

## Responses to Findings and Recommendations 2024-25 Grand Jury Report:



### Orange County Should Have More Respect for Its Elders!

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## SUMMARY RESPONSE STATEMENT

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On June 13, 2025, the Grand Jury released a report titled, “*Orange County Should Have More Respect for Its Elders!*” This report includes findings and recommendations directed to the Orange County Board of Supervisors and the Office on Aging, a division within the Orange County Community Services Department. Below are the responses.

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## FINDINGS AND RESPONSES

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### **F1. Orange County Office on Aging is not currently prepared to serve the future wave of older adults in this County.**

Response: *Disagrees wholly with the finding*

The County is proactively spearheading the Orange County Master Plan on Aging to ensure service needs are identified and considered through the OC Cares model and the annual Strategic Financial Planning process.

### **F2. Based on the limited general funds allocated by the County for the Office on Aging, the well-being of older adults is not reflected as a County priority.**

Response: *Disagrees wholly with the finding*

The Office on Aging serves as Orange County's Area Agency on Aging and receives funding to administer state programs. Twelve other County departments also receive funds to support older adults, demonstrating that it's a County-wide priority.

**F3. The Office on Aging does not have its own dedicated Event Coordinator to manage outreach, resulting in missed opportunities to engage and educate older adults and their caregivers about the services provided.**

Response: *Disagrees wholly with the finding*

OC Community Services utilizes various staff to conduct outreach for the Office on Aging and employs a dedicated Public Information Officer. The Office on Aging also relies on a network of contracted service providers who participate in community events across Orange County.

**F4. The Office on Aging does not have its own dedicated employee responsible for website design and modernization as well as for updating information and events; as a result, the Office on Aging website and mobile application (app) have outdated information and are difficult to navigate.**

Response: *Disagrees wholly with the finding*

To address communication needs, the Office on Aging secured a Public Information Officer (PIO) in late 2023, leading to significant improvements in communication content, timeliness and accuracy. Furthermore, an Older Adults Advisory Commission Website Ad Hoc Committee was formed in early 2025 and has worked with the PIO to gather feedback and enhance user experience.

**F5. The Office on Aging suffers from limited resources and staffing and is therefore reactive rather than proactive to the needs of Orange County older adults.**

Response: *Disagrees wholly with the finding*

The Office on Aging serves as Orange County's Area Agency on Aging and receives funding to administer state programs. The County is proactively spearheading the Orange County Master Plan on Aging to ensure service needs are identified and considered through the OC Cares model and the annual Strategic Financial Planning process.

**F6. The Administrative Unit of the Orange County Community Services agency is at times slow to respond to requests from the Office on Aging, causing unnecessary delays to older adult services.**

Response: *Disagrees wholly with the finding*

Statistical data from the OCCS Administrative Unit indicates that most Office on Aging requests are properly addressed within 24 hours, demonstrating commitment to timely support for all agency divisions, including those serving older adults.

**F7. The Administrative Unit of the Orange County Community Services agency does not pursue sufficient feedback, input, or discussion with the Office on Aging and non-profit providers before implementing changes affecting the non-profit providers who are serving older adults.**

Response: *Disagrees wholly with the finding*

The OCCS Administrative Unit prioritizes open communication and regularly seeks feedback from the Office on Aging and its contracted service providers. The OCCS Administrative Unit consistently issues notifications, provides training, and offers feedback opportunities when introducing or revising processes.

**F8. The new invoicing system launched on July 1, 2024, by Orange County Community Services for the Office on Aging has caused certain non-profit providers difficulty in understanding how to implement the new system due to insufficient information and training provided, thereby causing a delay in payment for services to some non-profit providers.**

Response: *Disagrees wholly with the finding*

OC Community Services' automated invoicing system, which received a 2025 National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Award, was rolled out with comprehensive training, including multiple retraining sessions and personalized technical assistance. All OC Community Services contracted providers have successfully transitioned to the new system, ensuring contract compliance and any questions were addressed with tailored training and ongoing technical support.

**F9. It takes the Office on Aging an estimated six to nine months to fill a vacancy, due to the County hiring process. With the Office on Aging having roughly twenty employees (based on their most recent organization chart), any long-term vacancies have an outsized impact on the quality of services provided to Orange County older adults.**

Response: *Disagrees wholly with the finding*

The County hiring process follows standard public sector hiring protocols as prescribed by state and federal employments rules. The Office on Aging collaborates closely with County Human Resource Services to focus on expediting recruitments and retaining valuable staff resources.

**F10. The Orange County Older Adults Advisory Commission advises the Office on Aging but is frustrated at the OOA's current outreach activities, website revisions, marketing program, and the time it took to create a new brochure for the senior centers.**

Response: *Disagrees wholly with the finding*

The Orange County Older Adults Advisory Commission has a large membership roster, with 30 to 40 members representing varying interests. Per the bylaws, staff resources are focused on helping the Commission carry out advisory functions which further the County's mission of developing and coordinating community-based systems of services for all older persons in the planning and service area.

**F11. The Office on Aging has to rely on the Orange County Community Services Administrative Unit as well as the Contracts Monitoring and Program Compliance Unit for decision making affecting older adult services. The inherent delays with this type of system, as well as a lack of timely collaboration between the Office on Aging and Orange County Community Services, causes unnecessary delays in decision making affecting services to older adults.**

Response: *Disagrees wholly with the finding*

The OCCS organizational structure is designed to ensure accountability, regulatory compliance, and the responsible use of public funds.

**F12. The human services administrators, analysts, and staff specialists at the Office on Aging provide quality oversight of the non-profit providers and are making good faith efforts to advocate for the non-profit providers in getting paid for providing their services.**

Response: *Agrees with the finding.*

The Office on Aging staff, with the support of OCCS Administrative Unit and tools like the automated invoicing system, work collaboratively with non-profit providers to serve older adults in Orange County.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

**R1.** The Board of Supervisors should work with the Office on Aging's Agency Director to determine the staffing and financial needs of the OOA for the next decade, due to demographics projecting a sizable increase in the older adult population in the County. This determination should occur by December 31, 2025, and be reviewed annually thereafter. (F1, F2)

Response: *The recommendation has been implemented.*

The County is proactively spearheading the Orange County Master Plan on Aging to ensure service needs are identified and considered through the OC Cares model and the annual Strategic Financial Planning process.

**R2.** The Grand Jury recommends that the Office on Aging put forth more effort on outreach to older adults and their caretakers about the services and benefits available to them. This would include, but is not limited to, employing its own Event Coordinator dedicated to managing outreach to this population. The Event Coordinator should be retained by December 31, 2025. (F3)

Response: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.*

OC Community Services utilizes various staff to conduct outreach for the Office on Aging as well as employs a dedicated Public Information Officer. The Office on Aging also relies on a network of contracted service providers who participate in community events across Orange County.

**R3.** The Grand Jury recommends that the Office on Aging secure its own reliable and experienced employee to modernize and update the Office on Aging website and mobile application (app) by September 30, 2025, and review the effectiveness of those updates annually thereafter. (F4)

Response: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.*

The Public Information Officer and the Office on Aging will continue collaborating with the County's centralized IT services to prioritize updates, enhance functionality, and evaluate digital tools to align with evolving community needs and technological advancements.

**R4.** The Grand Jury recommends that the Office on Aging prepare a written plan to submit to the Board of Supervisors identifying the additional staffing necessary to enable it to become proactive in the Orange County older adult community. Being proactive includes, but is not limited to, attending senior events in the County, reaching out to senior community centers to ascertain needs, and educating the target population on the services and benefits available through the Office on Aging. This shall occur by December 31, 2025, and the plan shall be reviewed annually thereafter. (F5)

Response: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.*

The County is proactively spearheading the Orange County Master Plan on Aging to ensure service needs are identified and considered through the OC Cares model and the annual Strategic Financial Planning process.

**R5.** The Grand Jury recommends that the Administrative Unit of the Orange County Community Services respond in a timely manner to reasonable and relevant information requests made by the Office on Aging staff. (F6)

Response: *The recommendation has been implemented.*

The OCCS Administrative Unit will continue to respond timely to reasonable and relevant requests made by the Office on Aging.

**R6.** The Grand Jury recommends that the Orange County Community Services Administrative Unit collaborate with the Office on Aging staff and non-profit providers to secure their input before implementing changes affecting non-profit providers. (F7)

Response: *The recommendation has been implemented.*

The OCCS Administrative Unit will continue to collaborate with Office on Aging staff and providers before implementing changes.

**R7.** The Grand Jury recommends that the Orange County Community Services and Office on Aging jointly collaborate with those non-profit providers having continuing problems implementing the new invoice system. The basis of the collaboration is to determine what additional training, documentation, and materials are needed to get the new invoicing system to function effectively for these non-profits and to get their outstanding invoices for services paid immediately. This collaboration shall occur within thirty days of the publication of this report/investigation of the Office on Aging. (F8)

Response: *The recommendation has been implemented.*

All OC Community Services contracted providers have successfully transitioned to the new system, ensuring contract compliance. While some providers may have had implementation questions, primarily due to limited digital literacy or reliance on outdated software, OCCS Administrative Unit addressed these issues promptly with tailored training and ongoing technical support.

**R8.** The Grand Jury recommends that the Office on Aging collaborate with Orange County Human Resources Services as soon as the Office on Aging is aware of any vacancy that will need to be filled. With the growing older adult population in Orange County, it is imperative that the Office on Aging be fully staffed at all times. (F9)

Response: *The recommendation has been implemented.*

The Office on Aging will continue to collaborate with Orange County Human Resources Services as soon as the Office on Aging is aware of any vacancy.

**R9.** The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors consider providing the Orange County Older Adults Advisory Commission with more authority by requiring the Office on Aging to respond in writing within fourteen days of any requests made by the Advisory Commission. The written response should include whether, how, and when the request will be implemented. If a request is denied, the Office on Aging shall provide a written response explaining why it was denied. This recommendation is to be implemented effective as of September 30, 2025. (F10)

Response: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.*

The role and authority of Older Adult Advisory Commission (OAAC) are clearly defined by the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR, Part 1321.63) and its governing bylaws. Should the OAAC believe a change in its role or structure is necessary, it can propose Bylaws amendments for the Board's review and approval.

**R10.** The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors consider making the Office on Aging its own independent agency, which would include internalizing the functions currently provided by the Orange County Community Services Administrative Unit and Contract Monitoring and Program Compliance Unit. This would allow the Office on Aging to better serve older adults in the County, which exceeds 675,000 people and is the fastest growing demographic in the County. If this recommendation is implemented by the Board of Supervisors, then the Office on Aging shall become its own independent agency by July 1, 2026. (F11)

Response: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.*

This recommendation is not financially nor organizationally sound. The Office on Aging operates within a broader organizational structure that includes the Veterans Service Office and Workforce & Economic Development Division. This alignment is strategic and intentional designed to serve overlapping populations by coordinating efforts across divisions. The County is able to maximize resources, avoid duplication, and braid multiple funding streams—federal, state, and local—to deliver more comprehensive services to the community.