



Year in Review

FY 2020-21



SAN FRANCISCO HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
**Department of Disability
and Aging Services**



Letter from the Director

Two years ago, we could not have conceived that a global pandemic would arrive in our city and so deeply upend the way we interact with, learn from and support older people and adults with disabilities. This last year has brought its own twists and turns as we have wrestled with new virus variants, coordinated vaccine roll out, and advocated for the inclusion of older people and adults with disabilities as our city has begun to understand and shape its new normal. And, as we've begun to emerge from the pandemic, we have worked to keep issues of racial equity at the forefront of our planning, service strategies, and funding decisions.



Kelly Dearman
Executive Director
San Francisco
Department of
Disability and Aging
Services

Within this evolving context, the last year has also been a time focused on maintaining and sustaining our vital services. We have refined the pandemic pivots that have allowed us to reach and support thousands of San Franciscans. Through our non-profit partnerships, we supported over 36,000 community members last year, nearly the same service levels as pre-pandemic years despite the shift to virtual programming and other service limitations necessitated by shelter in place. We supported over 6.5 million meals through home-delivery and takeaway programs. We distributed 12,600 sets of personal protective equipment so that In-Home Supportive Services providers could safely care for thousands of people with disabilities. Further, staff in our direct service programs flexibly adapted to shifting state regulations and updated policies so that we could effectively provide continuity of care to our clients.

In my short time as the Executive Director of the Department of Disability and Aging Services, I have been beyond impressed by the breadth and depth of the Department's services and also the commitment of our staff. I have renewed appreciation for the creativity and energy of our community partners. I am looking forward to continuing to learn in my new role and all that we will achieve together in the years ahead.

Introduction

Within the City and County of San Francisco, the **Department of Disability and Aging Services (DAS)** is the government agency charged with **coordinating services for older adults, veterans, people with disabilities, and their families to maximize safety, health, and independence.** As the state-designated Area Agency on Aging for San Francisco, DAS is responsible under the federal Older Americans Act to serve as the focal point for local aging concerns.

DAS is located within the San Francisco Human Services Agency, which delivers a safety net of services and public benefits to promote wellbeing and independence. Each year, **DAS serves close to 70,000 unduplicated clients through its department programs and community partnerships.** With an annual budget of \$418 million, DAS is supported by a staff of 372 employees and contracts with over 60 community-based organizations to deliver services.

San Francisco Department of Aging & Adult Services	
VISION	
San Francisco is a city where people with disabilities and older adults are valued, engaged, and living with dignity.	
MISSION	
The Department of Disability and Aging Services supports the well-being, safety and independence of adults with disabilities, older people, and veterans.	
VALUES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compassion • Inclusion • Innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability • Equity

We provide programs both directly and through partnerships with community-based organizations, addressing a wide range of needs. This service spectrum spans from **engagement and wellness services** that promote a healthy aging experience for active and independent community members, to services that **support stability in the community** and prevent unnecessary institutional care, to **crisis intervention services** for individuals requiring immediate assistance to mitigate exposure to risks, and reaches the level of **guardianship services** for those unable to manage their needs due to mental illness and cognitive challenges.



Please read on to learn about our Department and some of our key achievements in FY 2020-21 that support older people and adults with disabilities to live safely and engage in our community. These highlights are structured by the five underlying goals within the Department’s five-year strategic plan:

- **Goal 1:** Maintain a robust network of community-based services for older people and adults with disabilities
- **Goal 2:** Protect older people and adults with disabilities from abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation
- **Goal 3:** Provide and support consumer-centered programming to best address client needs
- **Goal 4:** Expand planning and evaluation efforts to ensure best use of resources and maximize client outcomes
- **Goal 5:** Support and develop an engaged professional workforce that is prepared to work with older people and adults with disabilities

FY 2020-21 Highlights: By the Numbers

Our Department



\$418 million budget for direct programs and community partnerships



372 employees working to administer and develop services



62 community-based organizations partnering to provide diverse services

Our Programs



28.5 million hours of home care provided to **26,700 people with disabilities** through the In-Home Supportive Services program



2,000 veterans and dependents assisted in accessing benefits by the County Veterans Service Office



7,000 reports of abuse and neglect investigated by Adult Protective Services

Our Partners



5.1 million meals delivered to homes and **1.4 million meals served** at community dining sites



480 clients participated in 2,800 hours of **intergenerational programming**



10,800 hours of multilingual technology training and education provided to 1,300 clients



55,400 hours of virtual activities provided by community centers – including social and cultural events, art classes, educational workshops – to **13,400 participants**

GOAL 1

Maintain a robust network of community-based services for older people and adults with disabilities

WHY IT MATTERS: People of all ages and abilities deserve to live in the community with dignity. Particularly when government partners with non-profit organizations, we can support people to successfully age in place and thrive in their chosen community.

Promoting Ease of Access to Veteran Services

In spite of the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic, the **County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) implemented new strategies** to improve our ability to provide benefits assistance to veterans and their dependents. Recognizing the importance of meeting our clients where they are and enhancing citywide access to in-person veteran services, the **CVSO established outstations** at the VA Medical Center located at Fort Miley in the Richmond District and at the War Memorial Veterans Building near City Hall. Outstationing at these high-traffic locations has allowed the CVSO to expand our reach into the community, improve the visibility of our Department and services, and connect more clients to benefits like healthcare, education support, housing assistance, and pensions. The CVSO also **launched a new online tool for booking appointments**, making it easier for clients to schedule meetings with CVSO staff, reducing wait times for in-person assistance, and generally improving the customer experience.

Addressing Food Insecurity

Food has remained a significant area of community need and focus for our department and community partners over the last year. **Food support was the top area of referral** for our DAS Benefits and Resource Hub: about 40% of information and referral calls resulted in information or a connection to food services. Across all of our meal programs, **we provided 6.6 million meals to seniors and adults with disabilities** last year. Our Communal Dining program continued their new takeaway format and expanded volume, distributing an extra 340,000 meals last year (a 34% increase over pre-pandemic service levels). The Great Plates Delivered SF program provided 2.7 million meals prepared by local restaurants and businesses, a temporary program developed as part of the state's emergency response effort. In preparing for the program's July 2021 conclusion, we connected about a third of clients with ongoing food support needs to our traditional Home-Delivered Meal programs; those providers responded quickly to enroll clients without a gap in coverage. And we **explored new ways to offer culturally-relevant food**, such as offering supplemental Latin-style groceries with takeaway meals in the Mission.

"I appreciated every bite! From the organizers to the cooks and delivery people, many thanks – you all kept me healthy!"

- Great Plates Delivered client

Supporting Virtual Connections

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated social isolation and underscored the urgency with which we must work to expand access to technology and bridge the digital divide. Through the SF Connected program, we supported **ongoing technology training and device support**, including the distribution of over 400 devices to help low-income seniors and people with disabilities connect online. We also supported a **digital equity needs assessment** sparked by an Empowered Cities grant – research that will provide key insights into barriers faced by San Franciscans with disabilities and help us develop strategies to address these challenges.

GOAL 2

Protect older people and adults with disabilities from abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation

WHY IT MATTERS: While older and disabled adults have a variety of strengths and most live independently in the community without assistance, some benefit from services that help them to meet their basic needs and support them to maintain stability in the community. For those experiencing a period of heightened risk related to their health, housing, or safety, immediate intervention can address critical issues and facilitate connection to needed resources.

Keeping Older and Disabled API Residents Safe

Following a number of high-profile incidents involving violence against Asian and Pacific Islanders (API) – particularly older individuals – during the pandemic, **DAS implemented new strategies to keep these residents safe.** In partnership with the Mayor’s Office and Self-Help for the Elderly, we established senior escort services, offering older adults the added security of having someone accompany them to medical and personal appointments like going to the bank or picking up groceries. In the coming year, we will be sustaining and expanding this service. Through our Elder Abuse Prevention program, we also established the **Solidarity SF network**, bringing together City agencies, community-based organizations, businesses, and other stakeholders to **address targeted harassment and violence** against API residents and other members of our San Francisco community. Solidarity SF participants agree to place a sticker in their window to signal that their establishment will provide shelter and support to anyone experiencing hate or harassment while walking in San Francisco.



Sustaining and Strengthening Resources for Long-Term Care Residents

With many **residential facilities closed off to external visitors** for safety precautions during the pandemic, our deputy public guardians and public conservators worked diligently to maintain connection with their clients through virtual face-to-face to meetings and regular communication with facility staff. We have also continued exploring **new and innovative ways** to strengthen our programs and improve the experience of clients and referents reaching out for help with high-need situations. We developed and continue to refine an **outpatient referral pathway for conservatorship**, so that we can better engage with those who need our help. We also hosted a three-day **training on how to assess neglect and abuse with people who have communication impairments** for our Public Conservator and Public Guardian staff. We also invited the San Francisco Long-Term Care Ombudsman to participate in this training given the nature of their work. This advanced set of skills is especially critical in the pandemic context when our staff are meeting clients over technology and do not have the same opportunities to observe residential situations and assess client needs.

GOAL 3

Provide and support consumer-centered programming to best address client needs

WHY IT MATTERS: We serve our clients best when we see them as whole, multi-dimensional individuals. Older adults and people with disabilities have complex and varied needs, a wide range of preferences for what and how programs are offered, and diverse cultural backgrounds that shape their engagement with essential social services. Our efforts to take an integrated, holistic, and culturally-appropriate approach with our consumers allows us to move beyond providing them with any single service and instead offer connection to *all* the resources that may benefit them, tailored to meet their unique needs.

Providing Specialized Care to Residents of COVID-19 Alternative Housing Sites

As part of the City's pandemic response last year, we developed a **multi-disciplinary team made up of DAS social workers and community partners** to meet the needs of at-risk older and disabled **guests residing at COVID-19 alternative housing sites**, many of whom were homeless prior to placement at these locations. Made up of staff from the Community Living Fund program, Homebridge, APS, and IHSS, the "CHAI" team provides a range of supportive services to ensure that these residents can safely shelter in place or isolate/quarantine during the pandemic. This year, we **provided over 260 people with services** that include wellness checks, home care assessments, emergency and ongoing home care support, intensive case management, and investigation of and response to allegations of abuse, neglect and/or self-neglect. In the coming year, the CHAI team will continue to provide critical services for residents at the alternative housing sites, including **offering support to those moving into permanent housing** who may require additional support to remain safely and stably housed during this period of transition. Notably, the CHAI team model has **increased partnership and coordination between DAS and other City agencies** like the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing and the Department of Public Health, **laying the groundwork for new initiatives**, including a pilot for enhanced IHSS services at Permanent Supportive Housing sites.

Ensuring Access to COVID-19 Vaccines

DAS has played a significant role in **promoting access to the vaccine** among San Francisco's older adults, adults with disabilities, caregivers, and veterans. We supported Citywide vaccine outreach and coordination efforts at the COVID-19 Command Center, ensuring that seniors and disabled adults living not only **in the community**, but also **in assisted living facilities and institutional settings** could get vaccinated. Our In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program disseminated information, scheduled vaccination appointments, and staffed vaccination sites to encourage **vaccination among more than 26,700 care recipients and 23,700 Independent Providers**. Our Clinical and Quality Improvement team ensured some of our most vulnerable clients could get vaccinated, coordinating **in-home vaccinations to IHSS recipients** who are unable to leave their homes without significant assistance. The Department's **partners in the community also conducted essential work to promote vaccination**, including facilitating transportation to vaccination sites, hosting vaccination events, and conducting specialized outreach to boost vaccination rates in communities with lower engagement.

GOAL 4

Expand planning and evaluation efforts to ensure best use of resources and maximize client outcomes

WHY IT MATTERS: Developing and utilizing program and population data, as well as coordinating with partners in our planning and evaluation efforts, is pivotal to understanding the impact of our programs and ensuring that we optimize available resources. We work intentionally and collaboratively to identify unmet needs, craft and implement solutions, and evaluate systems.

Conducting Listening Sessions with Communities of Color

DAS embarked on an ambitious effort this year to **learn more about the landscape of need and consumer experiences** accessing our resources among older and disabled San Franciscans belonging to **Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities** through a series of structured listening sessions with the community. To plan and carry out tailored sessions for different groups, DAS staff representing diverse backgrounds, programs, and roles formed project teams focused on key populations of interest: Asian, Black/African American, Filipino and Pacific Islander, Latinx/Hispanic, and LGBTQ+ communities of color. Collectively, these teams carried out **listening sessions with over 170 community members, service providers, and other stakeholders**. The Department will share findings from these sessions in the coming months, along with recommendations to address areas of unmet need, reinforce access to programs, and ensure greater equity and inclusion of older and disabled adults of color.

Examining Trends in Community-Based Legal Services

This year, we **conducted a deep-dive analysis of our community-based Legal Services program**. Supported by Dignity Fund dollars, this program provides older and disabled adults with various forms of legal assistance on topics such as eviction prevention, financial and consumer issues, preparation of wills, disability planning and advance directives, and immigration matters. This analysis broke new ground in our understanding of the Legal Services program, **leveraging five years' worth of quantitative data** on services for older adults and stakeholder **interviews with 20 Legal Services clients and providers**, plus three DAS Office of Community Partnerships staff. We summarized our findings in a report that touches on trends in program budget and staffing, service levels, client demographics, consumer needs, caseload breakdowns, and qualitative feedback about the program's strengths and areas for growth.

Highlighting the Intersection of Long Term Care and Mental Health Needs

In partnership with the San Francisco Long-Term Care Coordinating Council, we undertook a study of **mental health needs and gaps in service delivery for residents of skilled nursing facilities**. This qualitative research project engaged facility staff, residents, long-term care ombudsmen, and other advocates and stakeholders to produce recommendations for mental health service delivery in this setting. These findings were presented before the Council and will be the topic of **legislative visits in the upcoming year** with the Board of Supervisors.

"One resident, I think she died of a broken heart, it [the isolation] killed her. Another resident told me, 'I feel so alone...am I going to go crazy?'"

- Ombudsman staff

GOAL 5

Support and develop an engaged professional workforce that is prepared to work with older people and adults with disabilities

WHY IT MATTERS: Our workforce is the backbone of our services, and staff must have the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to meet the diverse needs of older people and adults with disabilities. It is more important than ever before that our workforce, both within DAS and in the San Francisco community, is prepared to meet the mounting demand for disability and aging services as the population ages.

Creating Virtual Access Points for Community Collaboration and Education

Across our programs, **DAS has leveraged digital tools** to ensure that community-based professionals throughout our service network are equipped to meet the needs of older and disabled people, particularly in the constantly evolving pandemic landscape. Our Office of Community Partnerships **hosted a series of highly popular webinars for community-based agencies** beginning in the early days of the pandemic and continuing into the past year. With input from service providers about subjects of interest to them, these webinars covered a range of topics, such as long-term care system responses to the pandemic, technology-based supports for social connection, and public health updates on the coronavirus. Over 20 trainings were hosted last year that averaged more than 70 attendees per training. Similarly, Adult Protective Services **partnerships and trainings hosted through the San Francisco Elder Abuse Forensic Center also moved to virtual formats**. These virtual trainings and multi-disciplinary team meetings were highly successful: the greater flexibility afforded to service providers and other community members by these virtual meetings actually **boosted participation and engagement** relative to pre-pandemic levels.

Supporting Professional Development for Caregivers

We undertook a number of initiatives to support both informal caregivers and the IHSS caregiver workforce this year, both prior to and following the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in San Francisco:

- IHSS partnered with the Family Caregiver Alliance to host a series of **webinars to support friend and family caregivers** providing care for their loved ones during the pandemic. Over 200 individuals participated in these webinars.
- IHSS implemented a **virtual training curriculum for Independent Providers**, both in response to a recommendation from a recent assessment of the training program and the pandemic. This virtual approach has increased our reach and engagement with care providers, who are now able to participate in the training from any location and to move through the training at their own pace.
- Homebridge – our partner that offers agency-based home care for IHSS clients unable to manage their own care – continued its efforts to recruit and support its home care providers. Based on the success of an initial pilot, Homebridge continued the Skills-Training and Employment Pathways (STEPS) tiered wage program, which is designed to improve the skills, recruitment, and retention of home care providers. Over the past year, Homebridge has been working to **expand the professional development opportunities available to caregivers**, including preparing for the September 2021 launch of a 15-week ‘on-the-job’ Certified Nurse Assistant training program in partnership with the University of California San Francisco and City College of San Francisco.