

Sequester Cuts Prompt Grave Concern: Impact of Federal Cuts to Aging Services In Alameda County

The federal Sequestration cuts that will hit Alameda County's Older Americans Act-funded services beginning in July 2013 will limit access to an already strained system of services. California's Department of Aging announced a 6% overall cut to Older Americans Act starting July 1, but the cuts are being allocated unevenly, so that some programs will be spared, but others suffer deeper cuts.

Community-based services and supports are a necessary part of the equation in helping older adults meet the challenges of aging and live successfully in the community. These services not only complement medical care and help seniors maintain economic stability, they often provide life-line interventions that increase safety and prevent institutionalization. **Alameda County cannot afford to lose senior service capacity.**

What Programs and Services are Affected by Sequester Cuts?

Sequester cuts will affect meal programs, case management, adult day care, information and assistance, friendly visiting, telephone reassurance, community services, legal services, health services, elder abuse prevention funding and HICAP. The total cut across all programs is \$340,761.

Program Category	\$ Cut (FY 13-14 vs FY 12-13)	% Cut (FY 13-14 vs FY 12-13)
Senior Nutrition – Congregate Meals ¹	-\$189,304	-17%
Supportive Services ²	-\$74,164	-6%
Disease Prevention ³	-\$6,278	-7%
Elder Abuse Prevention (title VII)	-\$1,505	- 7%
Family Caregiver Support	-\$29,090	-5%
Senior Employment (title V)	-\$8,981	-6%
HICAP	-\$31,439	-8%

Human Impact

In the Supportive Services Category alone, the Sequester cuts will eliminate funding for over 4,400 service hours.

Service	Funding Cut	Service	Funding Cut
Adult Day Care hours	1,319 hours	Senior Center Activities	377 hours
Case Management	173 hours	Senior Center Staffing	51 hours
Information & Assistance	717 contacts	Telephone Reassurance	217 hours
Legal Assistance	559 hours	Friendly Visiting	919 hours

County-wide, Sequester cuts will eliminate funding for:

- 41,636 Congregate Meals
- 162 Family Caregiver Information and Access contacts
- 581 Counseling, Education and Respite Hours for Family Caregivers

¹ Senior Nutrition includes both congregate and home-delivered meals. Sequester cuts to Senior Nutrition as a whole amount to a 5.7% cut, but the Area Agency on Aging has some flexibility in allocation and is allocating a 17% cut to congregate meals while keeping meals on wheels whole.

² Title IIIB includes funding for Adult Day Care, Case Management, Friendly Visiting, Telephone Reassurance, Senior Center Activities, Language Interpretation, and Information and Assistance.

³ Title IIID includes funding for Health Screenings, Physical Fitness training, Health Risk Assessments, Nutrition Education, and Medication Management.

Individual organizations would absorb the impact of these cuts in different ways. SSC surveyed organizations, resulting in the following **examples of some of the impacts the Sequester cuts will have:**

- South County**
 - Friendly Visiting coordinator hours cut from 20 to 17 per week
 - Fewer educational events and workshops for family caregivers
 - Fewer counseling “slots” and longer waiting list for family caregivers
- East County**
 - Fewer case management consults with new seniors; growing wait list
 - Friendly Visiting coordinator hours cut from 18 to 15 per week
 - RN hours cut from 13 to 10 per week; less access to health screening and education
- Central County**
 - Reduced hours of Family Caregiver Counseling and Education
 - Friendly Visiting coordinator hours reduced; reduced access for volunteers and clients
- North County**
 - Fewer hours of language-appropriate information & assistance
 - Fewer job training slots for seniors seeking to reenter the workforce; growing wait list
 - Friendly Visiting coordinator hours reduced; reduced access for volunteers and clients
 - Possible closure of a language-appropriate congregate meal site

Snap Shot of Today’s Senior Safety Net

The safety net of senior services in Alameda County is severely compromised by years of state budget cuts. Between 2008 and 2012, while the rate of growth in Alameda County’s senior population accelerated and the level of poverty among seniors deepened, California cut funding. Cost-effective services that helped thousands of Alameda County’s seniors avoid the nursing home and emergency room and live safely in the community were eliminated or severely reduced.

In Alameda County, community-based organizations made up the difference – through increased fundraising, cost cutting and innovation. With some notable exceptions, programs stayed open and continued serving more seniors every year. The Area Agency on Aging tracks the total number of seniors served each year:

Seniors Served			
FY 09/10	FY 10/11	FY 11/12	FY 12/13
34,198	41,053	49,685	51,000⁴

Decision Point

Alameda County has a stake in keeping our growing population of low-income seniors stable:

- ▶ Older American Act services provide essential enhancements to long term supports and services that are not otherwise covered for Medi-Cal eligible seniors, and will not be covered under Medi-Cal Managed Care.
- ▶ Older American Act services are the primary support available to seniors of modest means, keeping them from crises that would propel them into economic disaster and dependence on public benefits and emergency services.
- ▶ While some of the program cuts are small dollar amounts, every cut has a destabilizing effect on organizations that already mount tremendous fundraising efforts every year to cover the actual cost of providing services, and now have to scramble to raise more to make up the difference.⁵

The Senior Services Coalition and its members request County Budget support to mitigate the impact of federal Sequester cuts to Older American Act programs and services.

⁴ estimate

⁵ We are thankful to Social Services Agency for absorbing the \$20,000 in second round sequester cuts that the California Department of Aging announced.