

ALAMEDA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Monday, September 22, 2025
2:30 p.m.

Supervisor Lena Tam, Chair
Supervisor Nikki Fortunato Bas

Location: Susan S. Muranishi County
Administration Building
Board Chambers
1221 Oak Street, 5th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612

Summary/Action Minutes

I. INFORMATIONAL ITEM: Veterans Affairs Commission Annual Update [Attachment](#)

Presenters

Andrea Ford, Director, Social Service Agency
Greg Owens, Chair, Veterans Affairs Commission

Summary

The Alameda County Veterans Affairs Commission (VAC) provided its annual update covering Commission purpose, past and current initiatives, outreach activities, data trends, service gaps, challenges faced by the Alameda County Veterans Service Office (VSO), impacts of recent legislation, and recommendations for enhancing veteran access to benefits and services through expanded satellite locations and improved digital tools.

Veterans Affairs Commission Purpose

- Advises and assists on veteran issues related to food, housing, transportation, employment, and benefits
- Supports veteran observance events and recognition activities
- Identifies veteran and family needs and submits recommendations to the County
- Reviews annual veteran benefit status and supports coordination of available services

Major Initiatives (July 2023 – Present)

- Countywide Outreach: Monthly meetings rotated through Chabot College, Las Positas College, Alameda College, UC Berkeley, Veterans Memorial Buildings in Alameda, Hayward, and San Leandro
- Standalone VSO Campaign: Advocacy to move VSO operations out of Eastmont into a dedicated veteran-only service center
- Richard Valle Annual Luncheons
- Veterans Observance Day Events
- 4 Oakland-based Stand Downs
- Black Veteran Historical Corridor: Three streets renamed to honor historic Black veterans
- Operation Green Light: Lighting government buildings green for Veterans Day
- Women Veterans Recognition Events: Two events held at the USS Hornet/NAS Alameda
- Santa Rita Jail Veteran Pod Tours: Two tours highlighting reentry needs
- Commissioner Recruitment: Increased from 12 to all 22 seats filled
- Transportation Committee: Ongoing coordination with transit agencies to identify mobility accommodations for disabled veterans
- Award Recognition: Formal recognitions for exemplary service contributions

Initiatives Planned (Through End of 2025)

- Standalone VSO Campaign
- Continued suicide-prevention forums (most recent held September at Hayward Veterans Memorial Building)
- Continued stand-down events (next planned for June 2026)
- Ongoing countywide outreach and participation in observance events
- Richard Valle Annual Luncheon
- New Commissioner Recruitment
- Women & Black Veteran Historical Corridor
- Award recognition
- Operation Greenlight
- Justice-involved Veteran Outreach
- Potential presence at the Castro Valley Library community site

Veterans Service Office (VSO) Overview

- Established in 1944 to assist veterans, dependents, and survivors in obtaining federal, state, and local benefits
- Provides disability compensation assistance, pension support, burial benefits, health care navigation, educational benefits, records assistance, DMV verification, and income verification
- Staff must maintain high-level accreditation; recruitment and retention remain challenging due to workload and certification requirements

Quarterly Service Data (2025)

Quarter 1:

- 1,704 total contacts
- 416 claims filed; 82 awards issued
- Award value: \$672,941

Quarter 2:

- 2,210 total contacts
- 198 awards issued
- Award value: \$1,248,049
- Significant growth in in-person visits, email inquiries, and claim awards

Challenges Identified

- Staffing shortages and retention difficulties due to workload, stress levels, and accreditation requirements
- Need for multiple satellite VSO locations comparable to surrounding counties
- Persistent housing, mental health, and medical/dental access gaps
- Large number of veterans not connected to available benefits
- Consequences include increased homelessness, untreated mental health needs, higher incarceration rates, unemployment, and loss of federal dollars that would otherwise flow to Alameda County

Recommendations

- Full implementation of the Hayward standalone VSO center and exploration of additional sites
- Enhanced website, social media, and public-facing communication
- Monthly or bi-monthly statistical reporting
- Increased VSO staff training
- Expanded outreach partnerships (VA, DAV, social service departments, courts, community colleges)
- Virtual walk-in service desk; improved digital access modeled after Contra Costa County
- Reestablish a VSO newsletter for Board offices and public distribution

Purpose:

- Report progress
- Advocacy or Education
- Request Social Services Committee Recommendation or Position
- Other:

Speakers

There were no speakers on this item.

Committee Feedback

Supervisor Fortunato Bas is interested in being informed of any events being held by the VAC so that the Board of Supervisors can promote the event on their media outlets.

Action

This item was informational only and required no committee action.

II. INFORMATIONAL ITEM: Department of Child Support Services Update

Attachment

Presenters

Phyllis Nance, Director, Department of Child Support Services

Vangeria Harvey, Supervising Attorney, Alameda County Department of Child Support Services

Summary

The Department of Child Support Services provided their semi-annual update, highlighting their mission, operational principles, caseload trends, collections, federal performance metrics, key collaborations, and upcoming implementation of new legislation affecting child support order processes and arrears management.

The vision of DCSS is to ensure all parents are fully engaged in supporting their children's well-being. They focus on responsible parenting, family self-sufficiency, and stability by: locating parents; establishing, modifying, and enforcing orders; establishing paternity; and collecting and distributing child support payments. Their operations emphasize family-focus, dynamic workforce, collaboration, high-quality service, and innovation.

Key Data:

Caseload & Service Population

- Serves more than 25,000 children and families
- Majority of cases involve families who previously received CalWORKs
- Decline in caseload over time, but many existing cases reflect high need and economic vulnerability
- State systems may be under-referring CalWORKs cases due to technical issues; statewide discussion underway

Collections (as of August 2025)

- Over \$71 million collected
- More than 90% (over \$65 million) distributed directly to families
- DCSS identifies itself as a critical safety-net function enabling economic stability for children

Federal Performance Measures (Preliminary FY 2025)

- 98.2% paternity/parentage establishment
- 92% order establishment
- 61.4% current support collected
- 64% arrears collections

Key Collaborations

- First 5 Alameda County (Fatherhood Initiative): Engagement and early education for new parents to prevent future support orders
- Social Services Agency: Shared clients; opportunities for coordinated casework
- Probation & Reentry: Debt-reduction programs, arrears forgiveness under certain criteria, and navigation support for justice-involved parents

- CORE Hubs: On-site presence to support parents with employment barriers, legal compliance, and order modification

Upcoming Legislation (Effective January 2026)

California 2026 FEM Final Rule Implementation changes basing a child support order on presumed income when there is no earning information on the parent to using earning capacity instead.

Purpose

- Report progress
- Advocacy or Education
- Request Social Services Committee Recommendation or Position
- Other:

Speakers

There were no speakers on this item.

Committee Feedback

There was no committee feedback on this item.

Action

This item was informational only and required no Committee action.

III. INFORMATIONAL ITEM: Social Services Agency Rebranding

[Attachment](#)

Presenters

Andrea Ford, Agency Director, Social Services Agency

Pamela Powell, Executive Program Coordinator, Office of Public Affairs, Social Services Agency

Laritza Lopez, The Purple Group, Chief Strategy and Creative Officer

Hannah Adams, The Purple Group, Account Director

Summary

The Social Services Agency (SSA) presented its rebranding initiative, developed with The Purple Group. The update outlined the rationale for rebranding, research findings, the new mission/vision statements, core values, visual identity system, messaging framework, and the implementation schedule across programs and public-facing materials.

The existing brand identity is outdated, inconsistent, and not reflective of Social Services Agency's values. Social Services Agency needs a unified identity that conveys trust, dignity, and accessibility while also emphasizing clarity, modern design, and ease of navigation for clients.

New Mission & Vision

- Mission updated to elevate client dignity, service excellence, and equitable access
- Vision focuses on supporting individuals, children, families, and older adults through integrated services

Core Values Highlighted

- Compassion
- Equity
- Accountability
- Integrity
- Collaboration
- Innovation

Visual Identity & Messaging Framework

- New SSA logo, typography, and color palette
- Standardized templates for reports, outreach materials, and digital communication
- Agency-wide tagline emphasizing stability and empowerment

- Streamlined messaging for public understanding of program services

Implementation Timeline

- Phase-in at all service centers
- Updated signage, digital properties, forms, and communication materials
- Staff training on brand application
- Full rollout planned across FY 2025–26

Purpose

- Report progress
- Advocacy or Education
- Request Social Services Committee Recommendation or Position
- Other:

Speakers

There were no speakers on this item.

Committee Feedback

There was no committee feedback on this item.

Action

This item was informational only and required no Committee action.

IV. INFORMATIONAL ITEM: State and Federal Policy Changes to the Safety-Net: Preliminary

Impacts

[Attachment](#)

Presenters

Andrea Ford, Agency Director, Social Services Agency

Hanna Hamilton, Policy Director, Social Services Agency

Roland Shao, Program Specialist, Department of Workforce and Benefits Administration, Social Services Agency

Juan Ventanilla, Program Specialist, Department of Workforce and Benefits Administration, Social Services Agency

Summary

SSA provided an overview of major federal and state safety-net changes affecting CalFresh, Medi-Cal, TANF/CalWORKs, and related programs. The presentation included preliminary demographic impacts, fiscal projections, implementation challenges, and areas requiring Board attention.

Key Federal Changes

- HR 1 provisions affecting SNAP/CalFresh time limits, student eligibility, and work requirements
- Anticipated reductions in federal administrative funding
- Potential cuts to auxiliary veteran-related services (as referenced in Item 1)

State Policy Updates

- Medi-Cal redetermination process resumption
- CalFresh Employment & Training alignment with federal rules
- Adjustments to state-funded food and cash benefits
- AB/SB legislation affecting older adults and immigrant populations

Demographic Impacts

- Groups identified as most affected include:

- Seniors and disabled adults
- College students
- Immigrant families
- Working-age adults subject to reinstated time-limits
- Increased churn projected due to eligibility complexity
- Geographic hotspots identified using SSA caseload modeling

Fiscal & Operational Impacts

- Expected increase in County workload for verifications, appeals, and outreach
- Higher risk of food insecurity and uninsured status among impacted groups
- Need for system modifications to align with changing eligibility rules
- SSA preparing mitigation strategies through community partnerships and proactive communication campaigns

Purpose

- Report progress
- Advocacy or Education
- Request Social Services Committee Recommendation or Position
- Other:

Speakers

There were no speakers on this item.

Committee Feedback

There was no committee feedback on this item.

Action

This item was informational only and required no Committee action.

V. INFORMATIONAL ITEM: Social Services Agency Area Agency on Aging Audit Findings and Responses

[Attachment](#)

Presenters

Andrea Ford, Agency Director, Social Services Agency,
 Robert Woolley, Financial Services Director, Social Services Agency
 Howard Chen, Deputy Financial Services Director, Social Services Agency
 Faith Battles, Assistant Agency Director, Department of Adult and Aging Services, Social Services Agency

Summary

Adult & Aging Services presented results from the AAA audit, including compliance findings, financial review outcomes, and the status of corrective action plans. The department highlighted improvements already completed, remaining items in progress, and strategies to strengthen fiscal oversight and program monitoring.

Audit Findings Overview

- Review covered fiscal controls, program eligibility documentation, contractor oversight, and federal reporting accuracy
- Several findings required corrective action, primarily related to documentation consistency and monitoring frequency
- No findings indicating misuse of funds

Corrective Actions Implemented

- Updated fiscal procedures and reconciliation workflows
- Retraining for staff handling compliance-sensitive programs
- Enhanced monitoring of contracted community-based organizations
- Revised internal audit schedule and quality-assurance reviews

Upcoming Actions

- Continued refinement of eligibility and service documentation
- Technology updates to streamline reporting
- Ongoing coordination with California Department of Aging to verify closure of findings
- Strengthening data integrity across aging programs

Service Delivery Enhancements

- Improved communication with providers
- Standardized forms and clearer guidance for AAA-funded programs
- Focus on reducing administrative burden for seniors seeking services.

Purpose

- Report progress
- Advocacy or Education
- Request Social Services Committee Recommendation or Position
- Other:

Speakers

There were no speakers on this item.

Committee Feedback

There was no committee feedback on this item.

Action

This item was informational only and required no Committee action.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kelly A. raised concerns over the lack of uniformity in the branding of Alameda County and all its agencies.

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