

Programs

Information and Assistance (I&A)

The K/T AAA Social Workers act as the gatekeepers for most of the AAA services and are equipped with information on resources, both governmental and non-profit, that are available in each county. They are stationed at the two largest senior centers in the PSA but visit every senior center at least once a month. The social workers conduct an initial assessment for each client and try to help the client resolve any problems. As appropriate, they may refer the client to a K/T AAA program or to a non-profit or county program. Social workers also assist the seniors in completing forms, advocate for seniors in problem resolution, and perform outreach to rural areas of the counties. Our social workers are also registered HICAP counselors. They make frequent presentations to various groups about the services available through the K/T AAA.

Outreach

Outreach refers to information and assistance provided on an individual basis, initiated by the staff. Our social workers speak with individual seniors, either in their homes, at a senior center, or at InfoVan locations, to provide information and assistance or help with a specific need. Using the Information Van, the social workers travel to rural locations to reach out to seniors who may not have knowledge of available services due to isolation.

Visiting

The visiting program is designed to provide reassurance and comfort to seniors. The social workers and other staff make home visits to seniors who are at risk of developing emotional problems due to loneliness. Seniors who are in need of additional support are referred to the counseling program.

Telephone Reassurance

Under this program, staff make telephone calls to clients to do a safety check, to provide a point of contact to homebound seniors, and to give reassurance.

Community Education

Through community education, the K/T AAA educates groups of older persons, their families, friends, and community organizations or facility staff on rights, benefits, or entitlements for older persons.

Transportation Services

The AAA provides seniors at each senior center with tokens for discounted rides on buses operating in the rural areas of Tulare County. In Kings County, a discount pass is available to seniors and can be obtained at the Kings County Commission on Aging.

Legal Services

An attorney is available on staff to provide direct legal counsel on a variety of concerns common to seniors. Referrals to the Legal Services program are made through the social workers. In accordance with the provisions of the Older Americans Act and the Older Californians Act, there is a screening process to determine eligibility and priority to receive legal services. Having an

attorney on staff who specializes in senior issues helps to assure timely access to services and a more rapid response to client needs than might be available through contracted legal services.

Elder Abuse Prevention

An attorney works closely with an elder abuse investigator at the County District Attorney's office to provide services to seniors who suspect that they may be the victim of abuse.

Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP)

The Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program provides counseling and assistance to eligible individuals in need of Medicare health insurance matters, including: understanding Medicare coordination of coverage, obtaining benefits, identifying unnecessary or duplicate coverage, estimating or determining out-of-pocket costs, MediGap-Supplemental Policy Comparison, MediCal-Medicare Savings Programs, Long-Term Care Insurance, Prescription Drug Coverage, and discount programs. While HICAP cannot recommend a particular insurance provider, it can assist seniors in making comparisons between various providers. In addition, HICAP may assist seniors in understanding their bills and filing appeals with intermediaries. HICAP relies strongly on volunteer counselors to assist individuals and provide informal advocacy with respect to Medicare. These volunteers are trained and coordinated by the HICAP manager, with assistance from the HICAP Case Manager.

HICAP also conducts educational presentations to any civic, employer, or community group, as requested.

Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP)

The purpose of the Family Caregiver Support Program is to:

- Provide information to caregivers about available services
- Assist caregivers in gaining access to the services that are currently available
- Preserve and expand respite care services in order to relieve caregivers, for a time, from their caregiving responsibilities
- Provide training to caregivers and other family members who are responsible for frail, older adults
- Develop the above in conjunction with a targeted geriatric mental health program

The FCSP includes some or all of the following: outreach, education, information and assistance, assessments, case management, transportation, counseling, support groups, caregiver training, and respite care.

Nutrition Services

Congregate Meals - Food service programs are organized to help seniors meet basic nutritional needs while increasing opportunities for socialization. The heart of this endeavor is the Congregate Meals program, carried out at a total of ten locations across the two counties. These sites offer nutritionally balanced meals designed to enrich the seniors' health. In addition to the meals, the program provides seniors the opportunity to meet and visit with others. Socialization is an important ingredient in maintaining a high quality of life. At many of the nutrition sites there are also other planned activities, including gleaning, crafts, games, education, music,

volunteer opportunities, and low-cost tours. The nutrition sites also provide a forum for presenting information and educating seniors on their rights and our services.

In addition to the regular, daily meals served at the nutrition sites, special holiday meals are served, when possible and appropriate, including Thanksgiving dinners, Christmas parties, Cinco de Mayo celebrations, and others.

Home-Delivered Meals - Seniors who, because of severe health problems or disabilities, are unable to come to the congregate meal sites may be eligible to have meals delivered directly to their homes. A Community Services Specialist or nutrition program staff member screens all home-delivered meal recipients for additional needs as they enter the program. The goal is to assist in the senior's recovery, if possible, so that the senior may again participate in the Congregate Meals program and visit with others. The Nutrition Program provides five frozen meals to homebound seniors, with condiments and other accompanying foods, delivered every other week.

Nutrition program delivery staff are trained to observe the seniors' surroundings and demeanor when delivering their meals. Many times, the delivery staff are the first to notice changes in the seniors' well-being and are able to provide quick referrals. Any changes or concerns are reported to the Nutrition Program Coordinator for referral to other services, such as health or mental health, within either the K/T AAA or the community.

Health Promotion / Medication Management

Funded through Title III-D, the K/T AAA uses nutrition sites and local events as outlets for health information distribution, community education, and outreach to promote good health habits and disease prevention. The AAA also provides education and resources on medication management to seniors.

Senior Employment

The K/T AAA contracts with a local nonprofit organization to provide senior employment services in Kings and Tulare Counties. The program provides and promotes useful part-time opportunities in subsidized community service employment for older workers and assists in the transition of enrollees to private or other unsubsidized job placements. The program also provides a variety of supportive services, such as personal and job-related counseling, job training, and job referral.

Multi-Purpose Senior Services Program (MSSP)

The Multi-Purpose Senior Services Program provides a multi-disciplinary team approach to providing care management for frail, elderly clients who are certifiable for placement in a nursing facility but wish to remain in their homes. MSSP staff, along with the client, develop social and health goals to prevent or delay the premature institutional placement of these frail clients. The community services must be provided at a cost that is lower than that of nursing facility care.

In order to be eligible for services, the client must be 65 years of age or older, currently eligible for Medi-Cal, certified or certifiable for placement in a nursing facility, and residing in the

service area. MSSP staff make this certification determination based upon Medi-Cal criteria for placement.

The services that MSSP clients may utilize include adult day care/support center, housing assistance, chore and personal care assistance, protective supervision, case management, respite, transportation, meal services, protective services, and communications services.

Long-Term Care Ombudsman

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman program was established to advocate for seniors in long-term care facilities. A coordinator provides supervision and oversight of the program, but it is primarily a volunteer-based system. Volunteers are assigned facilities to visit regularly. With the permission of the senior or legal guardian, the ombudsman advocates by proxy for resolution of patient concerns.

Law and regulation delineate the scope of ombudsman responsibility and authority. The program is currently operated via contract with the Kings County Commission on Aging, an appointment that has been certified by the State Ombudsman within the California Department of Aging.

The ombudsman program holds volunteer training no less than twice each year, using a curriculum developed by the State Ombudsman's office. Volunteers receive 36 hours of classroom instruction and 12 hours of on-site apprenticeship with an existing ombudsman volunteer before commencing regular site visits.

Mental Health Services

Mental Health services are provided in collaboration with the Tulare County Mental Health Department. Mental health counselors are available to assist the seniors in facing the concerns and changes experienced as they age, including spousal death, physical and mental degeneration, economic setbacks, and so forth. Some of the programs offered are Peer Counselors, Women's Support Groups, Men's Support Groups, and In-Home Services (Friendly Visitor).

Additionally, the AAA has coordinated with Tulare County's Mental Health Prevention and Early Intervention workgroup to develop intervention procedures that will facilitate early recognition of symptoms of mental illness, including depression and suicidal tendencies. Via a Home-Delivered Meals Prevention and Early Intervention (HDM PEI) program, overseen by a licensed clinical social worker, the AAA provides a mental health outreach initiative based on evidence-based depression and anxiety disorder screening tools. Initial efforts will be focused on the frail and isolated, homebound population, with potential for expansion into other areas of adult services.

Ancillary Services

The K/T AAA has developed a close working relationship with the social services departments in both counties. This has enabled the AAA to provide referrals to programs outside its purview, such as Veterans Services, Adult Protective Services, and In-Home Supportive Services.

The Veterans Services departments in both counties work closely with all the K/T AAA programs to make sure that veterans receive appropriate services. This has allowed an additional population access to the services provided by the K/T AAA.

The Adult Protective Services program in both counties works with the staff of the K/T AAA and its contractors in identifying elderly persons who may have been abused and who need their services. In-service training has been provided to all AAA staff on how to identify possible abuse and how to make a referral. In addition, the K/T AAA staff have referred seniors to the Public Guardian offices for oversight of the affairs of seniors who appear incapable of caring for themselves.

The In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program provides case management and services to seniors or disabled individuals who have been identified as in need of home care assistance and at risk for institutionalization. The social workers in both counties work closely with IHSS staff to make referrals when they suspect a senior may need help.

Disaster Preparedness

The K/T AAA is a partner with Kings and Tulare Counties' Public Health, Office of Emergency Services (OES), and Emergency Medical Services (EMS), who are dedicated to ensuring the safety and security of the community by building strong, collaborative partnerships at the state and local levels, as well as between the public and private sectors. They play the essential role in disaster preparedness and response, accomplished via strategic planning, surveillance and early detection of communicable diseases, laboratory support, emergency communication planning, education, and training, as well as coordination with other "front line" agencies. The OES and EMS are but two of the sixty departments, organizations, and agencies that have partnered with the Public Health Departments in both counties.

Disasters can present tremendous obstacles for people who face mobility-, health-, or age-related challenges. The AAA continues to educate seniors via web site, newsletters, training, and media about the need for additional considerations when preparing for an emergency. Seniors are encouraged to have a plan in place, which will help alleviate anxiety, confusion, and feelings of vulnerability in the event of an emergency. For our low-income seniors who receive In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS), the state requires that IHSS social workers develop, together with the clients, a written disaster plan that is updated annually.

K/T AAA representatives continues to be active members in the disaster preparedness and response partnership in Kings and Tulare Counties.

Funding Sources

There are six funding sources for the Kings/Tulare Area Agency on Aging:

- Federal Funds – The K/T AAA receives funds from the federal government through the Older Americans Act. These funds are received via the California Department of Aging (CDA). Federal funds account for approximately 65% of the revenue of the AAA.
- State Funds – State funds are received from the CDA on the basis of the Older Californians Act. These funds are state general funds and funds from the Community-Based Services Program. State funds account for about 21% of the revenue of the AAA.

- County Funds – The two counties help support the AAA from their general fund revenues. To help cover costs of the programs, the counties contribute funds that equal more than the required administrative match. County funds make up about 6% of the total revenue.
- Donations – Donations are received from seniors via the congregate nutrition sites, home-delivered meals, information and assistance, and legal services programs. Donations have been relatively consistent over the past several years and make up approximately 3% of the AAA’s total revenue.
- NSIP – This funding from the US Department of Agriculture represents about 5% of the total funding for AAA services.
- Other – The K/T AAA may occasionally receive small amounts of funding from miscellaneous county sources, such as Mental Health Services Act (Prop 63) funding and Targeted Case Management.

The mission of the Kings/Tulare Area Agency on Aging (K/T AAA) is to provide leadership at the local level in developing systems of home- and community-based services that maintain individuals in their own homes or least restrictive, home-like environments.

In particular, emphasis shall be placed on coordinating with local systems to enable individuals to live out their lives with maximum independence and dignity in their own homes and communities, through the development of comprehensive and coordinated systems of home- and community-based care.