Door Network
 - Kern County Department of Human Services
 - Kern County Child Support (kiosk)
 - Partners off-site include
 - Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS)
 - Women's Center High Desert
- South Family Justice Center - 12022 Main St, Lamont CA 93241
 - Phone number: Lamont- 661-868-5820

Both programs have access to language lines and intakes can be taken over the phone for those who are not able to come into their facilities for initial services. If anyone has questions, they can call the Program Coordinator Adriana Cuadras Talamantez, at 661-868-5956 or Program Supervisor, Kayla Pinkston, at 661-868-5955.

STAFF PRESENTATIONS - AASD SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION REPORT

DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Jeremy Oliver

Jeremy Oliver reported the following:

FEDERAL

The President signed into law a bill funding most of the government, including Labor/Health and Human Services (HHS), through September, ending the full government shutdown. Older Americans Act (OAA) programs and other critical aging programs are now fully funded until the end of the fiscal year. We anticipate level funding moving into our next fiscal year.

Administrator for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Dr. Mehmet Oz, recently visited the state and Kern County. Shortly after his visit, a letter was sent to the Governor inquiring about increases in spending on Medicaid through specific programs highlighting growing costs to the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program as one of the programs and asking about efforts to combat fraud, waste and abuse (FWA). The State responded with a 64-page letter entitled California's Response to CMS' Request for Program Integrity Action Plan.

The response highlights the State's efforts to combat FWA and points to growing needs in California as reasons for the increased costs in part due to an expanding aging population. Additionally, it highlights the savings the IHSS program brings in accordance with stated missions of the federal programs.

STATE

The California Department of Aging has opened its 45-day period for public written comment on changes to Unit of General-Purpose Local Government. Written comments need to be received by April 6, 2026. The proposed changes seek to clarify that counties are eligible entities for purposes of CDA Programs.

In recent updates the County of Ventura (PSA 17) is seeking de-designation as the local Area Agency on Aging and the previous non-profit (Central Coast Commission for Senior Citizens) that was designated for the counties of San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara (PSA 18) is also relinquishing its designation. As a result, the State has posted requests for proposals for PSA 17, and we anticipate an RFP for PSA 18. A March 23 Public Hearing will be held in relation to the Ventura PSA 17.

DEPARTMENT

The Department is drafting its budget for the next fiscal year July 1, 2026, to June 30, 2027. The County is requesting that all departments prepare step down plans in General fund areas. This has impact on any over-match programs such as nutrition.

Older Americans Month Resource Fair has begun planning for May 2, 2026. The event to be held at our offices located at 5357 Truxtun Avenue from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Channel 23 News has offered to promote the event and have a booth at our event this year. There will be no charge for vendors and flyers have begun to be circulated.

Adult Protective Services has begun planning for the Annual Elder Abuse Prevention Conference and has a date selected of June 11, 2026. We are awaiting contract language to secure Lux venue off Gosford in Bakersfield. The process of selecting presenters for the event is occurring and topics will be shared as we develop the program.

The IHSS Community First Choice Option (CFCO) penalty continues to be a high priority to minimize the penalty to the department/county. Penalty totals as of the end of December are \$287,209.28. We are pivoting to try to address the pending applications and other reassessments that are overdue. Challenges faced are high volume and staffing to keep up with the workload.

The SNAP-ED program with our department will be ending due to no longer receiving federal or state funding. This is in part due to HR1 implementations. We are exploring partnership with Eli Health for a Medicare Funded program called Guiding an Improved Dementia Experience (GUIDE) Model. More information will be shared as it is fully implemented.

The Ombudsman program has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Kern County Fire Department and the Kern County Aging and Adult Services Department to coordinate emergency response support for long-term care facilities.

OPERATING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

BYLAWS COMMITTEE – S. Bodnar

No report.

CALIFORNIA SENIOR LEGISLATURE (CSL) – J. Lemucchi, J. Snyder

No report.

COMMISSIONER APPOINTMENT – S. Gomez

Commissioner Gomez provided the following report:

Recently Reappointed: None.

New Appointments: None.

Resignations/Retiring: None.

***Expired Terms:**

1. Yolanda Prado, term expired 09/08/2025 – In Process, awaiting response.
2. Barbara Goodlow – In Process, awaiting response.
3. Ellen Linder – In Process, awaiting response.

*Commissioners can continue serving until they are reappointed.

Vacancies:

1. District 2 - for term expiring 06/17/2026 (replacing Gloria Brown)
2. District 2 – for term expiring 09/29/2027
3. District 3 – for term expiring 09/22/2027
4. District 5 – for term expiring 06/17/2027
5. Around the Clock Care – for term expiring 08/07/2027 – Pending Appointment of Stacie Dollar (waiting on formal letter).

New Applications Received:

1. Kali Markham – On Hold - Capacity for applicants under 60 years may have been reached at this time.

This concludes the Commissioner Appointment Report for February 2026.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION – E. Linder

No report.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – S. Bodnar; S. Gomez; J. Lemucchi; Y. Prado; C. Ray; J. Snyder

Chair Snyder reported that the Executive Committee met February 4, 2026, via Zoom. The Commission had a lot of recent retirements in 2025, and those created vacancies. The COA Bylaws state the Commission should have 15 to 25 active Commissioners. While we currently have 16 Commissioners, there are two who are not able to attend or have not attended for a variety of reasons. As a result, the Commission seems a little on the smaller side. Our goal is to fill these vacancies. We have two applicants willing to fill those vacancies, but we are awaiting the appointment process. The committee also discussed new Commissioner orientation, and the upcoming events that Jeremy outlined in his report. The Older Americans month is fun. They have cake walks, yoga, lots of information. Jeremy shared that the committee is looking into getting an Elvis impersonator for the event. Commissioner Juarez-Ceja shared that Alzheimer's Disease Association of Kern County is holding their annual Caring for the Caregivers conference on November 7, 2026, at Hodel's Country Dining. They consider this as a one-stop shop to learn about resources available in the community for families who are experiencing Alzheimer's or Dementia in their homes. They'll have a variety of vendors there. Most importantly, attendees will learn how to prevent caregiver burnout, or how to combat caregiver burnout. This event is free for caregivers.

IN-HOME SUPPORTIVE SERVICES (IHSS) ADVISORY – A. Griffin

Commissioner Griffin reported the committee last met on January 15th and a lot of the information and IHSS numbers Jeremy provided in his report is what was shared with the committee. She invited everyone to attend the meetings which are held on the third Thursday of every other month. The next meeting will be March 19th at Aging and Adult Services. She ended her report with sharing that the IHSS staff are working very hard to get the new referral cases caught up. The department is still accepting applications.

LONG TERM CARE – S. Dhillon; N. Jackson; C. Ray

Commissioner Dhillon reported she and Commissioner Ray visited the San Joaquin Rehab Center and found it to be well-maintained with appropriate staffing ratios, though they noted some concerns about call light response times and staffing shortage but the staff reassured them that when they are short on staff, they do get overtime to stay and work and they are hiring on Indeed for CNAs and nurses. Menus, activities, and licenses were posted and up to date.

MARKETING & ORIENTATION COMMITTEE –J. Juarez-Ceja; M. Salazar; Y. Prado; J. Snyder

Commissioner Prado reported they will be ready for the upcoming events. New Commissioner orientation is scheduled for February 26th. Chair Snyder added that as events come up, they'll need their full participation, especially since there are fewer Commissioners right now.

NOMINATION COMMITTEE – B. Goodlow; N. Jackson

No report.

SENIOR CENTER ADVISORY – S. Bodnar; B. Goodlow; A. Griffin; C. Ray

The Committee provided reports on the following senior centers:

- Commissioner Goodlow (read by Chair Snyder): February was an active month, being that it is Black History Month. The Bakerfield Senior Center started Black History Month on February 1, 2026, with a Gospel Brunch. It was a sell-out. Cain Memorial AME Church choir sang several songs from the Black Culture. The menu consisted of grits, mac and cheese, chicken wings, fried fish, canned yams, collard greens, drinks, and dessert. All Favorable Southern Style Cuisine. The sewing class had a fashion show. Valentine's Day was a showcase of red attire. On February 21st, the Cardio class had an event called Soulful Steps for those who would like to learn how to line dance. The center continues to offer sewing, cardio, exercise, arts and crafts, and Bible Study. Beginning in March, the Senior Center will be offering diabetic classes. Everyone is welcome to join. The best news is that the Bakersfield Senior Center will begin its move to the new temporary location in March 2026

SUNSHINE COMMITTEE – E. Linder

Commissioner Linder reported she just received an updated Commissioner contact list so she will review it and continue to send cards as needed.

THE AREA AGENCY ON AGING COUNSEL OF CALIFORNIA (TACC) – S. Dhillon; S. Gomez

No report.

TRANSPORTATION – J. Lemucchi; M. Salazar

No report. The next meeting is scheduled for April 21, 2026.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION –E. Linder

Commissioner Linder shared that prior to the meeting, the Commission recognized 16 senior nutrition volunteers for their volunteerism. Volunteers will continue to be recognized as they visit different senior centers throughout the county.

INFORMATION ITEMS

- **Centenarian Recognition Program Parliamentarian** – Commissioner Ray shared that there are two pending birthdays. Certificates will be presented as the date nears.

GUEST COMMENTS:

- Suzanne Sparks asked about warming centers. Jeremy Oliver explained that the County does not offer warming centers because it is an overnight stay. There are also funding and staffing constraints currently preventing their operation. She also inquired about getting wi-fi for the Rasmussen Senior Center. Jeremy responded that we do have some locations and the department did offer it for a little while when they had the Digital Divide program, but that funding is no longer available.
- Royce Spencer addressed his approval of the homeless Tiny Homes Center. Chair Snyder encouraged him to reach out to District 3 Board of Supervisor and his staff for any concerns or additional suggestions for the community.
- Monica Fitzgerald asked if there is a path or support for homeless seniors as far as tracking. Jeremy responded that there is a Homeless Collaborative that Aging and Adult Services is a partner of, and the department can help prevent seniors from becoming homeless with the department's Home Safe program. He asked Monica to reach out to him if she'd like to discuss this further.

NEXT MEETINGS:

EXECUTIVE MEETING	REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, March 4, 2026, at 1:30 pm Via Zoom If interested in attending via Zoom, please contact Laura Juarez at 661-868-1052.	Monday, March 16, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. Taft Senior Center 500 Cascade Place, Taft, CA 93268 (COA Ex-Officio Members and the public may attend in person or via Zoom. Please contact Laura Juarez at 661-868-1052 for the link to join)

ADJOURNMENT - The meeting adjourned at 2:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeremy Oliver
Secretary

JO/lj