Introductions

- Your Name
- Your role within the LTCCC
- Your Board of Supervisory District
San Francisco's Long Term Care Coordinating Council (LTCCC) advises the Mayor and City on policy, planning, and service delivery issues for older adults and people with disabilities.

Responding to anecdotal reports of increased levels of suicidality, acute anxiety, depression, social isolation and loneliness.

Objectives:
- Identify mental health needs and service gaps for Skilled Nursing Facility residents
- Illuminate the impacts of the pandemic on mental health
- Produce actionable recommendations for the City, coupled with a call to action for state and federal advocacy

Findings based on: stakeholder interviews, a survey of San Francisco SFNs & best practices lit review.
Impacts of the Pandemic: Common Themes

• Extreme loneliness and isolation:
  • “Three people on my unit have died because of lack of visitors, a screen isn’t the same. They couldn’t see their important people and they died earlier than they had to.” -SNF Director of Nursing Services

• Increased depression:
  • “One man told me that he might as well not live because he hasn’t seen his family in so long. Depression and despair seem to be increasing significantly” – Advocate for Nursing Home Reform

• Boredom due to routine and activity disruptions:
  • “They want us to stay in our rooms... it drives me nuts, its just the same old stuff every day.” – SNF Resident
  • Less than half of respondents surveyed expressed agreement with the statement: “I participated in meaningful activities in the past week.”
Impacts of the Pandemic: Common Themes

• Loss of dietary and dining routines:
  • “Socialization at meal times is important. With the cues of everyone being around, eating together and talking, people eat better.” - SNF Director of Nursing Services

• Resident cognitive decline and loss of functioning:
  • “I don’t think anybody is the same. Residents are experiencing functional decline based on being in their rooms for so much time. They have a new normal now.” - SNF Director of Social Services

• “Fear of Re-entry”:
  • “We opened up the dining room and no one wants to return, right now only one person is eating in the dining room by themselves. People are resistant, that isolation became a habit.” - SNF Director of Nursing Services
In a 2020 nationwide survey of nursing home Registered Nurses, **72%** reported missing at least one necessary care task in their most recent shift due to a lack of time and/or resources.

“Even before COVID, residents were hearing, ‘we’re short-staffed, you’ll have to wait’, even if they were at ratio. The ratio is not enough”

–Ombudsmen
“All of a sudden they [SNF residents] became a huge focus because so many of them were dying [from COVID-19], they weren’t a focus before, and I am hoping that they stay in the limelight a while longer. We need to continue to focus on areas that affect the elderly.”

-SNF Director of Social Services
5 Key Recommendations
1. Sweeping Overhaul of the Status Quo

• Success of any intervention would be supported by addressing underlying systemic issues which currently impede adequate access to mental health supports and services for SNF residents:
  - Improve caregiving staff ratios to reflect CMS' recommended hours per day per resident of nursing (ideally 3:1)
  - Increase Medi-Cal & Medicare reimbursement rates for mental health practitioners
  - Decreased reliance on psychotropic medications in favor of access to therapeutic interventions
  - Increased presence of registered nurses in SNFs
  - Addressing the very high rates of caregiving staff turnover
2. Advocate for Safe Resumption of Social Engagement Activities

• Due to high vaccination rates, many SNFs have been “re-opening” in recent months.

• City needs to encourage safe resumption, and development of, social engagement activities.
3. Support Evidence-Based, On-Site Therapeutic Practices

- **Telephonic Outreach**: older adults receive friendly check-in calls with the objective of forming social connections, facilitating connection to needed resources, and improving mental health symptoms.

- **Life Review**: structured evaluation of one’s life, aimed at coping with negative experiences and finding positive meaning.

- **GIST**: cognitive behavioral approach to treating depression, adapted specifically to the LTC context and with the goal of developing coping strategy skills.

- **BE-ACTIV**: individual therapy model, developed collaboratively with caregiving staff. Residents attend weekly individual therapy sessions and staff receive training on depression and the benefit of pleasant events for residents’ socioemotional wellness.
4. Ensure Tele-Connectivity for All Residents Able to Benefit from it

• Tele-connectivity can serve as a bridge to loved ones, healthcare providers, and the larger community.

• Access considerations:
  o Reliable internet, adequate numbers of internet-enabled devices, formal instruction to support acquisition of skills for the use of technology, availability assistance (staff, volunteers, community based organizations)

• Potential for partnerships with the private sector to support tele-connectivity
5. Train Caregiving Staff on Mental Health & Trauma Informed Care

• Caregiving staff SNFs have intimate contact with residents, providing opportunity for recognition and response to residents’ mental health needs

• Programs that emphasize mental health training for staff have significantly improved detection and response to residents’ symptoms of depression

• Trauma Informed Care is particularly salient after the events of the last year
Can We Count on YOU?

1. **Advocate for local funds for SNFs to pilot:**
   - Site-based therapeutic interventions
   - Training of care-giving staff on trauma informed care & detecting mental health issues,
   - Improving tele-connectivity for SNF residents

2. Advocate for Safe Resumption of Social Engagement Activities
3. Support legislative bills at the state and federal level that address systemic barriers
4. Encourage inclusion of recommendations into the State’s Master Plan for Aging state and local advocacy efforts
Questions?

- Add your contact information