

Innovative new health program available to Sonoma seniors

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A new program designed to keep seniors healthy and in their homes will be presented during a forum in Sonoma this month.

Part of the [Village of Sonoma Valley](#)’s Aging Better Forum series, the event will focus on the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), which offers innovative, full-service health care and social services. Slated for Vintage House on Tuesday, Jan. 16, the forum is being funded through a grant from the Dave and Vicki Stollmeyer Family Fund.

It will feature Peter Fitzgerald, executive vice president for policy and strategy at the National PACE Association, and Celine Regalia, executive director of Providence Community Health Napa Valley.

PACE offers personalized plans of care, created by an interdisciplinary team that addresses all preventive, primary, acute and long-term service needs. This enables participants to remain independent and in their home for as long as possible.

[Providence PACE Center](#), the nearest PACE location for Sonoma Valley residents, is located on Jefferson Street in Napa. Its services can be provided either at the center or the client’s home.

Medicare requires the center to offer services to Sonoma Valley and other communities within a designated radius of the center and provide door-to-door transportation to and from it at no additional charge. These services are also available to Medi-Cal patients.

Regalia said the presentation on Jan. 16 will focus on the Providence PACE program, the PACE model of care and the benefits of this health care model.

“When we launched our program in May of 2023, we were excited that we would be able to expand our continuum of care to the city of Sonoma and outlying areas,” she said.

Larson added, “This collaboration between Village of Sonoma Valley and PACE on this seminar will create greater awareness of this new health care option in the valley.

“We want to present an in-depth, comprehensive introduction to this new program, so we invited a speaker from the national association to speak about PACE conceptually and historically. We also want to introduce the local executive director, who is more familiar with local concerns and issues.”

Each application that Providence PACE Center receives is addressed individually to help the senior take advantage of all benefits for which they qualify. PACE provides individualized care based on the senior’s needs and choices.

“Every PACE participant is assigned a dedicated team of highly qualified health care professionals who specialize in providing geriatric care,” Regalia said. “This team assesses each participant, creates a personalized care plan and then coordinates all the health and home care services that the elder needs.

“The team makes every effort to meet the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of the elder, emphasizing prevention, coordinating primary and specialty care — including transportation — reducing hospitalizations and providing access to palliative care.”

She said participants continue to receive care from the same team of health care professionals that is assigned to them.

Larson said the program can have a significant cost benefit for families trying to care for a loved one at home.

“The Day Care Program, for example, could allow a family caregiver free time to care for their family, continue working or simply recover from the challenges of caring for someone,” he said.

Participants and their families have access to a PACE member 24/7.

“Having this access to a person who can answer questions right away reduces trips to the emergency room and hospitalizations,” Regalia said. “With this wraparound care, participants are able to stay in their homes and in their community — where they want to be.”

She said participants who need social and therapeutic activities can take advantage of the Adult Day Health program.

“This program enables us to expand our continuum of care,” she said. “No matter what door a participant walks through, we can help them get the right care.”

Providence PACE Center has provided some participants with access to appointments for services they were not utilizing due to barriers, especially transportation. These services include dental, podiatry, optometry and provision of vaccines.

Another program, Agewell PACE, has opened at 5789 State Farm Drive, Ste. 110, in Rohnert Park. Like Providence PACE Center, it is regulated by Medicare, Medi-Cal and the National PACE Association, and Sonoma Valley residents are within its service area.

“The Village of Sonoma Valley hopes to collaborate with both PACE organizations,” Larson said.

[Created in January 2022](#), the Village of Sonoma Valley is a curator of community resource organizations and neighborhoods aimed at improving the quality of life at all stages of aging. It is part of a statewide coalition, the Village Movement of California, and on a national level, the Village to Village Network.

It is part of a growing network of organizations and agencies trying to address the needs of older adults in Sonoma County and Sonoma Valley, in particular.

Sonoma County is home to nearly 140,00 residents over 60 years old. According to census reports and “Hidden in Plain Sight,” the Sonoma Valley Fund 2017 report, demographics show that a growing number of older residents are residing in Sonoma Valley, and they will have many additional needs as they age.

“This collaboration between the Village of Sonoma Valley and PACE on this seminar will create greater awareness of this new health care option in the Valley,” Larson said. “I don’t want to paint an unrealistic picture that PACE is a panacea for all the issues facing older adults. It is, however, an exciting innovative approach to health care for older adults who require higher levels of care.”

Regalia added, “I’m excited to participate and share programs like PACE with the community. I’ve worked with older adults for 25 years. I’ve seen the community needs change over the years and feel fortunate to have been able to expand our programs and services as well as advocate for them at the state level.”

The forum will take place from 3 to 4 p.m. at Vintage House, 264 E. First St. in Sonoma. It will include a Q&A session and be followed by a reception in which attendees will be able to chat with the speakers. Seating will be limited, so anyone interested in attending the forum is advised to register in advance at villageofsonomavalley.org.

Reach the reporter, Dan Johnson, at daniel.johnson@sonomanews.com.

PACE program eligibility and fees

Medi-Cal and Medicare pay for part of the PACE program services. Applicants who have Medi-Cal coverage are automatically eligible for the program. Participants whose Medi-Cal benefit has a “share of cost” (like a deductible) must pay it before Medi-Cal pays the rest.

The share of cost is a set amount based on how much money the participant makes and is determined by Medi-Cal. Applicants who only have Medicare coverage then pay for the Medi-Cal portion of the fee privately (out of pocket) and Medicare covers the rest.

Seniors interested in enrolling in a PACE program do not need to be enrolled in Medicare or Medi-Cal, and no financial criteria are considered in determining eligibility. They can choose to pay out of pocket.

They cannot be enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Part C plan, a Medicare prepayment plan, or a Medicare prescription drug plan and cannot be enrolled in hospice services or certain other programs.

PACE covers all Medicare parts A, B and D benefits; all benefits covered by Medi-Cal; and any other services or supports that are medically necessary to maintain or improve the health status of PACE program participants.

Anyone interested in applying for the program can contact Providence PACE Center at 707-254-4159 or NapaPACE@providence.org. Each application is addressed individually to help the applicant to take advantage of the benefits for which they are eligible. The Village of Sonoma Valley help line can provide an introduction to PACE and the application process by calling 707-509-0031.