

PSA 2 AAA Profile



Geography

PSA2AAA is the third largest Planning and Service Area in the state of California, covering 22,774 square miles. Not only is PSA2AAA larger than nine (9) separate states in the US, it is larger than the states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Delaware and New Jersey combined! Each of the five counties in PSA2AAA has high mountain ranges, winding valleys, numerous lakes, national forests and wilderness areas. Two active volcanoes dominate the surrounding forests. A large majority of land is controlled by the Federal Government as National Forest. All counties, with the exception of Shasta, are considered to be either rural or frontier.

Travel, when weather permits, requires patience and is always a challenge. To travel the PSA2AAA by car from the eastern border to the western border requires seven hours under ideal conditions. Travel from north to south takes more than three hours. Residents in many areas must travel 2-3 hours, one way, to reach medical help and other needed services. The large expanse, mountainous terrain, and inclement weather challenge all service providers to meet the needs of the older adults and adults with functional impairments.

Weather

Weather conditions in the PSA2AAA are reflective of all four seasons and are as widely varied as the terrain. Summer temperatures reach upward to 110 degrees; winters are characterized by snow, ice, fog, and high winds with temperatures occasionally below 0 degrees. Entire towns may be isolated for days at a time during a heavy winter; it is not uncommon for folks to find themselves “snowed-in” while they wait out storms.

Electricity is not available in several areas of PSA2AAA and is known to fail during the winter stormy season. Great travel distances, geographic location, and inclement weather are all key elements in every decision affecting services for the older adults and adults with functional impairments.

Demographics

While those aged 60 and older qualify for services, the OAA & OCA mandates that specific populations be “targeted” for services. These populations include the aged 75 and older, frail, minority, low income, minority & low-income, most vulnerable, and home-bound. To identify those individuals which are “targeted” for services, demographics play a very important role.

Each of the five counties is characterized by the lack of a centralized population. Small cities and townships are sprinkled throughout the mountains, valleys and limited flat land. With the exception of Redding in Shasta County, most residents dwell in unincorporated areas. The words “geographic isolation” and “rural” are common phrases which describe the average of 2 ½ seniors per square mile within the PSA.

The following offers a more in depth review of the PSA2AAA demographics:

POPULATION

- 19.7% of the total population (51,940) is aged 60 and older (60+)
- 2.9% of the total population (18,595), or 35.8% of the aged 60+ population is aged 75 and older (75+)

AT 125% OF POVERTY LEVEL OR BELOW

- 13.0% of the 60+ population is at 125% poverty level or below
- 16.1% of the 75+ population is at 125% poverty level or below
- 44.3% of the 60+ populations at 125% poverty level or below are 75+

ETHNICITY OF 60+ POPULATION

- 94.7% Non-Minority
- .4% African American
- 1.3% American Indian/Alaskan Native
- .7% Asian
- .1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- .6% Other
- 2.1% Multi-Race

LOW INCOME MINORITY (WITH INCOME BELOW 125% OF POVERTY LEVEL)

- 89.9% Non-Minority
- .7% African American
- 2.3% American Indian/Alaskan Native
- 1.6% Asian
- .2% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- .6% Other
- 1.8% Multi-Race
- 3.0% Hispanic

Economic Development and Resources

Resources in the region are scarce within most counties. The timber-based industry is dwindling which has had a devastating affect on the local economy. With no other primary industry to offer employment, counties have had to watch helplessly as families leave the area to seek a more stable employment environment.

Additionally, reduced funding has required that many federal, state and local government agencies downsize, freeze wages, and suffer a huge employee turnover rate. Counties in the region are beginning to develop and encourage new industry to adjust to this downward spiral. The economic pressure to develop “soft” industries, such as tourism, offers hope that the communities may be able to regenerate the dwindling population and economic base.

Services for the older adults and adults with functional impairment face severe economic challenges ahead, given the major shifts in the economic base, the ever-looming threat of OAA & OCA funding reductions, and the expected growth in the senior population due to the retiring “Baby Boomers” generation.

Human Resources

Although the north state faces severe economic challenges, it's human resource potential may be the most valuable asset in the fight to persevere. People living in this rugged far northern area of California have a deep sense of pride in their beautiful high country. Many have paid a high price to leave the rat-race of the urban life to settle into our serene and majestic setting. While enjoying their quality of life, these rural communities share a sense of commitment and friendliness to those around them. The overall philosophy is that they've “never met a stranger”. It is this spirit of community and the self-sufficient nature of the individuals which will nurture ongoing services to seniors and their communities within this five-county region.

Service Delivery

California has separate state and county departments for aging, health, mental health, welfare and developmental and rehabilitative services. In each state planning and service area, the Area Agency on Aging must develop links to coordinate the aging and adult services.

The systems of service in the PSA2AAA range from elaborate to nearly non-existent. All counties have the basic Medicaid reimbursed health, mental health and in-home services, the OAA and OCA programs such as Senior Information and Assistance, Congregate Meals and Home Delivered Meals Programs, Legal Services, Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Programs, and Ombudsman. In-Home and transportation services for seniors and other groups are varied and limited. There is an increasing need for Adult Day Care, In-Home and Respite programs. There is also a need for high-tech and satellite technology to provide outreach services to the smaller communities within each county. Home and community-based services to seniors are continuing to develop based on the resource and the sophistication of services available. Most counties are facing limited funding and must therefore re-examine the development of a new system of service.