

From: jsthom@comcast.net
Sent: Friday, December 6, 2019 8:55 AM
To: EngAGE@CDA
Subject: recommendation concerning services for persons with sensory impairments

Master Plan for Aging

Recommendation Form

To submit your recommendation, fill out as many of the fields below as possible. It is fine to leave some blank. Recommendations can be submitted at engage@aging.ca.gov. Initial recommendations are requested to be submitted by December 13, but they may be submitted after this date as well.

Issue Statement: [State the problem your recommendation will address. Insert links to reports where appropriate.], The majority of persons with sensory impairments are seniors. The number of seniors with either vision and/or hearing impairments is dramatically increasing, and since these impairments are largely age-related, the majority of seniors with these impairments are from the middle class. Seniors with vision and hearing impairments need services and technology in order to enable them to remain in their own homes and lead productive lives. Despite having community-based organizations in various regions of California that provide high-quality services to this population, both the availability of such services, and their cost, makes it difficult and in many areas impossible, to acquire them, even for those who can afford to pay for them. Limited federal funding is available for services to seniors with vision loss, but it is estimated that this funding is sufficient to meet at most 3% of the need.

MPA Framework Goal: [Insert which goal/s from the framework this recommendation addresses. [View MPA Framework here.](#)]

Goal 1: We will live where we choose as we age and have the help we and our families need to do so.

MPA Framework Objective: [Insert which objective/s from the framework this recommendation addresses.]

Objective 1.1: Californians will have access to the help we need to live in the homes

and communities we choose as we age.

Objective 1.2: Californians of all ages will be prepared for the challenges and rewards of

caring for an aging loved-one, with access to the resources and support we need.

Recommendation: [Explain your recommendation in one to two sentences.]

Any universal benefit for seniors, whether provided through an expanded Medi-Cal benefit or other means, must include goods and services that will enable those with vision and/or hearing loss to remain independently in their own homes and maximize their potential. In addition, a money-follows-the-person approach should be explored to enable other funding streams to be used so that persons with sensory impairments can receive these services. Specifically, services for those with sensory impairments provided by community based organizations should be among those for which Cal-Aim gives incentives to health plans.

Target Population and Numbers: [Describe groups of Californians impacted by this recommendation, with numbers if available.]

It is estimated that approximately 3.5 million persons 55 and over have vision impairments, and it is likely that even more have hearing impairments. Even if 10% of this population are viewed as having sufficiently significant impairments, hundreds of thousands of Californians would be impacted by this initiative.

Detailed Recommendation: [Insert detailed bullet points describing your recommendation.]

- Research consistently shows that sensory impairments are among the most feared conditions by the general public. It is extremely common that persons suffering severe vision or hearing loss believe that their life, as they have known it, is over. Depression and isolation are among the consequences of vision and hearing loss.

In order to remain independent and continue to live in in their own homes, people with vision loss require an array of services, including cooking, cleaning, low vision therapy, the use of technology, travel, both within the home and outside it, self-advocacy skills, behavioral health services and more. Moreover, persons with both hearing and vision loss are often unable to acquire the technology they need because these items are not covered by insurance or publicly-funded programs.

Evidence that supports the recommendation: [Add links or summaries of research evidence that support the recommendation.]

Examples of local, state or national initiatives that can be used as an example of a best practice: [Provide any available links and sources.]

- **Local:**
- **State: California has a long history of private entities that render high-quality services to those with sensory impairments. However, as previously noted, both the funding for existing entities and the number of entities, especially those serving rural areas, creates a vastly underserved population.**
- **National:**
- **Other:**

Implementation: [Insert actions state agencies, legislators, counties, local government, or philanthropy can take to move this recommendation forward. Some of the entities listed below may or may not be applicable to each recommendation.]

- **State Agencies/Departments:** [action to be taken by Governor or specific state agencies] State Department of Health Care Services and Governor should allow maximum flexibility with respect to optional Medi-Cal benefits that serve the specific needs of persons with sensory impairments. State funding should be provided to the Department of Rehabilitation to supplement existing federal dollars, including funding for the Assistive Technology program and the Older Individuals who are Blind program.
- **State Legislature:** [legislation needed to implement recommendation] Legislation is needed to enact universal senior benefit that includes appropriate services for those with vision or hearing loss and additional funding for existing programs.

- **Local Government:** Local government should be making referrals to appropriate private agencies.
- **Federal Government:** Expand Medicare to pay for hearing aids, low vision aids, and services for this population.
- **Private Sector:**
- **Community-Based Organizations:** Expand the availability of services available to those with sensory impairments.
- **Philanthropy:** Continue their willingness to attempt to fill the funding gap that until public dollars become more available.
- **Other:**

Person-Centered Metrics: Individual measures of inputs or outcomes that can be used to measure the recommended action's impact on people.

Evaluations: [How will we know that the recommended action is successful once it has been implemented?]

- **Short-term (by 2020):** In the short-term, determine whether available funding has increased and whether referrals to, and persons served by, appropriate entities have begun to increase.
- **Mid-term (by 2025):** Not only should each entity have increased service capacity and greater numbers of persons served, but there should be an increase in agencies serving this population. Decreases in entry into long-term care due to sensory impairments should be quantifiable.
- **Long-term (by 2030):** In addition to the above, there should be a noticeable positive change in the public perception of seniors with vision or hearing impairments and their place in society.

Data Sources: [What existing data can be used to measure success or progress?]:

- Existing data sources: [specify datasets, variables, and data owner/location]
- Suggestions for data collection to evaluate implementation of this goal when no data sources exist:

Potential Costs/Savings: [insert any research, actuarial analysis or other evidence of the cost of this recommendation or potential savings]

Prioritization: [How would you prioritize this issue in importance relative to other needs/priorities – e.g., low, medium, high):

Name of person(s)/organization submitting recommendation:

Email for person(s)/organization submitting recommendation: California Council of the Blind

Date of submission: December 6, 2019

