

CCoA
California Commission on Aging

AGEWATCH

Policies that support “Grandfamilies” are focus of new report



A new report from Generations United (GU) tracks the policies that support the growing number of grandparents raising grandchildren – known as “grandfamilies.”

In its second [State of Grandfamilies in America](#) report, GU finds that the majority of children living with grandparents are found in the states with the least-supportive policies. The report looked for policies that facilitate grandparents’ ability to obtain custody, to provide consent for healthcare and education decisions, and provide access to benefits including Temporary Assistance to needy Families, National Family

Caregiver Support Program, guardianship assistance and respite. Although GU ranks California in the top 10 states for grandfamily-friendly policies, only four states ranked over 60 percent on the ratings scale.

According to Generations United, “the report offers recommendations to help guide development of supportive federal and state policies and services for grandfamilies,” including adequate supports for grandparents to keep their grandchildren and promoting “tailored services to meet the unique needs of grandfamilies.

To read the full report, click [here](#).

Information from Generations United [press release](#), December 2, 2015.



California Commission on Aging elects new officers for 2016



Marian Last (pictured at left) of Rossmoor was elected chair of the California Commission on Aging at the CCoA’s November 18th meeting in Costa Mesa. Ms. Last is a retired Community and Senior Services manager for the City of El Monte and Governor Brown’s appointee to the Commission. Paul Downey, of San Diego, was elected Vice Chair. Mr. Downey (below, right) was appointed by Assembly Speaker Atkins and is President and CEO of Serving Seniors in San Diego.

CCoA meets five times annually across the state. Members are appointed by the Governor and Legislature and serve up to two three-year terms as volunteers. For members’ biographies and the Commission meeting schedule, visit www.ccoa.ca.gov.



AGE WATCH is an occasional publication of the California Commission on Aging (CCoA) intended to inform, educate, and advocate. The CCoA is an independent state agency established in 1973 to serve as the principal state advocate on behalf of older Californians. The CCoA office is located at 1300 National Drive, Suite 173, Sacramento, CA 95834. (916) 419-7591

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Senators Introduce SAVE Benefits Act to Boost Social Security and Other Critical Benefits for Seniors, Veterans

A new bill introduced in the Senate hopes to boost Social Security and other critical benefits for seniors, veterans and other Americans to counteract the news that Social Security benefits will not increase in 2016.

S. 2251, spearheaded by Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren and a cadre of senators from across the nation, would give about 70 million seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, and others an emergency payment equal to 3.9 percent of the average annual Social Security benefit, about \$581 - the same percentage raise as the top CEOs.

This fall the Social Security Administration announced there would be no cost-of-living adjustment for 2016, despite the fact that the cost of goods and services is predicted to rise.

According to Senator Warren, “A \$581 increase could cover almost three months of groceries for seniors or a year's worth of out-of-pocket costs on critical prescription drugs for the average Medicare beneficiary.” The increase would be paid for by closing a tax loophole that allows corporations to write off executive bonuses as a business expense.

The Senator estimates the Seniors and Veterans Emergency (SAVE) Benefits Act will raise approximately 1 million Americans above the poverty level. To read Senator Warren's press release and the text of the bill, visit her [website](#).

Information from *Senators Introduce SAVE Benefits Act to Boost Social Security and Other Critical Benefits for Seniors, Veterans*, Office of Senator Elizabeth Warren, press release.

Proposed budget package protects services for seniors, disabled and more

This week Congress crafted a final FY16 funding package that rejects proposed cuts and even provides some increases for programs and services for older adults, persons with disabilities, veterans and more. The “omnibus” legislation is expected to pass Congress this Friday and be signed into law by the President a few days later.

Program cuts that were rejected include:

- State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) level-funded at \$52.1 million (instead of \$22.1 million cut)
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) level-funded at \$434.4 million (instead of \$30 million cut)
- Chronic Disease Self-Management Education (CDSME) level-funded at \$8 million (instead of \$400,000 cut)
- Falls Prevention level-funded at \$5 million (instead of \$250,000)
- Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) level-funded at \$6.1 million, but still has to make up for loss of over \$9 million two years ago (instead of \$360,000 cut)
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) level-funded at \$3.4 billion (instead \$25 million cut)

Programs proposed for increases include:

- Congregate Nutrition funded at \$448.3 million (increase of \$10.2 million)
- Home Delivered Nutrition funded at \$226.3 million (increase of \$9.9 million)
- National Family Caregiver Support Program funded at \$150.6 million (increase of \$5 million)
- Native American Nutrition and Supportive Services funded at \$31.2 million (increase of \$5 million)
- Native American Caregiver Support funded at \$7.5 million (increase of \$1.5 million)
- Elder Justice and Adult Protective Services funded at \$8 million (increase of \$4 million)
- Lifespan Respite Care funded at \$3.4 million (increase of \$1 million)
- Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funded at \$715 million (increase of \$41 million)
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) funded at \$222.2 million (increase of \$10.7 million)
- Section 202 Housing for the Elderly funded at \$432.7 million (increase of \$12.7 million)

Enactment of the FY16 and FY17 Bipartisan Budget Act in November raised the budget control cap, giving Congress the ability to forego proposed funding cuts. In 2018, the caps, cuts, and threat of sequester could return unless policy-makers finally craft a long-term budget deal.

Excerpted from NCOA, *Good news: Congress protects and invests in seniors in final FY16 funding deal*, December 17th, 2015.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Managed Care Academy to be offered at the 2016 Aging in America Conference

The American Society on Aging (ASA) is hosting a new Managed Care Academy at the 2016 Aging in America Conference this March. Attend the ASA Managed Care Academy Series, and return to your organization with new knowledge, replicable new models, and new contacts to help you along in your own journey of organizational reframing, relevance and sustainability. The program will be woven into the Aging in America Conference, beginning with the Opening General Session on Sunday, March 20, which will provide a panoramic view of the new aging services landscape and ending with the comprehensive Managed Care Academy Summit on Thursday, March 24, which will explore the evolving business model that community-based organizations, including area agencies on aging, are undertaking to create value-based services for older adults using value-based pricing models. This event will take place on **Thursday March 24, 2016**.

[Click here](#) to view details and register.

Announcement from NASUAD News & Updates, Dec. 11, 2015

New website features elder abuse training materials

The new Training Resources on Elder Abuse (TREA) [website](#) is a searchable database of elder abuse related training materials. Inspired by the Elder Justice Roadmap, the website's goal is to increase the number of professionals, caregivers and community members who receive high-quality training on how to prevent, report and work with victims of elder abuse. TREA features a variety of materials and resources created by organizations throughout the country, including a library of videos appropriate for training purposes.

TREA is a collaboration between the Department of Family Medicine and Geriatrics at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and the National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA). This project is funded thanks to a grant from the Archstone Foundation.

Anyone interested in submitting training resources to be included on the TREA site is invited to visit NCEA's material submission [page](#).

Information from NCEA, December 9, 2015.

New, in-depth online training course addressing health, chronic conditions and well-being for older adults

The American Society on Aging and University of Southern California's Leonard Davis School of Gerontology have announced a new five-week online certificate course: **Health and Wellness in an Aging Society**. Taught by the nation's leading experts in aging, including Drs. Kate Wilbur, PhD, Donna Benton, PhD and other specialists, sessions in this course take a deeper look at issues of healthcare, chronic disease management, dementia, mental health, caregiving, and medication management.

USC faculty members will discuss the common health issues faced by seniors, public health in an aging world, and the strategies for caring for older adults with various health challenges. Participants who successfully complete the course will earn a certificate of completion from USC. Through this convenient and flexible online format, participants will learn about research, best practices and effective models that are readily applicable to their work with older adults. [Click here to learn more and enroll online for the January 25, 2016 session.](#)

And, back by popular demand, the **Fundamentals of Gerontology** five-week online certificate course starts on January as well. [Learn more and enroll online.](#)

This opportunity is available exclusively to ASA members and if you register five or more participants, you will receive 15% off a new or renewed organizational membership.

Information courtesy of Krista Brown, Director of Education, American Society on Aging

Consumer advocate Bonnie Burns honored by national insurance commissioners

Bonnie Burns, Training and Policy Specialist with California Health Advocates (CHA), was honored in November by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) for her decades of service as a consumer representative. Long recognized as a national expert in her field, Ms. Burns brings invaluable contributions and insight to consumer issues from more than 30 years of experience in Medicare, Medicare supplemental insurance and long-term care insurance. She has served with the NAIC consumer liaison representative program protecting consumer rights and reforming policy at state and federal levels since the program began in 1992.

"Burns is an inspiration to us all with her many contributions to consumers state and nationwide," said Elaine Wong Eakin, Executive Director of California Health Advocates. "Her advocacy efforts brought about the standardization of Medicare supplemental insurance, known as Medigap. Before standardization, consumers had no dependable way to compare policies and many unwittingly bought more than one policy with duplicate benefits."

In addition, Burns has testified before Congress to guide policies for financing long-term care, including improvements for consumers with long-term care insurance. Much of her work has been incorporated into NAIC Model Laws and Regulations, which serve as a guide for and are often adopted by states. To read CHA's full press release and read more about Burns, click [here](#).

Information from California Health Advocates *California Medicare News*, December 14, 2015



Bonnie Burns (at left) receives NAIC award.

New report points to concerns over availability of long-term care for growing number of obese elderly

The percentage of those entering American nursing homes who are moderate and severely obese — with a body mass index of 35 or greater — has risen sharply, to nearly 25 percent in 2010 from 14.7 percent in 2000, [according to a recent study by the National Institutes of Health](#), and many signs suggest the upward trend is continuing.

But as demand from severely obese patients surges, nursing home administrators say they cannot afford to care for them, because Medicaid, which covers more than 60 percent of all nursing home residents, does not reimburse them for the specialized equipment required: motorized lifts; larger wheelchairs, bedside commodes and shower chairs; and longer intramuscular needles and blood pressure cuffs. The devices are expensive: \$10,000 for a mechanical lift, for instance, and \$5,000 for an extra-wide bed.

"One or two places that have tried to do it recognize the economics just don't work," said Dr. David Gifford, the senior vice president of quality and regulatory affairs at the [American Health Care Association](#), an industry trade group.

As a result, nursing homes across the country are routinely declining referrals from hospitals seeking to transfer obese patients, creating dilemmas for hospital staff members tasked with safely discharging those ready to leave. Whether these routine denials violate antidiscrimination laws is unclear, especially since the degree to which obesity is a legally protected disability remains unsettled. Industry specialists argue the law is unambiguous.

Excerpted from Kaiser Health News, [Rising Obesity Puts Strain On Nursing Homes](#). By Sarah Varney December 15, 2015

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Rancho MirageUCLA receives RW Johnson Foundation grant to study high number of
“dual-eligible” opt-outs

Why are hundreds of thousands of the state's "dual eligibles" - fragile older seniors and disabled young people who receive both Medi-Cal and Medicare benefits - rejecting the new state-managed health care pilot program?

That's the question being posed by researchers at the [UCLA Center for Health Policy Research](#), who have received a \$400,000 grant from the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#) and are working with community advocates, managed health care providers and health insurers to study the issue.

According to recent enrollment data from the state, the overall opt-out rate for the pilot program, Cal MediConnect, is high - 45 percent. An additional 10 percent have actively dis-enrolled after having been passively enrolled. The program was designed to better coordinate medical care and long-term support services for this vulnerable population and eliminate potential overlaps in service under Medi-Cal and Medicare. To read more about the UCLA research project, click [here](#).

Information from NASUAD Friday Update, Dec. 11, 2015.

Boomers will be less healthy, more costly to Medicare

A new report from USC's Schaeffer Center of Health Policy and Economics predicts significantly higher costs to Medicare in 2030, once the last of the baby boom generation becomes eligible. The increase is anticipated both because of the high number of beneficiaries and because many are expected to be significantly less healthy than previous generations. The typical Medicare beneficiary who is 65 or older then will more likely be obese, disabled and suffering from chronic conditions such as heart disease and high blood pressure than those in 2010.

Overall Medicare spending is projected to more than double between 2010 and 2030 to about \$1.2 trillion. A massive influx of baby boomers into Medicare will be the main driver. With the last baby boomers turning 65 in 2029, Medicare rolls are expected to number 67 million Americans in 2030, the Schaeffer Center said. But costs per beneficiary could grow by 50 percent over the same time due to longer life expectancies, shifting health trends and medical cost inflation, the report said. In inflation-adjusted dollars, Medicare is projected to spend 72 percent more for the remaining lifetime of a typical 65-year-old beneficiary in 2030 than a 65-year-old in 2010.

To read the full report, click [here](#).

Excerpted from [Kaiser Health News](#) *Baby Boomers Set Another Trend: More Golden Years In Poorer Health*, December 17, 2015

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Upcoming Events

January 21-22, 2016 -- California Commission on Aging -- Sheraton Hotel Petaluma. www.ccoa.ca.gov for agenda and information.

February 9-10, 2016 - LeadingAge CA 2016 Policy and Leadership Summit, Sheraton Grand, Sacramento. Information and registration [here](#).

March 9, 2016 -- California Budget & Policy Center Policy Insights 2016, Sacramento Convention Center. Information and registration at policyinsights2016.eventbrite.com.

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