

2024-2025 ORANGE COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT



Grand Jury

Orange County Should Have More Respect for Its Elders!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS..... 4

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON IMPORTANCE OF OLDER ADULTS..... 4

SUMMARY 5

BACKGROUND 6

Master Plan for Aging..... 6

REASON FOR THE STUDY 8

METHOD OF STUDY 9

INVESTIGATION..... 11

Office on Aging’s Purpose 11

Orange County Older Adults Advisory Commission 12

Older Adults as a County Priority..... 13

Proactive vs Reactive 15

Lack of Efficiency..... 15

Invoicing..... 16

Vacancies..... 18

Website and Mobile Application (App)..... 18

Office on Aging and Non-Profit Organizations Contact Information 19

Office on Aging Call Center 19

Meals on Wheels Program 19

Congregate Meals Program 20

Council on Aging..... 20

Dayle McIntosh Center..... 21

Community Action Partnership of Orange County 21

Abrazar, Inc. 21

St. Jude Hospital, Inc. (Doing business as Providence St. Jude Medical Center) 21

Get Set Up, Inc...... 22

Hope Community Services..... 22

Alzheimer’s Family Center..... 22

Orange County Should Have More Respect for Its Elders!

Age Well Senior Services 22

COMMENDATION 22

FINDINGS 23

RECOMMENDATIONS..... 24

RESPONSES 26

Required Responses 27

Findings 27

Recommendations 28

Requested Responses..... 28

Findings 28

Recommendations 28

BIBLIOGRAPHY 29

ACRONYMS

ADRC	Aging and Disability Resource Connection
BOS	Board of Supervisors
FY	Fiscal Year
MIPPA	Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act
MPA	California Master Plan for Aging
OCCS	Orange County Community Services
OCMPA	Orange County Master Plan for Aging
OCOAC	Orange County Older Adults Advisory Commission
OOA	Office on Aging
PIO	Public Information Officer
RFP	Request for Proposal
SCAC	Senior Citizens Advisory Council
VSO	Veterans Service Office
WEDD	Workforce and Economic Development Division

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON IMPORTANCE OF OLDER ADULTS

In a press release dated March 11, 2025, to inform the public of the Orange County Older Adults Needs Assessment Report, the Orange County Board of Supervisors weighed in on the importance they place on this demographic. They were quoted as follows:

- Chair Doug Chaffee, Fourth District: “Ensuring the well-being of our older residents is a top priority. This assessment equips us with the data needed to make informed decisions that will enhance services and improve quality of life for seniors across the County.”
- Vice Chair Katrina Foley, Fifth District: “As our County residents grow older, we know that means a third of Orange County will be over 55 by 2050. We must plan for their housing, caregiving, and quality of life needs. The needs assessment kick starts our efforts to build a master plan for aging that allows future seniors of all backgrounds to live well in Orange County in their golden years.”

- Janet Nguyen, First District: “This report highlights the critical challenges our older residents face. We must work together to create targeted solutions that improve access to healthcare, social services, and community support.”
- Vicente Sarmiento, Second District: “The needs outlined in the report highlight the significant work still required to ensure we are ready to provide the crucial services our aging population will need. Supporting seniors with dignity and respect throughout the aging process involves more than just delivering services; it also requires offering support to their families and caregivers.”
- Donald P Wagner, Third District: “This report reinforces our commitment to strengthening healthcare, caregiver assistance, and community services to help seniors live with dignity and independence.”

SUMMARY

The 2015/2016 Orange County Grand Jury published a report questioning, “Is the Office on Aging prepared to handle the demands placed on it by the rapidly expanding Orange County senior population?” Nine years later, the 2024/2025 Orange County Grand Jury is still asking that same question. Has the County viewed the aging population as a priority in its planning during the last nine years? If so, what progress has been made in its preparedness? If not enough has been done, why not? It will become increasingly more difficult in the coming years to provide support and assistance for the older adult generation’s unique needs unless there is immediate, innovative, and forward-thinking action.

This report illustrates some of the obstacles and challenges that the Office on Aging and the County are facing when trying to address the needs of sixty-five and older residents—who are the fastest growing age group demographic in the County. It also identifies the positive actions that are working to bring the Office on Aging and County closer to this goal.

Given the Board of Supervisors’ (BOS) statements about older adults, quoted above, the Grand Jury respectfully requests that the BOS acknowledge the findings made and implement the recommendations proposed in this report on the Office on Aging.

The Orange County Grand Jury hopes that positive action will follow.

This report will also serve as a resource to older adults and their caregivers on services and programs available through the Office on Aging.

BACKGROUND

The Older Americans Act signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson on July 14, 1965 created the Federal Administration on Aging to administer grant programs to the states for community planning and social services, research and development and personnel training. It has been reauthorized several times—most recently as the Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020 for the fiscal years 2020-2024.

The California Department of Aging administers programs that serve older adults, adults with disabilities, family caregivers, and residents in long-term care facilities. The goal is for every Californian to have the opportunity to enjoy wellness, longevity and quality of life. Its core services include nutrition, supportive services, assisting caregivers, elder rights and health and wellness. This agency is funded through the Older Americans Act, Older Californians Act, and Medi-Cal. In 1973, the California Department of Aging established thirty-three Area Agencies on Aging, which are mostly funded by the State and federal government.

The BOS created the Orange County Area Agency on Aging in 1979 and renamed it Office on Aging (OOA) in 2002. The Office on Aging is a program/subdivision under Orange County Community Services (OCCS) which in turn is under Orange County Community Resources (OCCR). The mission of the Office on Aging is to ensure that Orange County older-adults experience a high quality of life, characterized by independence, safety, health, access to transportation, appropriate nutrition, and social activity. The main functions of the agency include providing information mainly through its call center, as well as planning, contracting, and overseeing programs of non-profit agencies benefiting older adults in Orange County. The agency also provides a Speakers Bureau of professionals and volunteers available to educate older adults about health and other topics. Its main funding is from the federal and State government.

Master Plan for Aging

In June 2019, Governor Gavin Newsom signed an executive order calling for the development of the California Master Plan for Aging (MPA). This MPA serves as a blueprint for local governments to develop their own Master Plan.

The Orange County Office on Aging is developing its own Master Plan—the Orange County Master Plan for Aging (OCMPA)—with an expected completion date of the end of June 2025.

In preparation for the OCMPA, the County contracted with Advance OC, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, to conduct a needs assessment survey of older adults and their caregivers. The County awarded

this contract to Advance OC despite the fact that the nonprofit did not submit a Request for Proposal (RFP), based on information provided to the Grand Jury.

The original survey timeline called for Advance OC to gather data from March to September 2023 and have a draft report of the findings by the end of November 2023.

The survey was in fact performed by Advance OC from September 5, 2023 until January 1, 2024. (Another non-profit, Alzheimer's Orange County, which had applied for the OCMPA contract but was not chosen, did their own survey on the needs of seniors, and their survey and the report were completed in five months.) Advance OC sent out approximately 7,000 surveys, and 5,657 people responded. However, Orange County officials identified the following problems with the survey results:

- Advance OC failed to report the data as requested, and the data it did report was difficult to interpret.
- Some survey questions were convoluted and had to be discarded.
- The survey failed to limit the target respondents to the appropriate low-income population, and therefore it was not an accurate representation of seniors in need of services.

As a result of these problems, the County had to bring in its own experts to analyze the data. The survey report was announced in a press release by OOA and presented to the Older Adults Advisory Commission in March 2025, *more than a year after the survey was completed*.

Despite this questionable process, the OOA proceeded with using the survey results, which showed the following top three priorities for older adults:

- Transportation assistance
- In-home care services
- Meal delivery and fitness/wellness programs (both were equally rated)

The needs assessment survey acquired information that is supposed to be integrated into the Orange County Master Plan for Aging. As of this writing, the Grand Jury has no access to the work in progress of the OCMPA, scheduled to be released by June 30, 2025.

The County's Master Plan should be organized around the priorities and strategies identified in the State's "five bold goals" contained in the California MPA. Those goals are the following:

1. Housing for all ages and stages

This goal focuses on housing for older adults designed to accommodate different household sizes, provide accessible transportation options, and access to parks and public spaces. It is

beneficial to age in a community that is accommodating to people who are older, or who might have a disability or dementia—as well as one that is climate and disaster ready.

2. Health reimagined

This goal identifies health as a lifetime journey and endeavors to support aging adults to continue to live comfortably within their homes and communities of choice. It addresses planning for chronic illnesses and gaps in home or community care. This goal highlights the benefits of having access to services needed by older adults to optimize health and quality of life.

3. Inclusion and equity, not isolation

This goal focuses on creating, establishing, and continuing opportunities for relevant engagement for those over the age of sixty. This means opportunities for work, volunteering, and leadership. Inclusion and equity for all includes ensuring the prevention of elder abuse, which takes many forms including physical, sexual, and financial, as well as abandonment, isolation, neglect, and mental suffering. This goal also seeks to protect the elderly from discrimination and exploitation.

4. Caregiving that works

Most people will need caregiving at some point in their lives. This goal focuses on supporting caregivers, including high-quality paid caregivers, as well as family and friends.

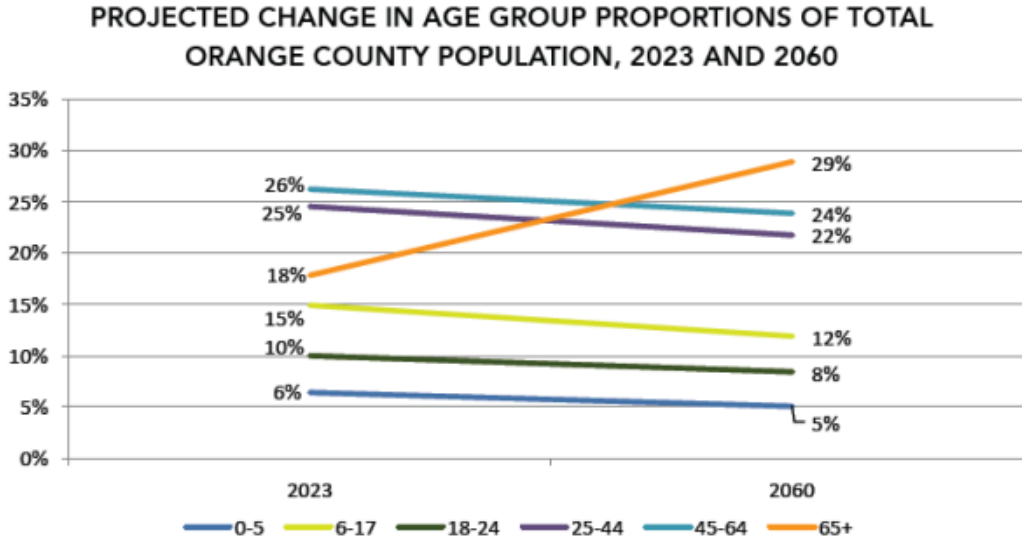
5. Affordable aging

This goal focuses on economic security, which is essential to living and aging well. An increased cost of living and economic instability can contribute to older adults' medical and/or behavioral health issues. This goal targets economic security during the latter stages of an older adult's life.

REASON FOR THE STUDY

Orange County adults aged sixty-five and over are not only the *fastest* growing demographic age group in the County, but they are also the *only* growing population. This demographic is projected to increase from 18% of the total Orange County population in 2023 to 29% of the total population by 2060.

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Source: California Department of Finance. Demographic Research Unit. Report P-2B: Population Projections by Individual Year of Age, California Counties, 2010-2060 (Baseline 2019 Population Projections; Vintage 2020 Release). Sacramento, California, July 2021.

An estimated 28% percent of County residents over the age of sixty-five do not have enough income to meet their basic needs—let alone their emotional and social well-being, physical health, and safety.¹ This is a very troubling statistic.

METHOD OF STUDY

The Orange County Grand Jury conducted many interviews including

- Personnel at Orange County Office on Aging
- Personnel at Orange County Community Services and Orange County Community Resources
- Head of Department of Aging from another county
- Members of Orange County Older Adults Advisory Commission
- Officials at non-profit organizations who contract with the Office on Aging

¹ Justice in Aging, "Snapshot of Older Adults in Orange County," Justice in Aging, March 2023, <https://justiceinaging.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Snapshot-of-Older-Adults-in-Orange-County-Accessible-Outline.pdf>.

Orange County Should Have More Respect for Its Elders!

In addition, multiple sources of documentation were reviewed including

- Internet research about the Office on Aging and their contracting non-profits
- Documentation received from non-profits
- Demographics from United States Census Bureau website
- Demographics from California Department of Aging for 2024
- Demographics from Neilsberg Research, dated July 26, 2024
- Demographics from Justice in Aging website
- Prior Grand Jury reports on topics of aging in Orange and other counties
- Report on Aging in Orange County by the Orange County Aging Services Collaborative
- Various area agencies on aging websites
- Old and new invoicing systems created by Orange County Community Services for Office on Aging's non-profit providers
- Needs assessment survey and responses that were prepared to create the Orange County Master Plan for Aging
- Orange County Office on Aging 2023-2024 Area Plan update
- Orange County Office on Aging Fact Sheet for Program Funding for fiscal years 2023-24 and 2024-25
- Citizens Guide to Orange County fiscal year 2024-25 budget

The Orange County Grand Jury conducted field research including the following:

- Attended senior community events
- Visited the Office on Aging
- Attended general board and executive committee meetings of the Orange County Older Adults Advisory Commission
- Visited skilled nursing facilities and board-and-care facilities with paid and volunteer ombudsmen
- Observed meal delivery service to individuals and congregate meals served by non-profits

INVESTIGATION

Office on Aging's Purpose

The Office on Aging's function is to provide services and assist the older adult community of Orange County and their caregivers. The OOA is a program/subdivision of the Orange County Community Services (OCCS) division, which is a division of Orange County Community Resources. The Office on Aging can be contacted directly as follows:

- Website: officeonaging.ocgov.com
- Email: areaagencyonaging@occr.ocgov.com
- Phone: (714) 480-6450

The mission of the Office on Aging, as stated on their website:

“To ensure that Orange County's older adults experience a high quality of life characterized by independence, safety, health, transportation, affordable housing, appropriate nutrition and social activity.”

The vision of the Office on Aging, as stated on their website:

“Orange County is the best place in America to age with dignity.”

The Office on Aging operates with approximately twenty personnel consisting of an agency director, two managers, five administrators, two staff analysts, staff who assist the administrators and analysts, and call center personnel. The OOA is assisted by Orange County Community Services. That assistance is provided by the Orange County Community Services Administrative Unit, Contract Monitoring and Program Compliance Unit (CMPC), and the OCCS Public Information Officer (PIO).

The County of Orange contracts with non-profit service provider organizations to provide invaluable services to the most vulnerable of the older adult population in the County. These non-profits are supervised by the OOA. Their services include, but are not limited to, nutrition and transportation. This investigation will identify many of these non-profit providers and the services they provide. A review of the Office on Aging website will provide the most current information.

The Grand Jury interviewed leadership and employees of the Office on Aging, Orange County Community Services, and the non-profit providers, among other interviewees. The Grand Jury found that all parties want the older adult population, especially those that are the most vulnerable, to receive the services offered by the non-profit providers.

Through its investigation, the Grand Jury determined that Orange County Community Services does not collaborate sufficiently with the Office on Aging and the non-profit providers on significant decisions affecting both the services and the benefits for the County's older adults.

Orange County Older Adults Advisory Commission

The Board of Supervisors established the Senior Citizens Advisory Council (SCAC) in 1973 to advise the BOS on all matters affecting older adults. SCAC is now known as the Orange County Older Adults Advisory Commission (Advisory Commission).

This Advisory Commission advocates for and advises the BOS and Office on Aging on issues affecting older adults in Orange County. This includes, but is not limited to, advising the BOS on all matters relating to the development and administration of the Area Plan and Master Plan for Aging, as required by law.

The Orange County Grand Jury attended several general and executive committee meetings of the Advisory Commission in the years 2024-2025 and found both the commission and its members to be strong advocates for the senior community of Orange County.

The current bylaws of the Advisory Commission, dated January 23, 2024, can be found on the Orange County Office on Aging website (officeonaging.ocgov.com) under the heading "About Us."

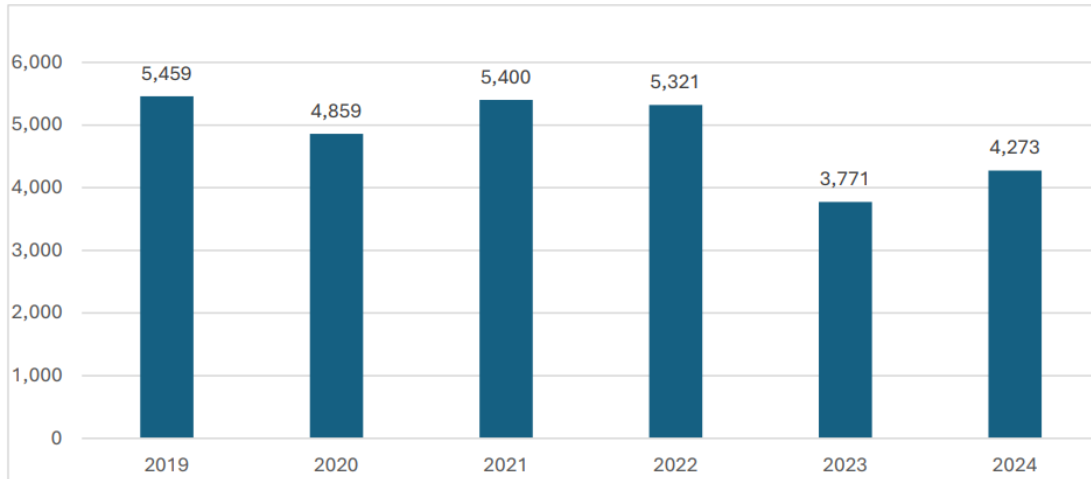
The Grand Jury noted the Advisory Commission's frustration with the Office on Aging regarding the completion of simple tasks, such as the creation of a brochure and the updating and modernizing of its website.

The Grand Jury further noted that several of the Advisory Commission's members are deeply engaged in serving as liaisons to senior community centers and providing volunteer hours to the senior community. The chart below, from the Advisory Commission, identifies the thousands of hours that its members have devoted to these senior causes:

OC Older Adults Advisory Commission Reported Volunteer Hours

January 24, 2025

OCOAC Member Reported Hours



The Advisory Commission has committed their ideas to action. Most notably, it has begun a program that brings together leadership from other County departments with leadership from Office on Aging. This collaboration is helping older adults get more information about County resources, in addition to allowing the various County departments to learn about how older adults manage in their homes. This innovative program has zero cost to the taxpayer.

The Grand Jury commends the Advisory Commission for its creative thinking and putting its thoughts into action.

Older Adults as a County Priority

The Orange County Office on Aging 2023-2024 Area Plan update identifies that, according to the California Department of Finance Demographic Research Unit, the total older adult population (aged sixty-plus) in Orange County will increase from 709,928 in 2020 to more than a million in 2060. The COVID-19 pandemic may have had some effect on the final numbers, but that population should still be an estimated 25-30% of the Orange County population.

The California Department of Finances Demographic Research Unit found that Orange County currently has more than 80,000 older adults living below the poverty line. Demographics identify the older adult population range as being from 675,000 to an estimated 776,000.

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Pursuant to the Office on Aging Fact Sheet, the County allocated around \$1.6 million of general fund revenue to the Office on Aging for the fiscal year 2024-2025. Other data indicates the allocation to be \$1,140,767.

The County budget overview for 2025-2026 indicates that 92% of the County’s \$1.1 billion general purpose revenue comes from property taxes. Orange County receives the lowest property tax allocation of all fifty-eight counties in the State: five cents for every dollar. The property tax revenue allocation average for all fifty-eight counties in the state is fourteen cents for every dollar collected. In 1979, Assembly Bill 8 set the property tax allocation formula for each California county and has never been amended—despite Orange County having grown considerably in the intervening years.

Based on the demographics for the older adult population in Orange County, which currently comprises over 20% of the population, the allocation amounts to an estimated \$2.20 per person, per year. This is simply insufficient for this group’s population size and their growing needs.

If one looks at the estimated older-adult *low-income* population of 80,000, and if the entire \$1.6 million were applied only to this population, the dollar figure would amount to \$20.00 per low-income person for the entire year.

For comparison, according to the State Legislative Analyst’s Office, the 2024-2025 California state budget allocated **\$133,100** per year for each incarcerated individual.

Orange County General Funds for Office on Aging vs. Population Growth of OC Residents Aged 60+

Fiscal Year	2015-16	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
General Funds	\$778,438	\$1,195,416	\$1,095,416	\$1,140,254	\$1,133,821	\$1,140,767	\$1,140,767
Population Age 60+	587,240	681,997	656,232	693,800	713,969	723,896	Unavailable
Per Senior OC GF Expenditure	\$1.32	\$1.75	\$1.66	\$1.64	\$1.58	\$1.57	Unavailable

The table above shows general funds allocated to the Office on Aging alongside data for the county’s 60+ population. Expenditure per senior was calculated by dividing general funds by the population, as per the 2015-2016 Grand Jury report. Note that census data is reported by calendar year, while general fund data is based on the fiscal year (*Source; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023*).

Older adults appear to be forgotten in the County’s budget. The County needs to prioritize this population by increasing the general fund allocation to the Office on Aging. Increased funding will allow for more staffing—including an Event Coordinator to manage outreach—and will enable the Office on Aging to become proactive in the Orange County senior community.

Proactive vs Reactive

The Grand Jury interviewed personnel from the Office on Aging and Orange County Community Services and learned that other than offering a variety of health education seminars, the Office on Aging is *reactive* to the needs of the older adult population rather than *proactive*.

“Proactive” is defined as creating or controlling a situation by causing something to happen rather than responding to it after it has happened. “Reactive” is defined as acting in response to a situation rather than creating or controlling it.

For example, members of the Grand Jury attended the Senior Summit in Buena Park in August of 2024. There were two full rooms of vendor booths on senior-related activities, including a large section occupied by the Orange County Health Care Agency. The Office on Aging was missing in action. The Grand Jurors also visited various community senior centers. These centers have locations for flyers and brochures of interest to seniors. In the centers visited, there was minimal to no information on the OOA and the services they offer.

The Grand Jury believes that the County should provide the Office on Aging with a dedicated Event Coordinator to manage and oversee all community outreach for older adults and their caretakers so that the OOA has a larger presence in the County.

The Office on Aging needs to maintain updated marketing materials, including brochures and flyers, and make sure that they are provided to all community and senior centers.

The Grand Jury strongly recommends that the Office on Aging become more proactive in the older adult community, and that they have a booth and actively take part in all relevant senior events in the County. A dedicated Event Coordinator would help the OOA to be proactive.

Lack of Efficiency

Along with the Workforce and Economic Development Department (WEDD) and Veterans Service Office (VSO), the OOA is a program/subdivision of OC Community Services, which in turn is under OC Community Resources. The Office on Aging shares various functions with these other sub-agencies, including an Administrative Unit, Contracts Monitoring and Program Compliance Unit (CMPC) and Public Information Officer (PIO). As a result, changes in policy and new ideas from Office on Aging staff take an inordinate amount of time to be implemented, as they must progress up the OCCS chain of command for approval.

For example, it took roughly one year for a small Office on Aging brochure to be revised, and many months for the Office on Aging website to be updated which, at the beginning of the Grand Jury investigation, still listed events from 2015, 2017 and 2019. If the Office on Aging or its Advisory Commission would like to send an OOA representative to a senior community event,

this must first be approved by the Administrative Unit at Orange County Community Services. This cannot always be done in time for the event because the Administrative Unit appears to prioritize requests from other subdivisions under its purview. The Administrative Unit must approve press releases, reports and meeting agendas of the Advisory Commission and has veto power over any item on the agenda it does not wish to discuss.

The Office on Aging purchased \$10,000 worth of gift cards for seniors and \$30,000 worth of staff computer equipment which were (as of the date of this report) sitting in storage and unable to be distributed due to lack of collaboration between Orange County Community Services and the Office on Aging regarding a policy for purchasing and distribution. Orange County Community Services must provide approval for all purchases, including office supplies.

The Advisory Commission and some County employees and officials believe that the Office on Aging should be a stand-alone agency with its own Administrative Unit, Contract Monitoring and Program Compliance, and Public Information Officer, as is the case, at the time of writing this report, in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego counties.

The Grand Jury agrees that the older adult community would be better served by an Office on Aging that is an independent agency with its own support staff.

Invoicing

The Administrative Unit of Orange County Community Services developed a new invoicing system for non-profits overseen by the Office on Aging. This system has also been implemented by other sub-divisions of Orange County Community Services. The precise reason and need for this change is unclear. Some reasons presented to the Grand Jury include:

- Streamlining the process so non-profits are paid in a timely fashion
- Helping OOA program managers better monitor the non-profits
- Preventing OOA program managers and the non-profits from improperly altering or amending contracts
- Alleviating concerns of the California Department of Aging about the non-profits not being paid in a timely fashion
- Saving taxpayer money
- Preventing the misuse of taxpayer money, such as what happened with former Supervisor Andrew Do, who pled guilty to a felony.

Development of the new invoice system began in June 2023. The program managers at the Office on Aging were notified of the impending change in May 2024, with the rollout on July 1, 2024. No third-party providers were included in the development process, even though they

would ultimately be the end users of the new invoice process. The OOA staff who deal directly with the non-profit providers felt the prior system was working well and did not need to be changed.

The Office on Aging administers many older adult services by managing contracts with non-profit, third-party providers. Each provider submits a monthly invoice for reimbursement. Up until June 2024, the non-profit providers would typically receive payment from Orange County by the twentieth day of the following month.

The Administrative Unit chose a very aggressive rollout schedule for this new invoice system:

- May 13, 2024: Providers received first official notice of the new system
- May 24, 2024: Deadline for providers to respond for mandatory training
- June 3 or June 6, 2024: Full day of hands-on training for providers
- July 1, 2024: New invoice system took effect

The rollout schedule did not include a pilot test of selected providers, nor did it include time to address potential issues or to implement necessary adjustments uncovered during the training sessions. As a result, the transition to the new invoice system was frustrating for all involved parties.

Several non-profit providers and the respective program managers for these providers struggled with the new one-size-fits-all process, as it was not flexible to allow for provider service uniqueness. The Administrative Unit at Orange County Community Services provided additional one-on-one assistance; however, the providers commented that the sessions often uncovered underlying workbook formula errors and omissions that needed to be corrected, resulting in invoice submission delays.

These delays caused some non-profit providers to go for several months without reimbursement, creating significant financial stress. The providers have shouldered the burden of the new invoice system requirements, with their staff spending additional hours each month completing the invoice workbooks. Orange County Community Services believes the new invoicing system should not require any additional work time.

The Grand Jury determined that future major decisions, such as modifying the invoice system, which affects payment to the non-profits and oversight by the Office on Aging staff, should include input from the affected parties prior to its implementation. It is unclear whether the OOA's concerns were heard or addressed regarding the new invoicing system. The Grand Jury received conflicting information.

Vacancies

The Grand Jury found that it can take six to nine months for the Office on Aging to fill a vacant position, due to the County's lengthy hiring process. Current employees who have years of experience are not considered for elevation in their agency if they are not already on a list of applicants used by Human Resources Services. The Grand Jury concludes that the County's hiring process contains inefficiencies and contributes to poor office morale at the Office on Aging. This includes, for example, the practice of strictly adhering to hiring lists at the expense of existing Office on Aging staff who are subject matter experts, but are not on the relevant hiring list.

Given the fact that the Office on Aging consists of roughly twenty employees, a lengthy delay to fill a position can quickly have a negative effect on the OOA and the older adults who rely on its programs.

Website and Mobile Application (App)

The Office on Aging website is the entry point for many seniors, family members and their caregivers in understanding public and private older adult services in Orange County. Users may go to the website at a moment when they are in a crisis and need immediate solutions.

The Office on Aging website, sadly, is difficult to navigate for the following reasons:

- The homepage does not engage users:
 - There is no Office on Aging welcome, mission or vision statement, nor any information about how the agency is organized.
 - The website refers users to the Information and Assistance Call Center, which is not available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.
 - It lacks suggestions on how to best use the website.
 - A large photo occupies most of the visible landing page, requiring users to scroll down the page to get information.
- Information and resources are buried under headings and subheadings whose logic and organization is unclear, causing frustration.
- Acronyms are used without full descriptions, causing user confusion.

The Office on Aging website, at the time of writing this report, still contains outdated information, including events such as Town Halls and news dating back to 2018. Until this year, the activities calendar listed events dating back to 2015.

The Administrative Unit of the Orange County Community Services manages the websites for the Office on Aging, Workforce & Economic Development Division, and Veterans Service Office. Office on Aging staff and the Advisory Commission submit website updates and suggested improvements, which are then put in a queue. Orange County Community Service's limited staff resources often cause significant delays in OOA website updates.

The Office on Aging also provides a mobile app ("OC Senior Resources") that links to the Office on Aging website. The app is also difficult to navigate. For example, to select a zip code, the user must scroll through a long list instead of simply inputting a zip code. In addition, the landing page does not clearly direct the user to the Office on Aging's phone number. Tapping a phone icon within the app brings up a phone number, but it is not clear to the user that the number is associated with the Office on Aging.

The Grand Jury notes that since it started its investigation, the Office on Aging's website has shown some improvement.

Office on Aging and Non-Profit Organizations Contact Information

Office on Aging Call Center

For information and assistance

714-480-6450

Monday-Friday 8am-5pm

Call center referrals include, but are not limited to:

- Housing options
- Transportation
- Food and nutrition program
- Caregiver services
- In-home care
- Medicare/Medi-Cal information
- Veteran's services
- Community center information

Various non-profits providing services to older adults through the Office on Aging:

Meals on Wheels Program

<https://www.mealsonwheelsoc.org>

714-220-0224

Helps homebound older adults live independently. It delivers three nutritious meals, covering five days a week, to older adults in the north and central districts of Orange County who, without these meals, would struggle with hunger and malnutrition.

Program participants must be aged sixty-plus and homebound due to illness, disability, or lack of mobility.

Beyond delivering meals to homebound seniors, volunteers often provide friendly conversation while helping ensure the senior is thriving. If needed, the volunteer will secure help for the senior, using available resources.

Congregate Meals Program

Serves nourishing meals to older adults in a group setting and provides opportunities to visit and socialize with other seniors. The program also provides nutrition education, and in some areas, nutrition counseling. Voluntary contributions are requested, but not required.

Council on Aging

www.coasc.org

714-479-0107

Provides long-term care ombudsman services identified below and develops and implements programs to prevent, identify, and address elder abuse.

Long-term care ombudsmen are advocates for residents of nursing homes, board-and-care homes, and assisted living facilities. The Ombudsmen seek resolution of problems and advocate for the rights of residents of long-term care facilities. The issues they advocate for may include, but are not limited to

- Violation of residents' rights
- Violation of residents' dignity
- Quality of care issues
- Dietary issues
- Abuse (financial, mental, physical, and verbal)
- Transfer or discharge of a resident
- Medical care, including therapy and rehabilitation issues

The Council on Aging also provides the following services:

- Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP) advises Medicare beneficiaries on coverage options and health insurance issues.

Orange County Should Have More Respect for Its Elders!

- Friendly Visitor Program provides weekly contact with fragile and disabled older adults. This occurs through home and telephone visits. This program identifies needs and offers assistance in acquiring needed health and social resources.
- Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) educates and assists low-income seniors in applying for programs that help pay their Medicare costs and conducts outreach activities aimed at preventing disease and promoting wellness.
- Improves access to preventative and mental health services, low-income benefits, and healthcare and medication access for older adults.
- Smile Makers provides wrapped gifts to senior long-term care residents without family and friends who would otherwise be forgotten during the holidays.

Dayle McIntosh Center

<https://daylemc.org>

714-621-3300

The Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) is a partnership between the Office on Aging and the Dayle McIntosh Center, which provides oversight and support to older adults and people with disabilities so that they can live independently and avoid being institutionalized.

Community Action Partnership of Orange County

<https://www.capoc.org>

714-897-6670

Provides residential repairs and minor home modifications that are not available under other programs and are necessary to assist the ability of older individuals to remain at home.

Also provides nutrition and obesity prevention programs for older adults aged sixty-plus.

Abrazar, Inc.

<https://www.abrazarinc.com>

714-893-3581

Coordinates transportation for senior non-emergency medical-related needs, such as dialysis and chemotherapy, for adults aged sixty-plus who lack other transportation options.

St. Jude Hospital, Inc. (Doing business as Providence St. Jude Medical Center)

<https://www.providence.org>

714-871-3280

Provides support groups and counseling to older adults, family members, and unpaid caregivers, as well as short-term relief for primary caregivers.

Get Set Up, Inc.

<https://www.getsetup.io/partner/oc>

888-559-1614

Offers online classes on various subjects for adults over the age of sixty in Orange County. This includes a class on how to use the internet and other technology devices.

Hope Community Services

<https://giveushope.org>

714-265-1181

Provides a food pantry and English as a Second Language classes.

Alzheimer's Family Center

<https://afscenter.org>

714-593-9630

Provides information and referrals for memory loss, dementia, Alzheimer's, and related medical issues.

Age Well Senior Services

<https://agewellseniorservices.org>

949-855-8033

Delivers nutritious meals through Meals on Wheels to older adults who are living at home with little or no assistance in the south district of the County. They provide three meals a day, five days a week.

Age Well's senior centers provide lunch five days a week by reservation for those residing in South Orange County. Age Well also provides non-emergency medical transportation scheduled at least five business days in advance.

Please see all non-profit websites for further information on all services provided to the older-adult community of the County of Orange.

COMMENDATION

The Grand Jury found the Office on Aging personnel to be knowledgeable in the areas they service and eager to assist the older adults of Orange County.

The Grand Jury also found that the Office on Aging staff consists of Human Services Administrators and Analysts who are extremely experienced, with many years of valuable knowledge of the functions and duties of the non-profits they oversee. They clearly understand the crucial role that the non-profits have in serving the most vulnerable older adults of Orange

County and exercise their best efforts to make sure the non-profits get paid for the services they provide.

FINDINGS

In accordance with California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, the 2024-2025 Grand Jury requires (or as noted, requests) responses from each agency affected by the findings presented in this section. The responses are to be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.

Based on its investigation titled “Orange County Should Have More Respect for Its Elders!” the 2024-2025 Orange County Grand Jury has arrived at twelve findings, as follows:

- F1.** Orange County Office on Aging is not currently prepared to serve the future wave of older adults in this County.
- F2.** Based on the limited general funds allocated by the County for the Office on Aging, the well-being of older adults is not reflected as a County priority.
- F3.** The Office on Aging does not have its own dedicated Event Coordinator to manage outreach, resulting in missed opportunities to engage and educate older adults and their caregivers about the services provided.
- F4.** The Office on Aging does not have its own dedicated employee responsible for website design and modernization as well as for updating information and events; as a result, the Office on Aging website and mobile application (app) have outdated information and are difficult to navigate.
- F5.** The Office on Aging suffers from limited resources and staffing and is therefore reactive rather than proactive to the needs of Orange County older adults.
- F6.** The Administrative Unit of the Orange County Community Services agency is at times slow to respond to requests from the Office on Aging, causing unnecessary delays to older adult services.
- F7.** The Administrative Unit of the Orange County Community Services agency does not pursue sufficient feedback, input, or discussion with the Office on Aging and non-profit providers before implementing changes affecting the non-profit providers who are serving older adults.
- F8.** The new invoicing system launched on July 1, 2024, by Orange County Community Services for the Office on Aging has caused certain non-profit providers difficulty in understanding how to implement the new system due to insufficient information and training provided, thereby causing a delay in payment for services to some non-profit providers.

Orange County Should Have More Respect for Its Elders!

F9. It takes the Office on Aging an estimated six to nine months to fill a vacancy, due to the County hiring process. With the Office on Aging having roughly twenty employees (based on their most recent organization chart), any long-term vacancies have an outsized impact on the quality of services provided to Orange County older adults.

F10. The Orange County Older Adults Advisory Commission advises the Office on Aging but is frustrated at the OOA's current outreach activities, website revisions, marketing program, and the time it took to create a new brochure for the senior centers.

F11. The Office on Aging has to rely on the Orange County Community Services Administrative Unit as well as the Contracts Monitoring and Program Compliance Unit for decision making affecting older adult services. The inherent delays with this type of system, as well as a lack of timely collaboration between the Office on Aging and Orange County Community Services, causes unnecessary delays in decision making affecting services to older adults.

F12. The human services administrators, analysts, and staff specialists at the Office on Aging provide quality oversight of the non-profit providers and are making good faith efforts to advocate for the non-profit providers in getting paid for providing their services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In accordance with California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, the 2024-2025 Grand Jury requires (or as noted, requests) responses from each agency affected by the recommendations presented in this section. The responses are to be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.

Based on its investigation titled "Orange County Should Have More Respect for Its Elders!" the 2024-2025 Orange County Grand Jury makes ten recommendations, as follows:

R1. The Board of Supervisors should work with the Office on Aging's Agency Director to determine the staffing and financial needs of the OOA for the next decade, due to demographics projecting a sizable increase in the older adult population in the County. This determination should occur by December 31, 2025, and be reviewed annually thereafter. **(F1, F2)**

R2. The Grand Jury recommends that the Office on Aging put forth more effort on outreach to older adults and their caretakers about the services and benefits available to them. This would include, but is not limited to, employing its own Event Coordinator dedicated to managing outreach to this population. The Event Coordinator should be retained by December 31, 2025. **(F3)**

R3. The Grand Jury recommends that the Office on Aging secure its own reliable and experienced employee to modernize and update the Office on Aging website and mobile

application (app) by September 30, 2025, and review the effectiveness of those updates annually thereafter. (F4)

R4. The Grand Jury recommends that the Office on Aging prepare a written plan to submit to the Board of Supervisors identifying the additional staffing necessary to enable it to become proactive in the Orange County older adult community. Being proactive includes, but is not limited to, attending senior events in the County, reaching out to senior community centers to ascertain needs, and educating the target population on the services and benefits available through the Office on Aging. This shall occur by December 31, 2025, and the plan shall be reviewed annually thereafter. (F5)

R5. The Grand Jury recommends that the Administrative Unit of the Orange County Community Services respond in a timely manner to reasonable and relevant information requests made by the Office on Aging staff. (F6)

R6. The Grand Jury recommends that the Orange County Community Services Administrative Unit collaborate with the Office on Aging staff and non-profit providers to secure their input before implementing changes affecting non-profit providers. (F7)

R7. The Grand Jury recommends that the Orange County Community Services and Office on Aging jointly collaborate with those non-profit providers having continuing problems implementing the new invoice system. The basis of the collaboration is to determine what additional training, documentation, and materials are needed to get the new invoicing system to function effectively for these non-profits and to get their outstanding invoices for services paid immediately. This collaboration shall occur within thirty days of the publication of this report/investigation of the Office on Aging. (F8)

R8. The Grand Jury recommends that the Office on Aging collaborate with Orange County Human Resources Services as soon as the Office on Aging is aware of any vacancy that will need to be filled. With the growing older adult population in Orange County, it is imperative that the Office on Aging be fully staffed at all times. (F9)

R9. The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors consider providing the Orange County Older Adults Advisory Commission with more authority by requiring the Office on Aging to respond in writing within fourteen days of any requests made by the Advisory Commission. The written response should include whether, how, and when the request will be implemented. If a request is denied, the Office on Aging shall provide a written response explaining why it was denied. This recommendation is to be implemented effective as of September 30, 2025. (F10)

R10. The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors consider making the Office on Aging its own independent agency, which would include internalizing the functions currently

provided by the Orange County Community Services Administrative Unit and Contract Monitoring and Program Compliance Unit. This would allow the Office on Aging to better serve older adults in the County, which exceeds 675,000 people and is the fastest growing demographic in the County. If this recommendation is implemented by the Board of Supervisors, then the Office on Aging shall become its own independent agency by July 1, 2026. (F11)

RESPONSES

The following excerpts from the California Penal Code provide the requirements for public agencies to respond to the Findings and Recommendations of this Grand Jury report:

§933

(c) No later than 90 days after the grand jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to its reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body, and every elected county officer or agency head for which the grand jury has responsibility pursuant to Section 914.1 shall comment within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court, with an information copy sent to the board of supervisors, on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of that county officer or agency head and any agency or agencies which that officer or agency head supervises or controls. In any city and county, the mayor shall also comment on the findings and recommendations. All of these comments and reports shall forthwith be submitted to the presiding judge of the superior court who impaneled the grand jury. A copy of all responses to grand jury reports shall be placed on file with the clerk of the public agency and the office of the county clerk, or the mayor when applicable, and shall remain on file in those offices. One copy shall be placed on file with the applicable grand jury final report by, and in the control of the currently impaneled grand jury, where it shall be maintained for a minimum of five years.

933.05.

(a) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:

(1) The respondent agrees with the finding.

(2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.

(b) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:

(1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.

Orange County Should Have More Respect for Its Elders!

(2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.

(3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.

(4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.

(c) However, if a finding or recommendation of the grand jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a county agency or department headed by an elected officer, both the agency or department head and the board of supervisors shall respond if requested by the grand jury, but the response of the board of supervisors shall address only those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision-making authority. The response of the elected agency or department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her agency or department.

(d) A grand jury may request a subject person or entity to come before the grand jury for the purpose of reading and discussing the findings of the grand jury report that relates to that person or entity in order to verify the accuracy of the findings prior to their release.

(e) During an investigation, the grand jury shall meet with the subject of that investigation regarding the investigation, unless the court, either on its own determination or upon request of the foreperson of the grand jury, determines that such a meeting would be detrimental.

(f) A grand jury shall provide to the affected agency a copy of the portion of the grand jury report relating to that person or entity two working days prior to its public release and after the approval of the presiding judge. No officer, agency, department, or governing body of a public agency shall disclose any contents of the report prior to the public release of the final report.

(Amended by Stats. 1997, Ch. 443, Sec. 5. Effective January 1, 1998.)

Required Responses

Comments to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court in compliance with Penal Code §933.05 are required from:

Findings

Orange County Board of Supervisors

F1, F2, F3, F4, F5,
F6, F7, F8, F9, F10,
F11, F12

Recommendations

Orange County Board of Supervisors

R1, R2, R3, R4, R5,
R6, R7, R8, R9, R10

Requested Responses

Comments to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court in compliance with Penal Code §933.05 are requested from:

Findings

Orange County Office on Aging

F1, F2, F3, F4, F5,
F6, F7, F8, F9, F10,
F11, F12

Orange County Community Services

F3, F4, F6, F7, F8,
F10, F11

Recommendations

Orange County Office on Aging

R1, R2, R3, R4, R5,
R6, R7, R8, R9, R10

Orange County Community Services

R2, R3, R5, R6, R7,
R9, R10

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