

Challenging Times Call for Creativity

How different the world has become in a few short months. Patience, planning and preparation are now needed to handle simple things like grocery shopping that we once took for granted.

CEI has had to face new realities, too. A core part of how we have always provided our seniors with medical care, socialization, exercise, activities, and nutritious meals is to bring them into CEI Centers. But that is no longer best. So we have challenged ourselves to develop new methods for delivering our high-level, whole-person care to participants as they shelter in place.

Here is how we have been able to accomplish that.

Quickly determining who needs what

PACE programs are designed to be flexible, which gave us a head start. Our integrated care teams constantly review participants' medical and living conditions, which also helped CEI act quickly.

Within the first week of shelter-in-place orders, we had identified what each of our 1,000 participants would need to keep them safe and supported. In collaboration with the seniors themselves, we figured out how to help people at home with meals and activity kits and even toilet paper.

Thanks to 100 new tablets, we have ramped up our telehealth and virtual activities that include virtual karaoke, cooking classes and even a Friday social happy hour. Our Rehab staff now has videos available on YouTube so we can do virtual meditation or exercise classes.

And when participants do require additional care, our centers are there for them. Those few who need to attend the PACE centers for safety reasons are brought in for activities, while observing all recommended COVID prevention measures. CEI owns both the clinics and vans that transport participants, so we have been able to provide them with medical care and safe rides throughout this crisis.

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Participant Maria Gudino-Moreno's daughter, María Elena, let us know that the home-delivered activity kit inspired her mom to get out of bed and create colorful art.

Home and Community Based Alternatives (HCBA) Waiver Program



In September 2018, CEI became the Home and Community Based Alternatives (HCBA) waiver agency for Alameda and Contra Costa Counties and began supporting a new group of underserved people. The HCBA program aims to help anyone who requires institutional level of care, including children and adults with developmental disabilities, HIV, or other medical issues. In fact, 20% of beneficiaries of the program are dependent on a ventilator and a feeding tube. We help keep the HCBA participants residing at home. We have assessed and enrolled more than 100 new HCBA participants and served over 400 beneficiaries.

A lifeline for struggling parents

We were so heartened by the following letter we received in May from the mother of a recently enrolled young daughter with complex, intensive medical needs. It sums up why we do this work.

“My child was diagnosed at the age of 6 months with a life-long diagnosis. Since then my husband and I have been struggling to learn, cope, and provide our daughter with the best care needed. I had to give up my career, my husband began working long hours. We had sleepless nights, financial burden, and emotional struggle, to provide for her...

Working with the HCBA waiver team gave us relief. We got understanding and emotional support from each team member. We do not have words to express our appreciation for this program, which will allow us to have the simple pleasures we missed out on while

taking care of her 24/7. It will also provide us the energy and positivity to keep pushing through. Thank you for bringing back positivity and confidence into our lives.”

Sylvia Colt-Lacayo was another memorable case for us because of her drive to live life to the fullest and not let her disability hold her back. She has a degenerative neuromuscular disease, which causes weak, underdeveloped muscles. Despite needing assistance for most tasks, such as getting in and out of her power wheelchair, in and out of bed, taking a shower, and changing clothes, she managed to excel in school.

Sylvia needed more help than Stanford offers

Last year, Sylvia was admitted to Stanford University with a full scholarship for tuition and dormitory room and board. However, her doctor determined she’d need at least eighteen hours of personal assistance every day, which her mother had been providing. “You get into the school, they give you a full ride, but you still can’t go, even though you’ve worked so hard, because you can’t get out of bed in the morning. It’s mind-boggling,” Sylvia said. She applied for Medi-Cal, but was only eligible for 5.4 hours of care – not enough for her to live at Stanford on her own.

CEI’s waiver program comes to the rescue

Then Sylvia heard about the HCBA waiver program from another student and applied, but it had a two-year waiting list. Before CEI became the HCBA waiver agency for Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, people often waited many years for enrollment. For Sylvia and many others who need our help immediately, we were able to get to her case soon after she

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Establishing new protocols to guard everyone's health

One of our top priorities right now is to protect both our seniors and our staff. Even before the shelter-in-place orders, CEI was practicing physical distancing in our centers as a precaution. We provided our staff with specific training for cleaning, sanitizing, donning protective gear, screening and more. Our nurses, therapists, home care aides, drivers and everyone who interacts with participants gets screened at the start of their workday, and wears masks and gloves when meeting with seniors. We also clean and disinfect CEI clinics, centers and vans multiple times a day and schedule appointments two hours apart in exam rooms.

Delivering more than meals to seniors

While we used to serve hot lunches in our centers, CEI now delivers meals straight to participants' homes. This gives us a great opportunity to check in with them several times a week to make sure everything is going well. At the same time, we can bring activity kits, such as art and puzzles, and necessities they may be running out of, including toilet paper and soap. We are providing tablets and internet access to participants through our new CEI WebLinks program with the California Public Utilities Commission. This new technology helps them stay engaged with their doctors, their CEI activities, friends, and family.

Things will continue to change

We are already brainstorming new ways to safely bring our seniors back together in CEI Centers once public health officials deem the time to be right. And we will continue to develop innovative ways to hurdle whatever obstacles this pandemic puts before us.

This truly has been a group effort to make all these changes happen quickly and smoothly. Our seniors have been accepting of the alterations to their routines. Our staff has been superb in creating and pivoting to this new service model. And our donors have made it possible for us to go the extra mile

during this unprecedented time. We are grateful for – and quite proud of – how everyone has pulled together and exercised such tremendous creativity and flexibility in meeting this enormous challenge. ■



Participants are happy to see the drivers when they arrive with meals, home activity kits and personal supplies.



Driver Miriam Garcia charts the course for the day's meal deliveries.

CEI continues success with at-risk populations, continued from page 2

applied. Currently, we assess and enroll participants into the program within sixty days.

"I felt a bit nervous for her," said CEI nurse Bonnie Covarrubias. "But the energy that Sylvia was giving me was completely the opposite... She knew it would be different and challenging, but she wasn't about to let any fears get

in the way of her ambitions." After the intake assessment, Bonnie recommended an additional 11.4 hours a day of assistance and Sylvia was off to Stanford. We are very gratified to be helping so many vulnerable people to live independently in the community. ■

CEI holds first Ask-the-Expert event



Before the era of COVID-19 social distancing, we hosted our first “CEI Presents: Ask the Experts” event on Caregiving on February 18, to unanimous acclaim! As a leader in geriatric care, CEI put together a panel of experts who serve our participants on a daily basis: Alicia English, PhD, James Mittelberger, M.D., Radiant Scoggins, LCSW, and former family caregiver, Crystal Rivers, whose mother was in the program.

The panelists spoke candidly to a room full of people seeking answers about medical conditions, managing diagnoses, and how to care for their loved ones and themselves.

Expert caregiving advice appreciated

Attendees raved about how having a doctor they could ask direct questions of was priceless. The audience appreciated how Dr. Mittelberger addressed their concerns with easy to understand language and that he often gave them additional information they didn’t know.

Alicia English gave the audience several tips on how to deal with people with dementia, warmly welcomed advice that many people took notes on. Radiant spoke compassionately about End-of-Life planning, explaining to the audience that planning is a part of caring for yourself

and your loved ones so you can respect their wishes and do exactly what they want. Crystal Rivers was a much-needed voice as the sole caregiver for her mom, who was enrolled in CEI for 10 years.

Many of our community partners also joined us at the San Leandro Center to provide attendees with local resources and contacts, which helped contribute to the success of this event. ■

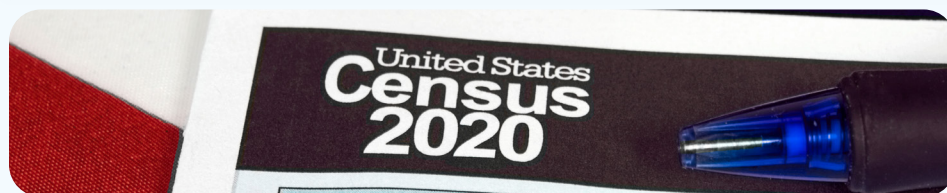


An attentive audience listened, asked questions, took notes, and read provided materials as the panel covered a variety of relevant topics and answered questions from attendees.

(before shelter in place)



Around seventy-five attendees were excited to visit all the community resource tables which included: The Alzheimer's Association, CalFresh, Daybreak, Family Caregiver Alliance, 4 Cs of Alameda County, HICAP (Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program), Hong Fook, Mental Health Association of Chinese Community and the Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center.



Census helps community get fair share of resources

Have you completed your 2020 Census form yet? The Census aims to count every person living in the United States. The information collected determines the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives and how billions of federal dollars are distributed to local communities like ours.

Governments, businesses, communities, and nonprofit organizations like CEI all rely on the data that the census produces to make critical decisions, such as where to build senior housing, roads, hospitals, and schools.

Help your community get resources

You can help make sure that you and your neighbors get your fair share of resources and services by participating in the Census. If you do not respond, a Census worker may visit your home. In this time of social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, you can help avoid unnecessary in-person contact by responding **online, by telephone, or by mail.**

The questions are simple. The form or person on the phone will ask:

- How many people are living or staying in your home on April 1
- Whether the home is rented or owned
- The age, sex, and race, of each person
- The relationship of the people to each other

Census will not ask certain questions

It will not ask if you are a U.S. citizen.

Participation in the Census is required by law. It is important to know that the Census Bureau will **never** ask you for: Your Social Security number; Money or donations; Anything on behalf of a political party; Your bank or credit card account numbers. If someone claiming to be from the Census Bureau contacts you and asks for one of these things, it's a scam, and you should not cooperate.

Your information remains private

Your personal information is kept **confidential**. The Census Bureau is bound by federal law to protect your information, and your data is used for statistical purposes only. Your responses are combined with information from other homes to produce statistics, which never identify your house or any person in your home.

Help seniors and others in your community to be represented fairly by responding to the Census. ■

Pampering Participants before COVID-19

Valentine's Day at CEI

CEI vans were lined up on Franklin Street as drivers and escorts delivered over 400 seniors to the historic art deco California Ballroom in Downtown Oakland for the Annual Valentine's Day Dance.

This year, volunteer Quiana Brown gathered some friends and set up a salon where participants could get their make-up, hair, and nails done. This new addition was very popular

and left participants feeling pampered long after the party was over. One participant said that she "hadn't felt pretty in a long time."

Helping participants feel special

In the main room, participants, staff, and volunteers danced to rock and roll, Motown, salsa and line dance favorites that got people up and moving, either by themselves or with the help of staff – physical therapy on a dance

floor! Mocktails and a special lunch completed the event.

This kind of outing takes great coordination among many departments at CEI including Activities, Dietary, Facilities, Transportation, Clinic, and Rehab. PACE Corps volunteers from Arise High School, Blaisdell's Business Products, Clif Bar, and the nursing department of Cal State University, East Bay, also helped at the event. ❤️



Two participants cherished a moment together in the photo booth.



A participant enjoys pampering at the salon.



Both staff and participants loved dancing to the music.



A staff member offering a treat to one of the waiting participants in the salon



Participants enjoy time with their tablemates from different centers.



A participant raving about how much fun she's having at the dance



PACE Party goes online with lots of social distancing

As you may have anticipated, CEI canceled this year's annual PACE Party fundraising event, which was scheduled for early May. Our sponsors from the PACE Party have been amazing and we will miss seeing them.

Even though we are not gathering in person, you can still make a difference.

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the needs of the 1,000 participants and persons with disabilities who depend on CEI daily – especially now as they shelter in place and are relying on us to deliver meals and care at home. Our staff is fighting isolation with phone calls, video activities and heightened homecare. We are still bringing people to doctor's appointments. We are providing extra food, protective equipment and even iPads. And we are planning the best ways to continue keeping participants safe as California begins to lighten some of the restrictions.

Your support matters more than ever. Please consider using the enclosed envelope to make a donation to provide the supplies and resources seniors need now. ■



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Mission Statement

The Center for Elders' Independence provides high quality, affordable, integrated health care services to the elderly, which promote autonomy, quality of life, and the ability of individuals to live in their communities.



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