

THE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT (MHSA), and BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT (BHSA) RELEVANCE for OLDER ADULTS and COMMISSION ON AGING (COA)

Mental Health Services Act

- “Millionaire Tax” of 2004. Mandates the Advisory Committee.
- Funds Prevention and Early Intervention services – Senior Peer Counseling (recent expansion), Boost (brief therapy), Warmline.
- Also, Funds Community Services and Supports – Project Hope (for older adults with severe psychiatric illness). A Full-Service Partnership (“Whatever it takes” model).

Behavioral Health Services Act

- Part of Proposition 1, passed in 2024.
- Prop 1 includes bonds for behavioral health services (6.4B!)
- Also includes the BHSA: reforms funding priorities, changes how much State keeps. Older adults are not, by themselves, prioritized without other criteria being met (e.g. homeless, in justice system, at risk of conservatorship or institutionalization). Also new focus on *housing* as part of MH/SUD intervention.
- Extensive community planning process November 2024 – 2025. Includes “listening sessions”. COA can be part of that. New allocations July 2026. Future funding not clear.
- Alignment with COA goals? Prevention services available to “missing middle” since no means test. Perhaps through listening sessions we can advocate for older adults above a certain age to be considered a “vulnerability factor” in deciding who gets shallow rent subsidies. (But must be connected to Behavioral Health and Recovery Services.) Current VI-SPDAT assessment – age is NOT a vulnerability factor, per Luke Barnesmoore of Home Match.

What can the Commission on Aging do?

1. Spread the word on need for Senior Peer Counselor volunteers.
2. Advocate for interests of older adults in BHSA Integrated Community Planning Process. Mario Garcia and Vanessa Blum will reach out to COA.

3. Related Note: [Front Porch Home Match program](#) needs more *providers* of housing. How can we spread the word? Can be a solution for older adults who are at financial risk.
4. Related note: We *also* want to spread the word re: congregate meal program, which has had a decrease in participation even though assessment shows need is there.