

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

July 20, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.

Shafter Senior Center
505 Sunset Ave., Shafter, CA 93263
and virtually via Zoom

OPENING

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Snyder called the meeting to order at 1:00 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 – Vivian Cao, Suzann Gray, Anabel Griffin, Barbara Goodlow, Julie Juarez-Ceja, **Jan Lemucchi, Ellen Linder, Kathy Orrin, Julie Parsons, Yolanda Prado, Christie Ray, Miguel Salazar, Yarnell Sherrell, *Judy Snyder

Virtually – None.

Excused Absences: Susan Bodnar, Sonia Dhillon, Stacie Dollar, Norma Jackson, ****Jeremy Oliver (non-voting), Justina Howell

COLLEEN PHILLEY CONFIRMED A QUORUM WAS PRESENT IN PERSON.

Honorary Commission Members Present:

None.

Aging and Adult Services Staff Present:

Colleen Philley, Program Manager
Laura M. Juarez – Office Services Coordinator

GUESTS:

- **In Person:** Rosemaria Jimenez, Phillip Jimenez, Rebecca Jimenez, Jose Lopez, Catherine Vasquez, Anthony Barbato
- **Virtually:** Sara Swertfager, Tara Gray, Tiffany Cigich, Daisy Neri, Gayla Hughes, Chad Acker, Kayla Pinkston

CORRESPONDENCE: None.**COMMENTS OF GENERAL INTEREST:****Public Comments:**

- Anthony Barbato presented his desire to establish a sixth of its kind in Kern County adult day healthcare facility to serve 100 to 200 seniors, regardless of income. The initiative builds on a successful model operating five facilities in Kern County since 2021. Operating Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., the program mirrors PACE centers by providing transportation, breakfast, lunch, and access to on-site nurses and physical therapists. To complement existing county programming and bypass expensive commercial builds, the immediate next step is to secure an underutilized, vacant 6,500-square-foot county building, senior center, or church facility with a commercial kitchen. Licensing is expected to take 18 to 24 months.
- Phillip Jimenez introduced himself as the District Manager for the Shafter Recreation and Park District, a role he has held for nearly nine years. He welcomed everyone to Shafter's beautiful community center, provided housekeeping details, and emphasized his appreciation for their strong partnership with County Aging and Adult Services. The Commission thanked him for his warm hospitality and excellent hosting. It was noted that a significant portion of the local community is Hispanic and bilingual and most attendees left early due to the lack of live translation during the English presentations. The Commission noted that it has successfully hosted bilingual meetings in the past, including in Shafter, Lamont, and Bakersfield and has several bilingual commissioners available to help. To prevent translation gaps at future events, Chair Snyder asked Mr. Jimenez to notify Laura and Jeremy at Aging and Adult Services well in advance, and they will work with the Chair to ensure appropriate language accommodation is in place.
- Tara Gray, Tribal Liaison for the Bakersfield American Indian Health Project (BAIHP) shared that their Elder Insights meeting (55+ years) is held on the last Thursday of every month starting at 12:00 p.m. at the clinic (501 40th Street, Bakersfield). The event includes a provided lunch, opportunities for social connection, and guest speakers covering relevant topics like Medicare. The group also hosts special activities, including a recent excursion to Morro Rock. Their upcoming youth backpack giveaway is scheduled for August 1st from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the clinic. The drive is open to local youth ages 6-24 years on a first-come, first-served basis while supplies last. She also shared about recent Leadership change: Angel Galvez has stepped down as Chief Executive Officer to accept a CEO position with another organization. The Board of Directors has welcomed Johnny Nieto as the Interim CEO to lead the organization moving forward as of July 14, 2026. For further questions or

information, Ms. Gray can be reached via email at tgray@bakersfieldaihp.org.

- Claribel Gutierrez, Field Representative for Assemblymember Bains, invited everyone to attend a healthcare wellness event on September 24, 2026, at Ellington Park in Delano. Set up is from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. and the event is from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. They already have 50 exhibitors lined up to share resources and provide flu shots and other vaccinations. She encouraged everyone to come out and join them. She can be reached via email at Claribel.Gutierrez@asm.ca.gov or via phone: 661-335-0302 (office) or 661-778-3265 (cell).
- Miguel Salazar reported that Valley Caregivers Resource Center (VCRC) relocated to 3434 Truxtun Avenue, Suite 220, Bakersfield, CA 93301. Their phone number is the same: 661-873-4000. VCRC is for family caregivers who care for a loved one in their household with cognitive impairment. VCRC provides resources such as short-term respite, counseling and legal consultation, and support groups. Effective July 1, 2026, administration of the Ombudsman program transitioned to VCRC, currently serving Fresno and Madera counties. The program is managed by Jessica Diaz, who will be on-site at the Bakersfield office every Tuesday and Thursday. VCRC is actively recruiting an additional Ombudsman representative and plans to hire a dedicated Program Manager once operations are fully established. The Ombudsman program can be reached directly at 661-323-7884. Individuals interested in volunteer opportunities are encouraged to contact Jessica Diaz at this same number.

Commissioner Comments:

- Chair Snyder welcomed newly appointed Commissioners Suzann Gray and Kathy Orrin. Commissioner Justina Howell had an excused absence due to a professional conflict on her first day of new employment. Additionally, Chair Snyder presented her May 1952 kindergarten photo from Franklin Elementary School (now Myra A. Noble), as a visual that reflects the demographic and generational representation we have as Commissioners and as older adults.
- Commissioner Sherrell announced that the Seniors Law Center at Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance (GBLA) provides free legal aid to adults aged 60 and older, regardless of income. The center helps with landlord-tenant issues, consumer complaints, power of attorney, and advanced healthcare directives. They also assist with small claims and drafting answers to debt collection lawsuits to prevent default judgments. Seniors can call 661-325-5943 for assistance. Walk-ins are welcome every Wednesday during business hours from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with no appointment needed. Additionally, the office front door has been repaired and is fully accessible.
- Commissioner Cao shared that she previously had the opportunity to work briefly with Commissioner Orrin, describing her as a "living legend" who is widely recognized and has served the Taft community for a very long time. Despite Commissioner Orrin's humble nature, she has made significant contributions to the community. Commissioner Cao also welcomed the new Commissioners and commended

Commissioner Howell, noting her success in starting a Zumba class. Additionally, Commissioner Cao inquired about the upcoming Golden Futures Senior Expo, which takes place in November at the fairgrounds. While she did not have specific details, she noted it is a massive event attracting thousands of attendees. She raised the topic because Bakersfield PACE had reached out to her regarding a potential senior health fair around the same time. She suggested the Commission coordinate its efforts to align with existing older adult programs. In response, it was clarified that participation is by invitation only; however, Colleen Philley shared that Aging & Adult Services Department has received an invitation and is currently securing staff to work the event.

ACTION ITEMS:

- **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Motion made to approve June 15, 2026, Regular Commission on Aging meeting minutes as presented.

Motion: Juarez-Ceja; **Second:** Prado; **Abstention:** Lemucchi; **Objection:** None.

Motion carried.

SERVICE PROVIDER PRESENTATIONS:

SENIOR CENTER REPORT – Angela Domingos

Angela Domingos reported the operations and programming at the Shafter Senior Center. The Shafter Senior Center's kitchen currently prepares approximately 270 fresh meals daily. These meals serve visitors at the Shafter, Wasco, and Taft Senior Centers, and support home-delivery programs across those communities, including the City of McFarland. Additionally, 25 seniors receive weekly meals through the frozen food program distributed by Revolution Foods. The Shafter center maintains a highly active environment focused on senior socialization. The facility opens daily with coffee and socializing from 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., alongside daily arts and crafts sessions. The current fitness schedule in the exercise room includes all-ages Zumba on Mondays and Wednesdays (9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.), Chair Fit 50 Plus on Tuesdays (9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.), and Shafter Fit on Tuesdays and Thursdays (6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.). Additional recurring programming includes twice-weekly sessions of both Bingo and Lotería, as well as monthly educational classes, vendor presentations, and organized senior road trips. This center requires two cooks, at least three drives, and a site coordinator, Casey Barajas.

GENERAL SERVICES - PARKS AND RECREATION – Isaac Preston

Not in attendance. No report.

VETERANS SERVICE – Jose Lopez

Jose Lopez reported that, in partnership with several lenders and realtors, he has recently been hosting free VA Home Loan education workshops. The workshops are open to veterans, spouses, family members, and anyone interested in learning more about the VA Home Loan benefit. He explained that the workshops were created because many service members leave the military without receiving practical guidance on how to use their earned benefits. Most veterans have little understanding of the VA Home Loan program or what it entails. Many veterans have used the benefit without fully understanding the process. He emphasized that the VA Home Loan is an excellent, veteran-focused program designed to

help those who served. His goal is to ensure veterans of all ages, whether they are currently looking to purchase a home or not, understand and can fully utilize this valuable benefit. Ultimately, he wants to help veterans not only survive but thrive within their communities. Reservations are not required for the workshops. The most recent workshop was held the previous Thursday, and the date for the next session has not yet been determined. To date, three workshops have been held. Initially, organizers considered the first meeting a success if even one person attended, but instead the room reached capacity. The second workshop was equally well attended, and attendance at the third exceeded expectations, with participants filling the room and overflowing into the parking lot. Lopez said the strong turnout demonstrates the continued need for these educational events. He added that once the next workshop date is confirmed, he will share the information with Laura and the Commission so they can help promote it throughout the community. Lopez acknowledged that he is not a home loan expert but said he is happy to coordinate presentations with lending professionals whenever there is community interest in the topic.

He also addressed questions regarding the closure of satellite offices in outlying areas of Kern County, including Shafter, Taft, Ridgecrest, and Tehachapi. He recently received a Freedom of Information Act request seeking records dating back to 2001 concerning office closures. He noted that there appears to be a misconception that the closures resulted from insufficient funding. While additional funding is always welcome, he explained that finances were not the determining factor. Instead, the decision was driven by staffing limitations. His department currently consists of approximately 12 employees, three receptionists and nine veterans service representatives who serve veterans throughout Kern County. After reviewing operations, the department determined that regularly sending staff on multi-hour round trips to locations such as Ridgecrest, Taft, and Delano was no longer an efficient use of limited personnel. He emphasized that the change was not intended to reduce services in those communities, but rather to maximize staff availability and improve service countywide. As a federally accredited organization, the department is authorized to file claims on behalf of veterans. Lopez explained that most services can be completed by phone, email, or other digital communication, eliminating the need for veterans to travel long distances or incur additional transportation costs. He stressed that the department continues to serve every community in Kern County and remains committed to providing the same high level of service regardless of where a veteran resides. When an issue cannot be resolved remotely, staff will travel to meet clients in person, whether at a private residence, assisted living facility, hospital, or correctional facility. He wanted to provide the update to reassure the public that, although service delivery methods have evolved, the department's commitment to veterans throughout the county remains unchanged.

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES – Sara Swertfager, SPHN

Sara Swertfager attended virtually and reported the following:

Ongoing 2026 Annual Campaign: Thrive Like a Poppy emphasizes that 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.

- Current 2nd quarter campaign focuses on teens, aka “Sprouts”. Please visit their website for resources: <https://www.kernpublichealth.com/healthy-community/annual->

They are entering mosquito-borne disease season. You can protect yourself from being bitten by mosquitoes by:

- Using mosquito repellent on exposed skin
- Wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors
- Avoiding areas with large numbers of mosquitoes when possible
- Making sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens in good repair
- Removing standing water around your home.

For additional information on mosquito borne disease and prevention please visit their website: <https://www.kernpublichealth.com/healthy-community/illness-disease/disease-conditions/west-nile-virus-and-other-mosquito-borne-illnesses>.

- 2025-2026 flu season has concluded. There are no new vaccine recommendations at this time. To receive vaccinations through the Public Health Clinic, please call 661-321-3000 to make an appointment.

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

Chad Acker attended virtually and reported as of July 1, 2026, the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) officially replaced the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). The new law expands funding to include both mental health and substance use disorder services, with an increased focus on housing, access to care, accountability, and integrated services. Kern BHRS has completed its BHSA Integrated Plan for 2026-2029, which outlines the department's priorities and funding strategies for the next three years. Kern BHRS has expanded adult screening and assessment services to improve access to behavioral health care and reduce waiting times for individuals entering treatment. Kern BHRS continues to hold monthly BHSA stakeholder meetings to gather community input and provide updates on implementation and future planning. The Board of Supervisors approved the behavioral health provider contracts for the fiscal year 2026-27, ensuring continued outpatient, residential, crisis, youth, and substance use treatment services throughout Kern County. Because Shafter lacks contracted providers, residents must travel to Wasco to receive behavioral health services through Clarvida or Omni Family Health.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (DHS) – Daisy Neri & Tiffany Cigich

Medi-Cal Updates: Daisy Neri attended virtually and reported about the Medi-Cal Policy Change regarding Reinstatement of Asset Limits for Non-Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) Medi-Cal Programs. Effective January 1, 2026, asset limits were reinstated for non-MAGI Medi-Cal programs, impacting aged and disabled beneficiaries during new applications and renewals. The policy sets a \$130,000 limit for individuals, with an additional \$65,000 for each family member, requiring households to report assets like bank accounts and stocks, while exempting homes, one vehicle, and irrevocable burial funds. To ease compliance, members may now self-attest to asset values on renewal forms or verbally, eliminating the need to submit physical documentation.

CalFresh Updates: Tiffany Cigich attended virtually and reported that starting June 1, 2026, federal rule changes updated the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) CalFresh program work and community engagement requirements. Under these new guidelines,

certain recipients must meet specific work criteria to maintain their food assistance benefits. The rules directly target individuals who are between 18 and 64 years old, do not have a disability, and do not have a dependent child under 14 living with them. For those between the ages of 16 and 59, general work registration rules apply. If you fall into this category and are subject to these rules, you are required to accept any suitable employment offered to you. Additionally, you cannot voluntarily quit a job or reduce your weekly work hours below 30 hours without a valid, approved cause. You may be excused from the general work registration requirements if you meet any of the following exemptions:

- Age: You are younger than 16 or are 60 years of age or older.
- Caregiving: You are caring for a dependent child under the age of six or a person with a documented disability.
- Income: You earn at least \$217 weekly before taxes.
- Other Benefits: You are currently receiving or applying for unemployment benefits.
- Disability Benefits: You receive or are applying for disability benefits from any source, including State Disability Insurance (SDI), Workers' Compensation, private disability insurance, Social Security, or Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits.
- Education: You are enrolled at least half-time in a school, college, or training program.
- Other Programs: You are meeting the work rules of another assistance program like CalWORKs, or you are participating in a drug or alcohol abuse treatment program.

The second part of the federal update addresses Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD). Under federal law, individuals classified as ABAWDs who do not meet work or community engagement requirements are restricted to receiving only three months of CalFresh benefits within a three-year period. To get benefits beyond this three-month limit, an ABAWD must work or participate in qualifying activities for at least 20 hours a week (80 hours a month), qualify for an exemption, or live in an area with a severe unemployment waiver. While regions like Kern County previously held long-standing waivers to protect recipients from this time limit, those county-wide waivers expired on June 1st, meaning local ABAWDs must now comply with the work rules to keep their benefits.

EMPLOYERS' TRAINING RESOURCE (ETR) – Peggy Langels

Peggy Langels was not in attendance but prepared the following report that was read by Chair Snyder:

Employers Training Resource (ETR) did not receive a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding cut for this fiscal year, allowing operations to continue as normal. Because the Shafter Department of Human Services (DHS) office is closed for repairs until approximately the first of the year, clients needing a Resource Room may visit the Bakersfield Olive Drive office or the Southeast Bakersfield office. Typing test reservations at the Southeast office can be made by calling 661-325-4473. Additionally, a new Delano Proteus office is expected to open soon to expand available services. Individuals interested in vocational training, resume updates, or job-hunting workshops can utilize the following orientation

schedules:

- **In-Person Orientations:** Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 9:30 a.m. at the Southeast America's Job Center of California (AJCC), located at 1600 Belle Terrace. Attendance is limited to the first 20 walk-ins.
- **Virtual Orientations:** Thursdays at 9:30 a.m. (limited to 20 participants).

The weekly, in-person Job Hub takes place every Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. at the Recruitment Center (1215 Olive Dr., Suite C, Bakersfield). While job developers will highlight new employment opportunities, there are currently no specific employer recruitments scheduled. Free virtual workshops covering Resume and Interviewing Training, Computer Basics, and Social Media Basics are accessible on the website. Virtual Expungement Workshops are also held on the first Friday of each month from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. For more information and event flyers, visit www.americasjobcenterofkern.com. SER Jobs for Progress continues to accept applications; however, the program currently has a higher volume of applicants than available positions.

PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES – Catherine Vasquez

Catherine Vasquez attended in person and reported 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 properties 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. The Home Improvement Loan repairs or replaces existing 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 661-862-5026.

INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER (ILC) – Jessica Carrillo

Jessica Carrillo was not in attendance but prepared the following report that was read by Chair Snyder:

Independent Living Center of Kern County (ILCKC) is proud to announce the successful completion of another Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) year (2025-2026) and the launch of the 2026-2027 period. Their team is excited to see what the new year will bring as they continue to support our community. In 2026, ILCKC received approximately 4,000 ADRC-related service calls. According to their intake department, there was a 30% increase in calls specifically related to rental assistance. Over 105 pieces of equipment were donated to care providers, caregivers, and local agencies. They provided 77 pieces of assistive equipment directly to consumers during this fiscal year. They continue to accept donations of assistive devices, including wheelchairs (both manual and electric), walkers, and other mobility aids. These generous contributions help us support even more individuals in need. These efforts have helped remove barriers and improve the quality of life for individuals who rely on assistive devices. They look forward to building on these successes and expanding our impact in the year ahead.

VICTIM WITNESS PROGRAM – Kayla Pinkston

Kayla Pinkston attended virtually and reported that the Kern County Victim Services Unit and Family Justice Center are located at 1315 8th Street in downtown Bakersfield, and reminds the community that services are available to victims of crime regardless of whether they choose to report the incident. The center provides comprehensive support, including criminal justice assistance, on-site law enforcement reporting, counseling, and restraining orders, as well as connections to Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance for elder abuse programs. Both programs have access to language lines and intakes can be taken over the phone for those who are not able to come into our facilities for initial services. If anyone has questions, they can call the Program Coordinator Adriana Cuadras Talamantez 661-868-5956 or Program Supervisor Kayla Pinkston 661-868-5955.

STAFF PRESENTATIONS - AASD SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION REPORT

DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Jeremy Oliver

Jeremy Oliver was not in attendance but prepared the following report that was read by Colleen Philley:

Jeremy apologized for not being able to be in person for this meeting, as he was attending the US Aging Conference learning about Aging Programs and Services from national providers that he hopes to be able to incorporate into Kern County's systems or at the least bring back additional knowledge to share with others.

FEDERAL

In July 2025, Congress passed the budget reconciliation act (H.R. 1), cutting federal Medicaid/Medi-Cal spending and establishing community engagement requirements (also known as work requirements) for adults ages 19-64 applying for or enrolled through Medicaid expansion or minimum essential coverage under certain demonstration waivers. The statute also categorically excludes people age 65 and older, people eligible for Medicare, people eligible based on SSI, or through other mandatory pathways. Congress also required the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to issue an Interim Final Rule (IFR) providing additional guidance to define terms and help states operationalize work requirements. The IFR was issued in June 2026 and takes effect July 31, 2026. The IFR provides further direction on how states must define and verify eligibility for exemptions, including medically frail and family caregivers. For the "medically frail or special medical needs" exemption, the IFR includes the categories listed in H.R. 1 but adds the requirement that individuals must also be unable to meet the community engagement requirements. In other words, a person must show that their disability or health condition prevents them from working. This brings forward concerns about additional paperwork or administrative layers needed to prove they meet the exemption requirements to maintain eligibility for Medi-Cal, ultimately resulting in more people losing benefits.

The Senate has passed the Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act (S. 2120). Just awaiting House of Representatives, we could see some additional changes to the bill before final passage goes into law. It is likely we will not see passage until September but want to encourage everyone to support passing the bill which funds many of Aging & Adult Services programs.

STATE

The Budget Act of 2026 and final budget agreement contain a balanced budget in both FY 2026-27 and FY 2027-28. More specifically, the Budget contains approximately \$351.7 billion in total state spending, including \$251.5 billion General Fund. Budget continues to address the State's structural deficit through a combination of ongoing revenue measures, targeted spending reductions, and the use of reserves.

- Provides \$197 million General Fund for Medi-Cal county administration and \$223 million General Fund for CalFresh county administration to address increased county workload associated with H.R. 1 implementation.
- Rejects the Governor's proposed reductions to the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program, including the proposed county cost shift for growth in assessed hours, elimination of the Back-Up Provider System, and alignment of IHSS termination with Medi-Cal discontinuance.
- Rejects the Governor's proposal to revert the Adult Protective Services expansion adopted in 2021.
- Delays or softens several Medi-Cal reductions proposed at the May Revision, including changes related to the Medi-Cal asset test, dental benefits for the unsatisfactory immigration status (UIS) population, and eligibility for certain qualified immigrant populations.
 - New asset limit to be \$21,000 for individuals and \$31,000 for couples beginning on July 1, 2027.
 - It will coincide with redetermination dates after July 1, 2027.
 - Non-qualifying immigration status recipients will be placed on restricted scope until July 1, 2027.
 - Unsatisfactory Immigration status recipients will move to fee-for-service delivery system effective January 1, 2027, to comply with federal directives.
- Provides additional funding for CalFood, immigration legal services, child welfare, and housing and homelessness programs beyond the levels proposed at the May Revision.

It does maintain the CFCO penalties and the cost shift for the penalties to 100% to the counties instead of the previous 50% starting this month.

DEPARTMENT

The Board of Supervisors approved the initial budget for the next fiscal year and provided ongoing additional funding for nutrition programs beyond required match contributions. The Department will begin a review of the nutrition programs to see if there are any additional efficiencies that can be found to maximize service delivery to eligible recipients of the program. Kern County was also awarded a grant from Meals on Wheels America for \$100,000 to support our local Meals on Wheels program.

The In-Home Supportive Services (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 May are \$288,919.08. 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 Ombudsman program has transitioned to Valley Caregiver Resource Center as of July 1, 2026. The Guiding an Improved Dementia Experience (GUIDE) Model (GUIDE)/program has also begun in Kern County with limited initial referral partners as we develop and work out any system issues. We will soon be opening countywide referrals in coming month. A request was made to have Martin Reynoso attend one of the Commission meetings, perhaps for the October meeting in Cal City, to provide additional information about the program. Colleen will check with Jeremy.

Adult Protective Services (APS) continues to see an increase in APS referrals and spikes in referrals as temperatures change across the valley.

Cooling Centers continue to be available based upon temperature thresholds in specific regions of the County until September 22, 2026.

OPERATING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

BYLAWS COMMITTEE – *S. Bodnar; Y. Sherrell*

No report.

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

Vice Chair Lemucchi shared they have the upcoming annual session and general session the third week of October. She and Chair Snyder will be busy over the two weeks at the end of October.

COMMISSIONER APPOINTMENT – *S. Bodnar*

Parliamentarian Bodnar was not in attendance but prepared the following report that was read by Chair Snyder:

Recently Reappointed:

1. Vivian Cao – Reappointed by District 1. Her term expires 06/17/2028.
2. Ellen Linder – Reappointed by North of the River. Her term expires 01/10/2028.

New Appointments:

1. Kathy Orrin – Appointed by District 2. Her term expires 09/29/2027.
2. Suzann Gray – Appointed by District 2. Her term expires 06/17/2028.
3. Justina Howell – Appointed by District 5. Her term expires 06/17/2027.

Resignations/Retiring: None.

*Expired Terms:

1. Christie Ray – term expired 06/17/2026 – Reappointment letter sent to District 4 on 06/25/2026.

*Commissioners can continue serving until they are reappointed.

Terms Soon to Expire:

1. Anabel Griffin – term expires 08/18/2026

Vacancies: 2 Total

1. District 1 - for term expired 06/17/2026 (replacing Jami Ward)
2. District 3 – for term expired 06/17/2027

New Applications Received: Justina Howell – Appointed

This concludes the Commissioner Appointment Report for July 2026.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION – *E. Linder*

Commissioner Linder reported that she has been sending emails to AASD staff on behalf of the COA, letting them know their work is appreciated. She printed the emails and put them in a binder so Commissioners can read the emails. They also have an Employee Recognition coming up August 5, 2026, at AASD. Commissioner Prado shared that while at the Elder Abuse Prevention Conference, some AASD staff approached her and shared that they appreciate the emails being sent to them.

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

Chair Snyder reported on the Executive Committee meeting held on Wednesday, July 3, 2026, and covered a lot that has already been discussed. The Kern County Fair Senior Day is confirmed for Friday, September 25, 2026. Commissioner Linder and Commissioner Parsons agreed to chair scheduling volunteers to greet and pass out maps. Gates officially open at 9:00 a.m., but historically, attendees arrive an hour early. Commissioners are encouraged to wear their COA shirt and/or name badge. See Laura Juarez for shirt orders. Chair Snyder welcomed Commissioner Goodlow back to the Executive Committee, effective July 1. Commissioner Goodlow fills the vacancy left by Commissioner Gomez, who relocated to Texas. The committee provided feedback about the Elder Abuse Prevention Conference and noted that the Dodger tickets fundraiser was highly successful, thanks to Vice-Chair Lemucchi, Commissioner Juarez-Ceja, and Commissioner Cao, as well as to all who attended and helped with the event.

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

Commissioner Griffin reported the committee met on July 16, 2026, and highlighted both progress and ongoing challenges. The department has significantly reduced its backlog of overdue IHSS Community First Choice Option (CFCO) cases, from several thousand to approximately six, helping eliminate state penalties. However, more than 4,000 IHSS applications remain pending, and the average wait from application approval to the start of services is about nine months due to persistent staffing shortages. Social workers currently manage about 360 cases each and can only take on a limited number of new cases each month, causing a backlog of new applications. There are plans to explore telehealth for IHSS

renewals and certain visits, though implementation remains in the early stages. Ongoing Medi-Cal policy changes continue to affect IHSS recipients, as Medi-Cal eligibility is required to receive IHSS services. Commissioner Griffin stressed the importance of renewing Medi-Cal on time and responding promptly to Department of Human Services requests to prevent interruptions in benefits. Community members continue to express concern about long wait times for IHSS services. Expedited processing is available only in limited circumstances, such as hospice care or rapidly declining medical conditions, and there is no process for advocates to request priority outside established eligibility criteria. For individuals who do not qualify for Medi-Cal, limited alternatives include Valley Caregivers grants, the GUIDE Program, and the Dignity Home Care Program, although most require some out-of-pocket costs.

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

Commissioner Ray reported that she visited the Shafter Nursing Home and met with the Activities Director, Lily, who provided a tour of the facility, during which Commissioner Ray observed residents receiving haircuts. She noted that the facility arranges haircuts for residents approximately every six weeks. She also learned about the home's activity programs and attended a meeting with the Residential Council President and Vice President. The council meets monthly to hear resident concerns, with food being the most common topic of discussion. She met the facility's longest-term resident, a delightful 96-year-old woman, as well as the Administrator, Dean. Commissioner Ray reported that the facility was clean, free of unpleasant odors, and that the resident rooms were well maintained. She also noted that the facility has earned a 4 out of 5-star rating, which she described as exceptional for a nursing home.

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

Commissioner Prado reported that the COA handbook is complete. Laura has emailed it to all current Commissioners and will distribute it to the newest members. Commissioner Orientation for the incoming Commissioners is currently being scheduled for August. Marketing plans for September's Senior Day at the Fair will be scheduled under the direction of the Chair and Co-Chair for that ad hoc committee. Marketing will begin preparing for the Senior Celebration in Ridgecrest, scheduled for October 2027. Parliamentarian Bodnar has agreed to serve as Co-Chair for this event, meaning the Commission is seeking a Chair to lead this ad hoc committee. Additionally, the COA will participate as an exhibitor at ADAKC's "Caring for the Caregivers" conference in November 2026 and will require volunteer support. Chair Snyder requested that all Commissioners keep their calendars open and ready to help. While acknowledging that members may not be able to volunteer for every single event, she emphasized the importance of contributing to most activities, in particular, the need to have Commissioners visibly present when events are planned within their respective districts.

NOMINATION COMMITTEE – B. Goodlow; N. Jackson

No elections coming up soon. No report.

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

The Committee provided reports on the following senior centers:

- Commissioner Goodlow:
 - **Bakersfield Senior Center (BSC):** The first week of the meal program was hectic, with meal deliveries getting underway and participation initially being very low. Many participants preferred to use the drive-thru to pick up meals rather than eat on-site. Volunteer participation improved during the second week, and meal distribution has steadily increased. On Thursday alone, approximately 15–20 meals were picked up for the center. The work on the cafeteria is progressing well. Staff are working daily, and according to Felix, the kitchen is expected to be ready by September 1st. All necessary equipment has been obtained, and everyone is working hard to complete the installation and preparations. Although programming and activities continue, some participants remain unhappy about traveling to the temporary location on R Street. Commissioner Goodlow expressed hope that once the new kitchen is operational, participation and satisfaction will improve. She also reported that demolition of the Fourth Street building began on the 17th. Lilli photographed the demolition and shared the pictures with the board members. Once demolition is complete and the site is cleared, construction is expected to begin in August. Commissioner Goodlow expressed optimism that the project will stay on schedule and that the new kitchen will be operational by September.
- Commissioner Ray:
 - **Ben Austin Senior Center:** Attendance at the Ben Austin Senior Center currently fluctuates, though the BINGO remains consistently popular and well-attended.
 - **Delano Senior Center:** She spoke with Rosa, who confirmed that no changes or further actions are needed.

Commissioner Ray asked whether the Commission handbook assigns each commissioner a senior center to oversee, noting that she recalled reading this in the manual and asking if she had misunderstood the guidance. Chair Snyder responded that the interpretation may vary but encouraged commissioners to maintain regular contact with a senior center, even if only through occasional phone calls, to provide a consistent point of connection. She noted that such outreach would be beneficial. Commissioner Ray agreed, emphasizing that proactive engagement is important to encourage participation and support the centers. While she was not suggesting a formal requirement, she encouraged Commissioners to make a concerted effort to stay connected. Chair Snyder thanked Commissioner Ray for raising the issue and explained that, with 14

operating committees and periods when the Commission had only 14 active Commissioners, members had significant workloads, often serving up to three committees. She noted that the Commission is now better staffed and suggested Commissioners could work together by partnering to visit and represent senior centers, helping ensure each center receives Commission support.

- Commissioner Griffin:

- **Lamont Senior Center:** The Lamont and Arvin senior centers continue to see growth in participation. The Arvin center has grown to approximately 14–16 active members, with participants sometimes joining birthday celebrations in Lamont and then returning to Arvin, helping build connections between the two communities. Both centers are expanding their activities and increasing community engagement. Commissioners noted the significant progress made over the past year, recalling that when they visited Lamont just over a year ago, only one person attended that day's meeting and there were only about three regular participants. Commissioner Griffin also shared that the Arvin center hosts weekly Wednesday potlucks, where members bring dishes to share, creating a strong social atmosphere. While Lamont continues to provide more meal services, Arvin's focus is on fellowship and socialization. The discussion also highlighted the importance of these centers, with one attendee reportedly walking a mile to participate, underscoring the value they provide to the community. Commissioners emphasized the need to continue promoting awareness of the centers, their activities, and the services they offer. Additionally, Lamont will soon begin hosting Al-Anon meetings for interested community members.

- Commissioner Prado:

- **Richard Prado Senior Center:** The Richard Prado Senior Center continues to experience strong participation and remains very active with a wide variety of programs and events. A highlight has been the success of Maria's dance therapy and exercise classes, inspired by her mother's "Vaile Therapia" program. Maria creates an inviting environment by encouraging participants to join in, resulting in high engagement. One recent session attracted approximately 27 participants, and she also filled in on days when Dignity Health's regular wellness instructors were unavailable. The classes promote exercise, socialization, and overall well-being. Attendance at the center remains strong, with 97 seniors participating in the Friday dance event. Upcoming themed activities, including Hawaiian Day, continue to encourage participation and community engagement. Commissioner Prado also highlighted a successful partnership with 2-1-1 Kern. A representative attended the Friday dance event with a laptop to assist seniors with CalFresh and other benefit applications. She also provided an updated directory of food distribution sites throughout Kern County, which the center plans to enlarge and distribute to help seniors access local food resources. The center continues to introduce creative, low-cost activities. Upcoming events may include a cardboard shark photo booth for themed celebrations. In addition, the center has launched a prize-based Lotería game

using donated items such as clothing, accessories, and household goods instead of purchased prizes. Participants contribute donated items, creating a fun, sustainable program that stretches limited resources while encouraging community sharing. Overall, the center continues to find innovative ways to keep seniors active, connected, and supported despite budget constraints.

SUNSHINE COMMITTEE – E. Linder

Chair Snyder thanked the Commission for her birthday card.

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

Chair Snyder reported that Commissioner Parsons agreed to be the backup on this committee.

TRANSPORTATION – J. Lemucchi; M. Salazar

Commissioner Salazar reported that he completed and submitted his recommendations to the Social Services Transportation Advisory Committee. A final list of recommendations is expected later this year. He noted that several communities, including Wasco and Shafter, have already adopted and begun implementing some of the recommendations. He shared that serving on the committee has provided a better understanding of the transportation planning process. While transportation challenges remain, significant efforts are underway to address them. However, one of the greatest obstacles is the lack of public participation from those who rely on transit services most. Commissioner Salazar reviewed the committee's *Unmet Transit Needs Regional Findings Report*, which evaluated transit needs throughout Kern County. Based on public outreach and testimony received, the committee determined there were no unmet transit needs that were reasonable to meet. He emphasized that this finding reflects the lack of documented public input rather than the absence of transportation challenges. He explained that public hearings across Kern County had very limited attendance, resulting in few documented concerns. As a result, existing services were deemed adequate based on available information. Commissioner Salazar stressed the importance of documenting transportation issues and encouraging residents, caregivers, and senior center participants to attend meetings or submit concerns so unmet needs can be formally recognized. He also reported that he and Vice Chair Lemucchi met with Angela Willis, Public Works Manager for Kern Transit, to discuss available transportation services. They invited her to present at a future Commission meeting to educate the public about available programs and create opportunities for residents to share transportation concerns directly. During discussion, Commissioner Salazar encouraged commissioners to collect information from individuals experiencing transportation difficulties so concerns can be documented and presented to the advisory committee. He noted that without documentation, unmet needs cannot be addressed through the planning process.

Vice Chair Lemucchi provided additional context regarding the transportation advisory committee's work and statewide transportation discussions. She explained that the Social Services Transportation Advisory Committee is being reorganized to bring together public transit providers and community representatives, including advocates for older adults and individuals with disabilities, to strengthen coordination and improve communication. She also reported on a state Disability and Aging Community Living Advisory Committee meeting, where transportation access and ADA transition planning were discussed. Similar to

the county findings, the state also reported no documented unmet transportation needs, reinforcing the concern that many transportation challenges go unreported rather than being resolved. Vice Chair Lemucchi questioned whether current outreach methods, including newspaper notices and public meeting announcements, are effectively reaching older adults and individuals with disabilities. She suggested expanding outreach through trusted community organizations, senior centers, focus groups, transit providers, and multilingual communication to better engage residents who depend on transportation services.

Commission members discussed several additional concerns and recommendations, including:

- The financial burden of transportation costs for some riders.
- The need to connect residents with available transportation assistance programs.
- Improving outreach through senior centers, community organizations, transit providers, and healthcare partners.
- Surveying transit users directly to document transportation barriers.
- Working with local governments, transit agencies, and community leaders to increase participation before future transit needs assessments.
- Partnering with Medicare and Medicaid transportation providers to better understand transportation usage and unmet needs.

Commissioner Salazar and Vice Chair Lemucchi will continue working with community partners to improve outreach, increase public participation, and ensure transportation concerns are documented before the next transit needs assessment. If you want to connect and discuss this further, Chair Snyder mentioned Laura can coordinate a Zoom meeting.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION – E. Linder; Y. Sherrell

No report. No volunteers at the Shafter Senior Center.

INFORMATION ITEMS

- **Centenarian Recognition Program Parliamentarian** – Commissioner Ray shared that there is one upcoming Centenarian celebration taking place July 25th so she will attend in person to present the certificate.
- **Caring for the Caregiver Conference – Alzheimer's Disease Association of Kern County (ADAKC) is hosting this conference on November 7, 2026, at Hodel's Country Dining.** Commissioner Juarez-Ceja reported that they are finalizing the material for the event ad will get it out to everyone as soon as possible.
- **Senior Celebration** – Please put this event on your calendar for October 2027 in Ridgecrest, CA.

NEXT MEETINGS:

EXECUTIVE MEETING	REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, September 2, 2026 at 1:30 pm Via Zoom (DARK IN AUGUST) If interested in attending via Zoom, please contact Laura Juarez at 661-868-1052.	Monday, September 21, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. (DARK IN AUGUST) California City Senior Center 10221 Heather Ave., California City, CA 93505 (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 3:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Colleen Philley for
Jeremy Oliver
Secretary

CP/lj