

**Strong Workforce Program**  
**Health / Business & Entrepreneurship**  
**Sector Regional Advisory Meeting Proceedings**  
**Gerontology, Geriatrics and Business Services in the Field of Aging**

**April 22, 2021**  
**Virtual - Zoom**

## **Introduction**

The Los Rios Community College District, in partnership with Valley Vision, and in collaboration with Sierra College and Yuba Community College District, invests Strong Workforce funding to organize and convene Regional Advisories. The objectives of the Regional Advisories are to build strong relationships between employers, educators, and workforce that:

- Provide timely information on skills gaps and workforce needs, informing partners on major industry trend information;
- Improve the efficiency of the advisory process for educators and employers;
- Reflect a regional view of workforce needs and assets
- Provide opportunities for more systemic, ongoing engagement that includes workforce partners in key industry sectors.

Regional Advisory meetings help inform decisions on needed investments and enhancements for Career Education (CE) programs to help fill the growing demand for middle-skill positions. This meeting proceedings report includes key findings, best practices, and minutes from the Spring 2021 Regional Advisory meeting focused specifically on careers at the intersection of gerontology and business services.

Valley Vision supports a robust talent pipeline through our multiple 21st Century Workforce initiatives. We prepare our regional workforce for the future by addressing skills gaps, advancing research, aligning efforts and strengthening systems. Valley Vision's workforce efforts are supported by the Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (SETA), Golden Sierra Workforce Development Board (WDB), North Central Counties Consortium, Yolo WDB, City of Sacramento, local community college districts and others.

The Strong Workforce program provides Career Education opportunities to increase social mobility and fuel regional economies with skilled workers.

## Key Findings

- Older adults represent a significant proportion of the population in the Greater Sacramento region, and will continue to do so. We will need people and systems to support older residents, whose population will increase by 14% between 2019 and 2024. This can be accomplished with training and greater exposure to geriatrics (i.e., healthcare and caregiving) and non-clinical gerontology careers. There is especially a need for more comprehensive data on non-clinical gerontology job offerings, since occupational data tends to focus on geriatrics.
- Soft and technical skills can help workers succeed within the industry, while those with technology skills and the ability to pivot in response to changing older demographics can take advantage of entrepreneurial opportunities. There is industry demand for employees with the ability to relate to older adults and perform general professional tasks such as writing, answering phones, and actively listening. Training providers can emphasize these skill sets when having students or prospective employees go through training programs.
- Career exposure in academic and licensing programs can improve outcomes for student transitions to a wide array of occupations. Workforce development partners can build on students' broad theoretical understanding of gerontology with hands-on internship programs in partnership with academic institutions and gerontology sites. This early facilitated career exposure can help students realize their specialty within gerontology, business and related services including nurses, caregivers, housekeepers, facilities managers, and technicians, amongst others.
- Greater awareness of gerontology career pathways and opportunities for advancement can attract additional workers. This includes greater awareness for high school students, faculty, and counselors at all education levels. Additionally, ageism interventions including education and exposure can help mitigate negative biases towards aging and provide training on appropriate communication with older adults. Opportunities exist for industry representatives to work with college faculty to shape curriculum that informs and prepares students for success and advancement opportunities in gerontology.

## Meeting Proceedings

### Welcome & Overview

The Gerontology, Geriatrics and Business Services in the Field of Aging Regional Industry Advisory welcomed attendees with an ice breaker activity asking them to answer the following question: What are your aspirations for a quality lifestyle for loved ones and yourself as a mature adult? Independence, Health, Respect, and Holistic were most frequently noted as demonstrated in this word cloud visual (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Mentimeter Word Cloud Visual**



Next, a welcome and explanation of the meeting’s objectives were provided by Julie Holt and Angela Cordell, Regional Directors of Employer Engagement for Health Services, Business, & Entrepreneurship respectively. Both Julie and Angela described the importance of bringing industry representatives, faculty, community members, and other workforce partners together to prepare high school and community college students for jobs in gerontology. Angela expanded on these jobs to include nonclinical jobs in business-related sectors such as marketing, accounting, and customer service surrounding an aging population. Opening remarks were then followed by Renee John, Project Leader at Valley Vision, who provided an overview of the advisory’s agenda and continued to moderate the rest of the virtual event.

**Shifting Demographics and Occupational Information Overview**

For additional industry context, Ebony J. Benzing, Research Manager at North/Far North Centers of Excellence (COE) at Los Rios, presented information from labor market data, Burning Glass Technologies, and EMSI, including:

- Industry trends
- Occupational/job data
- Job postings information
- Certificates and degrees conferred from regional community colleges

This information was designed for understanding local labor market conditions and provided as supplemental data to a [new COE report](#) examining Gerontology, Geriatrics and Business Services occupations in the Greater Sacramento area. As Benzing emphasized, it is important to note that there was no one occupational definition or industry that encompassed all of gerontology and that labor market data was based on standardized occupations and industries which could be limiting. Nevertheless, the data displayed the following:

**Older Adult Demographics** - According to Centers of Excellence, the Greater Sacramento region’s number of adults aged 60+ totaled 591,000, or 22% of Sacramento’s population, in 2019. By 2024, this Gerontology, Geriatrics and Business Services Advisory Meeting 4-22-21

number was projected to increase by 14% and total approximately 671,000, or 24% of the region’s population. This growing population of older residents points to the need for more workers who can provide services for this growing demographic

**Key Findings and Jobs Postings** - At the intersection of Gerontology, Geriatrics, and Business Services, 46% of jobs were in Health Care and the Social Assistance sector. Meanwhile, 37% of jobs were found in Nursing and Residential Care, Hospitals and Ambulatory Health, and Social Assistance, which encompassed social programs and community based organizations. Employers included insurance providers, health care, senior living facilities, local government, and education. The most popular job positions were Healthcare Practitioners and Support (21%), Management (16%), and Personal Care (11%).

**Program Inventory and Occupational Demand** - Sacramento area colleges that offered programs related to gerontology were American River College, Folsom Lake College, Sacramento City College, CSU Sacramento, and UC Davis. Together, these colleges’ programs led to a wide range of awards (i.e., Certificate, Associate Degree, Bachelor’s Degree) and provided entry into various career pathways. As demonstrated by Figure 2, occupational data showed widespread geriatric and gerontology positions to expect increases in demand between 2019 and 2024. Included amongst these careers is Social and Human Service Assistant positions, which amounted to 5,299 in 2019 and was expected to amount to 6,160 in 2024. However, the amount of jobs and earnings between positions differed, with Home Health and Personal Care Aides having the largest number of jobs at 44,894 and Community Health Workers having the highest entry-level hourly earnings at \$21.49.

**Figure 2: Occupational Demand for Gerontology, Geriatrics, and Business Services**

Training Focus	Occupation	2019 Jobs	2024 Jobs	Projected Change	Avg. Annual Openings	Entry-Level Hourly Earnings
<b>Administrative Support</b>	Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	7,375	7,592	3%	843	\$17.90
<b>Business Management</b>	Personal Service Managers					
<b>Caregiving</b>	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	44,894	58,385	30%	9,354	\$12.95
<b>Recreation</b>	Exercise Trainers and Group Fitness Instructors	3,275	2,874	(12%)	470	\$16.42
	Recreation Workers	3,094	2,907	(6%)	477	\$13.49
	Exercise Physiologists*	69	95	38%	10	\$12.16
<b>Social Support</b>	Social and Human Service Assistants	5,299	6,160	16%	780	\$18.26
	Community and Social Service Specialists, All Other*	1,249	1,324	6%	145	\$16.32
	Community Health Workers	528	514	(3%)	60	\$21.49
<b>North (Greater Sacramento) Totals**</b>		<b>65,783</b>	<b>79,851</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>12,138</b>	<b>--</b>

Source: EMSI 2021.2, QCEW, Non QCEW, and Self-Employed

Notes: (1) Occupations marked with an asterisk (\*) typically require a Bachelor’s degree for entry-level work. (2) Inclusive of all Greater Sacramento industries; i.e., these jobs will be found across multiple industries and are not relegated to Gerontology only

**Keynote Speaker: Jeanee Parker Martin**

Following up on the labor market data, a keynote presentation was provided by President and CEO of Leading Age California, Jeanee Parker Martin. The presentation focused on [California’s Master Plan for Aging](#), its workforce implications, and the Leading Age Workforce Blueprint for Action. Martin explained the Master Plan to be a blueprint preparing the State for upcoming demographic changes surrounding a growing and increasingly diverse aging population. As a result, there would be a growing demand for caregivers and workers of all types across the gerontology field, highlighted in the Master Plan with its goal to train individuals for one million high-quality caregiving jobs by 2030. Separately, Leading Age CA was working on its [Workforce Blueprint for Action](#), which identified 16,000 jobs in the field and described the organization’s goal to grow the workforce by at least 10%.

**Employer Panel Discussion**

The following employer representatives participated in the panel, bringing forward perspectives from major employers and institutions in the region regarding training needs:

- **Jan Trifiro** - Vice President of Workforce & Professional Development, California Assisted Living Association
- **Janeen Thorpe** - Director, Ethel Macleod Hart Senior Center
- **Michelle Nevins** - Executive Director, Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center
- **Mary Erickson** - CEO & Executive Director, Mercy McMahon Terrace
- **Diane Puckett** - Executive Director, Peg Taylor Center



- **California Assisted Living Association (CALA)** represents the gerontology sector’s employers including senior living centers and other organizations operating older adult programming. Along with supporting members through advocacy and education, CALA works to raise awareness of gerontology as a career choice.
- **Ethel Macleod Hart Senior Center** is a multipurpose senior center that is part of the City of Sacramento and consists of five staff members, some of whom graduated from Sacramento State’s Gerontology program. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, staff have offered writing and cooking classes and other programming virtually, which has allowed for participation from individuals who have had difficulty attending previous onsite programming in the past..
- **Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center** is a private nonprofit organization serving 13 Northern

California counties and working to improve the wellbeing of unpaid family caregivers. The bulk of their staff are family consultants with Bachelor's degrees, with some licensed social workers and counselors.

- **Mercy McMahan Terrace** is an assisted learning community that is owned by Dignity Health and has 100 line employees with a team of eight managers. In addition to having a 24 hour nursing care, other staff include caregivers, housekeepers, facilities managers, and technicians.
- **The Peg Taylor Center** is an adult day health care program and serves adults of all ages with serious health conditions and disabilities, with a primary focus on older adults. The Center serves Butte, Glenn and Tehama Counties. Across the state there are almost 300 adult day health care programs meeting the needs of various populations. Their staff teams include nurses, social workers, physical, occupational and speech therapists, dietitians, recreation therapists, activity coordinators, program assistants, including CNA's, and administrative professionals. Adult day health care programs provide extensive opportunities for students to gain experience and complete internships and practicums. These programs focus on helping their participants to be able to live in community settings and maintain better health and quality of life.

Based on responses to panel questions, the following themes on workforce pipelines into gerontology and business services were compiled:

**Diverse Skills for Diverse Aging Population** - Technological skills and the ability to pivot in response to changing preferences can support entrepreneurship in the industry. Virtual programming during the pandemic helped serve older adults who otherwise would not have been able to reach facilities. Individuals with technological mindsets can think of areas to bring technology into programming, such as events for socializing and education. The growing population of older adults will not only bring forward this digital literacy, but will also carry unique preferences for care and services such as yoga and for specialty food preferences that a mass production food operation may not meet. As a result of this shifting market for geriatric and gerontology services, entrepreneurs may find opportunities to provide niche services and goods for various older adult lifestyles.

The growing older adult population will require a workforce with a wide array of skill sets and experiences to meet their needs. For meaningful interactions with clientele, there is a need for workers who can relate to diverse older adults and meet them with individualized care. There remains an industry demand for employees who can perform general professional tasks such as writing, answering phones, and active listening. This need for both soft and technical skills was further emphasized by the fact that employers will look for individuals who can demonstrate soft skills and an understanding of the business model behind geriatric and gerontology services.

**Academic Pipelines into Various Occupations** - As highlighted by panelists, education and experiences through academic programs can and do prepare students for the various occupations in gerontology and related careers. The high number of panelists who cited Sacramento State's Gerontology Program demonstrates the potential for academic programs to funnel students into industry work. Partnerships with community colleges for interns and Registered Nurse trainees can provide in-depth work experiences for students. Students' career exposure through academic and licensing programs can further enhance the care and technical skills that they bring to work environments. This theoretical and hands-on experience with the gerontology field helps trainees decide their entry into the industry amongst various occupations, such as nurses, caregivers, housekeepers, facilities managers, and

technicians, amongst others.

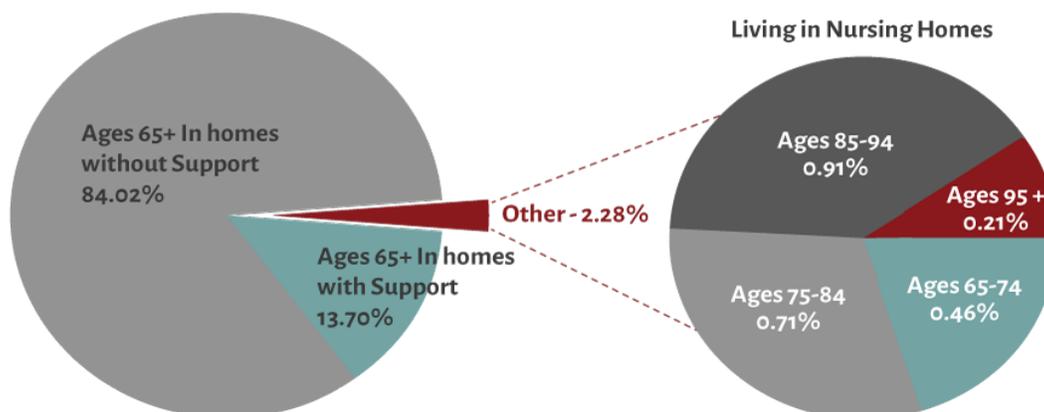
**Awareness of Gerontology for Advancement and Job Satisfaction** - Industry panelists also made clear that expanding awareness of gerontology career pathways can attract additional workers and lead to more intentionality in advancement, since workers will have an understanding of how to progress in the field of aging. Careers with older adults are not as known by job seekers and the fields of geriatrics and gerontology are often mistaken for one another. Despite the lack of a high salary in entry-level positions, panelists explained career advancement opportunities can lead to well paying careers. Greater clarification of the career ladder could attract additional workers to the industry. In addition to opportunities for advancement, these occupations can act as an entry-way for employment in hospital networks. In addition, young college graduates may find it motivating to be able to advance quickly and take on high-level administrative jobs within gerontology and geriatrics facilities.

Along with opportunities for advancement, panelists emphasized the satisfaction that comes with working alongside older adults. They described how gratifying a career path in gerontology and geriatrics could be. When working with excellent interpersonal skills, employees can find themselves connecting well with their clientele and finding satisfaction along with career advancement.

**Ageism, the Workforce Gap, and Ageism First Aid: The Cause, One of Many Effects, and a Multipurpose Intervention**

A presentation on Ageism, the Workforce Gap, and Ageism First Aid was provided by Laurinda Reynolds, Gerontology Department Chair and Career Education Program Coordinator at American River College. Reynolds began by defining ageism as referring to messages cultivating negative attitudes toward older people and aging, or misunderstandings and fears about aging. She further described the make-up of gerontology settings, as displayed by Figure 3 that explained where older people aged 60 and over lived. The industry’s clientele live across many settings, such as in homes with and without support and nursing homes (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Where Older People in the United States Lived in 2014**



Source: GSA, 2019

\*This chart is from the Ageism First Aid course.

Ageism can come in the form of messages that are rude, stigmatizing, and harmful physically or

mentally, and these messages originate from a wide array of sources across society. Those older adults facing ageism can find themselves experiencing abuse, neglect, exploitation, social marginalization, and denial of medical care. Furthermore, ageism ends up pulling younger workers away from gerontology careers because it builds negative implicit bias towards working with older adults. As a result, Reynolds explained that ageism is driving the workforce gap in the field of aging, while an increasingly aging population is widening the gap. However, workforce partners can bridge the gap with well qualified candidates by outreaching to high school students, faculty, and counselors and creating new courses, degrees, and certificate programs with qualified faculty for gerontology. Reynolds offered the following ageism intervention tools to address the workforce gap and ageism:

- [Ageism First Aid](#)
- [Age Friendly University](#)
- [Reframing Aging](#).

## Conclusion

At the end of the advisory, faculty and employers were encouraged to continue to engage with one another for a stronger pipeline into careers at the intersection of gerontology, geriatrics, and business services. For any follow up information and connections, attendees were encouraged to contact:

- **Julie Holt**, Regional Director of Employer Engagement for Health in the Greater Sacramento Region, at [HoltJ@scc.losrios.edu](mailto:HoltJ@scc.losrios.edu)
- **Angela Cordell**, Regional Director of Employer Engagement for Business & Entrepreneurship in the Greater Sacramento Region, at [acordell@shastacollege.edu](mailto:acordell@shastacollege.edu)