



California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards and Commissions

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OLDER ADULTS — Increasing mental/behavioral health access and engagement.

ISSUE BRIEF: Older Adults

A dramatic increase in CA's older adult population has begun, with a projected 80.8% increase from 2010–2030.* The state and local communities must scale and roll-out evidence-based mental/behavioral health offerings to address the needs of older adults.

Following the statistics are recommendations for local and state action.



The Statistics*

- **Mental illness** impacts one in four older adults.
- **Suicide rate** for males 85+ is more than 4 X higher than national rate.
- **Depression:** Nationally 15-20 percent of older adults have experienced depression.
- **Anxiety Disorders:** Approximately 11 percent of older adults have anxiety disorders.
- **Alcohol & Drugs:** 16% of older adults are estimated to be alcoholic or at risk. 25% of senior emergency room visits in 2012 involved narcotic and nonnarcotic pain relievers.
- 50% of depression care is provided in the primary care setting.
- 50% of patients with mental illness only have contact with their primary care physician.
- 66% of people who commit suicide had contact with a primary care physician in month prior to death.

*Sources: CA DOF, SAMHSA & UCLA Center for Health Policy Research

More at: www.calbhbc.com/seniors

Statewide Solutions

MH Data should include age-specific:

- Performance Outcome Data
- Service Penetration Rates for seniors

Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly (RCFE) “Board & Care” Shortage—[Issue Paper](#)

Workforce issues to address:

- **Workforce Shortage**—Fund [MHSA WET 5-Year Plan](#) calbhbc.com/workforce
- **Training** statewide to include MH/BH, Geriatric & Peer Specialist Certification
- **Medi-Care Access:** 43% of psychiatrists do not take Medi-Care.

Local Solutions

Evidence-Based Practices

Examples: [PEARLS](#) & [IDEAS](#) programs

Outreach: Increase outreach and engagement.

Planning should include input from older adults, such as the Area Agency on Aging (AAA): <https://4csl.org/aging-network-directory/>

Workforce/Training

- **Fund MHSA WET** programs.
- **Geriatric Training**—6-month programs for Mental Health providers. Example: [SDSU](#)
- **MH First Aid Training** for professionals and volunteers who work with Older Adults (such as Meals on Wheels, Community Centers, Residential and Hospice Care.)
- **Peer Specialists** offer experience-based support. Examples: [Pool of Consumer Champions](#); [Alliance on Aging Peer Counseling](#)
- **Training** in older adult suicide screening and differential diagnosis of SMI and dementia.

CALBHBC supports the work of CAs 59 local mental/behavioral health boards and commissions by providing resources, communication and statewide advocacy.