

Community Institute for Psychotherapy

1330 Lincoln Ave #201, San Rafael, CA 94901-2141

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2024-2025 News & Notes



2025 September News and Notes

Responding to Today's Needs: Focus on Elders

By Robin Joy Berenson, PhD, LMFT

Responding to Today's Needs: Focus on Elders

Reports of the Bay Area's shifting demographics – including Marin's – have appeared frequently in the news these days. According to census data, between April 1, 2020, and July 1, 2024, the number of Marin County residents age 65 and older increased 9.3%. Today, elders represent 25% of Marin's population¹.

In 2023, Marin County Health and Human Services hired Davis Research, LLC, to conduct a thorough needs assessment of older Marin residents (60+ years of age) to better understand their current needs and concerns. Researchers compared their findings with survey data from 2019. Among the noteworthy differences was that older adults are expressing greater levels of concern across all areas, including housing, getting and affording healthcare, financial security, food insecurity (up 8%), losing memory/cognition, and feeling depressed. About a third of older adults reported feeling isolated or lonely at least some of the time.

CIP's Expanded Services

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In 2025, Community Institute for Psychotherapy, through the support of a grant from Kaiser Permanente, expanded services to the growing number of low-income Marin seniors seeking mental health care. Through our **Strengthening Families, Healing Individuals, Senior Focus** program, individuals receive weekly individual therapy onsite at our clinical offices.

We are happy to share a few stories of those who are making progress with their issues and concerns. (The names and exact details have been changed to protect their privacy.)

Micky, 61, works in the restaurant business. He came to CIP seeking support as he tries to navigate a pending divorce. He is afraid of being alone again, on his own, and having to start a new chapter in his life. In therapy, Micky is processing the emotional and psychological stress of divorce, confronting issues and challenges related to this mid- to late-life transition period, and learning how to adapt to his new life circumstances.

Brenda, 68, is experiencing a deep sense of sadness, emotional conflict and dissatisfaction in her personal life. She faces difficulty in forming meaningful connections, a struggle which stems from her past traumas and feelings of loneliness. In addition, Brenda suffers with insomnia and back pain. In therapy she is beginning to recognize the connection between her past traumas and the impact on her current relationships. This growing

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awareness is helping her gain insight into her behaviors and emotions, and make progress in reducing her isolation.

Jazmine, 74, came to therapy primarily to discuss her marital issues. She and her husband have been married for over 25 years, and her husband is verbally abusive, and an alcoholic. She suffers from depression and describes having consistent symptoms of low mood and low energy. She also reports several current medical issues including chronic low back pain, arthritis, urinary incontinence, and a history of kidney failure. She is motivated for therapy to reduce isolation and help increase her socialization.

Weekly Therapy Group at Vivalon

Each week, a small group of older adults gathers for the *Ageless Inspiration Support Group*, led by CIP therapy interns Anne Johnson and Benjamin Fisher. These sessions offer space for participants to explore grief, loneliness, family dynamics, caregiving, and purpose in later life.

CIP's Assistant Clinical Director, Cindy Jepsen, LMFT, says that mental health support for older adults is too often overlooked. "Ageism, cultural stigma, and a lack of targeted resources can leave older adults feeling isolated and invisible. These participants are vibrant and wise, but they also face deep loneliness and grief," she says.

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Group members expressed a range of responses, including the following:

“Being in this group, I’m struck by the fact that I’m not the only one struggling with loneliness.”

“Listening to everyone makes me feel less alone.”

“It’s easy to feel invisible, but here I feel seen and heard.”

“There is so much sadness and loss, it’s hard to feel much else.”

“I used to have so many regrets, but I’m feeling lighter and maybe I can let them go.”

Groups like these, Jepson says, fulfill a need. “Vivalon is creating space for healing.”

1. <https://www.mariniij.com/2025/07/08/seniors-are-the-fastest-growing-age-group-in-the-bay-area-and-nationwide/>