
From The Record coverage below –

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Service that helps seniors age in place arrives in Stockton



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By Joe Goldeen

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STOCKTON — Imagine if you will a service designed to meet all the medical and social needs of the community’s frail seniors with the goal of keeping them out of nursing homes and hospitals.

And for most participants with Medi-Cal or a combination of Medicare and Medi-Cal with no share of cost, all of its services are free.

If you’re from any other California metro area, you may be familiar with PACE, or Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly. That’s because up until this year, the Stockton/Modesto region was the most populous area in the state not being served by PACE.

Stockton PACE now is up and running at 582 E. Harding Way, centrally located in Stockton’s University Park complex, and open to participants from virtually all of San Joaquin County and most of eastern Stanislaus County, including Modesto, Ceres and Turlock.

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“The PACE focus is helping people age in place. Having this type of quality health care services available in our area means more of our community’s elders will see their wish granted and be able to grow old in their own home,” Health Plan chief executive Amy Shin said.

To qualify for PACE — in addition to living in its service area — an individual must be 55 or older, certified by the state as eligible for nursing facility level of care and able to live safely at home and in the community.

PACE uses a coordinated team approach to help people continue to live independently by making sure, for example, they can get to appointments, keep track of their medications or maintain personal hygiene. That care team consists of nurses, nutritionists, pharmacists, social workers and therapists specializing in physical, occupational and speech therapy.

Services include:

- Medical care from nurses, primary care and specialist physicians — including cardiology, pulmonology, nephrology, oncology and ophthalmology — who focus on seniors.
- Hospital, emergency and urgent care.
- Short-term rehabilitation and long-term care.
- Prescription medications delivered at home in easy-to-use packaging with no copay.

- Home support that includes visits, equipment and supplies.
- Dentistry, optometry, audiology and podiatry, including dentures, eyeglasses and hearing aids with approval.
- Lab procedures, X-rays and dialysis.
- Transportation to the Stockton PACE Center as well as scheduled medical appointments.

Participation with PACE also means seniors have access to the new, \$15 million Stockton PACE Center offering engagement programs such as socializing with others, music, cultural events, games, cognitive activities and group exercise, as well as meals and nutrition counseling.

Stockton PACE was started through a partnership with Menlo Park-based WelbeHealth and Sacramento-based Sutter Health and currently operates with about 30 employees, according to Executive Director Jillian Simon.

“We provide a very high touch model of care, very proactive and preventable. We really want to partner with the whole family,” Simon said while walking through the large center that includes a medical clinic, dental suite, small program rooms, a quiet room, spa area with a hair salon, rehabilitation and fitness room, intimate seating areas, a kitchen, and an outdoor patio with a “living wall” suitable for growing vegetables and fruit.

The PACE model started about 40 years ago at On Lok Senior Health Services in San Francisco and began replicating nationally in 1987. In 1997, PACE became a permanent Medicare benefit. There are now about 120 organizations operating more than 230 programs around the country.

Through ongoing outreach efforts, Stockton PACE anticipates serving an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 eligible frail seniors, growing its workforce to well over 100 including personal care aides, drivers, social workers and other staff.

Simon’s passion for providing seniors — and their caregivers — a higher quality of life is evident. She spent several years with a PACE program in Los Angeles before coming to Stockton.

“Our core values are the courage to love, a pioneering spirit and shared intention, and we’ve seen a lot of successes,” Simon said.

In a statement announcing Stockton PACE’s arrival, former acting administrator of the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Andy Slavitt said: “I visited On Lok Lifeways in San Francisco, the very first PACE program, and commented that I had seen a ‘glimpse into our future.’ I’m proud to see that the future I envisioned then is now becoming a reality here in San Joaquin County.

“At CMS, we saw the unmatched potential of PACE to improve health, extend lives, support families and save taxpayers, all by coordinating the necessary medical and social services to keep frail seniors living in their homes, independent and healthy,” Slavitt said.

He cited recent studies that show PACE increases life expectancy by more than 1.5 years, improves quality and satisfaction and saves taxpayers \$10,000 per enrollee per year.

“All of this by bringing highly coordinated and compassionate care to those who need and deserve it most — our frail and vulnerable seniors,” Slavitt said.

Information: Stockton PACE is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday at 582 E. Harding Way, Stockton (behind Satellite Dialysis). Contact (209) 442-6077 or TTY (209) 932-0357 or visit <https://StocktonPACE.com>.

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