



LAS' HICAP Video
Please Share with your Community

HICAP, or Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program, is a Medicare counseling program at LAS that is free of charge and offers unbiased assistance for people in Alameda County who are on Medicare or who will be enrolling in the program. HICAP provides individualized, one-on-one, counseling in order to address the very specific needs of our clients and is part of the national network of SHIPs - the State Health Insurance Assistance Programs.



Watch LAS' *new* video about the HICAP Program

Enrollment into Medicare can be a difficult scenario for anyone to understand. Given that 10,000 people a day are turning 65 nationally, there is ever growing need for the HICAP services that LAS provides.

HICAP staff and volunteer counselors at Legal Assistance for Seniors provide individualized counseling to Medicare beneficiaries of any age on many topics:

- Medicare Benefits
- Enrollment Periods
- Supplemental Plan Options
- Prescription Drug Plan Options
- Low-Income Program Screening and Application Assistance
- Long-Term Care Insurance Policy Analysis
- Beneficiary Rights and Appeals



“The HICAP program runs on volunteer power,” explains HICAP Manager Janet Van Deusen. “We have approximately 30 volunteer counselors who have gone through 60 to 70 hours of initial training and internship to become state-registered counselors and they're really generous with their time in order to help address the specific questions or needs of our clients and help them through the Medicare maze,” she added.

Last year, LAS' HICAP program served 1,539 clients, and HICAP volunteer counselors contributed 3,310 hours of their time to the community. LAS' Community Education program also speaks to seniors, people with disabilities, caregivers, pre-retirees, and service providers in every part of Alameda County about the Medicare program in addition to important topics such as how to spot fraud and abuse and take action to protect the independence and safety of older adults. Last year, LAS was able to provide 113 group presentations to 5,032 individuals.

HICAP is the only resource in the county providing free, unbiased information and assistance to Medicare beneficiaries. In addition to explaining Medicare benefits and enrollment periods, supplemental coverage plan options, long-term care insurance policy analysis, and beneficiary rights, certain cases may be referred to our legal team for representation should the client need added support.

LAS is always looking for new volunteer counselors to assist Medicare recipients with their benefits and related health insurance issues as part of our HICAP program. Through one-on-one counseling and informal advocacy, HICAP volunteer counselors support the independence of people making choices that affect their health and financial well-being. If you are interested in assisting the HICAP program, please take a look at the requirements and qualifications for volunteers on our website and consider filling out an application:

[Learn About Becoming a HICAP Volunteer](#)

[Request an Appointment with a HICAP Counselor](#)

For more information, please find us online at: www.lashicap.org

Contact HICAP for your Medicare needs at: **800-434-0222 or 510-839-0393.**

2020-2021 LAS Annual Report

If you have not yet had a chance to see the LAS FY 2020-21 Annual Report, please download a copy today.

[FY 2020-21 Annual Report](#)

Please Donate to LAS

Your gift helps LAS fulfill our mission to ensure the independence and dignity of seniors.

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Partnership at the Heart of the Law at LAS

Legal Assistance for Seniors (LAS) has changed a great deal since its founding in 1976. There have been substantive changes at the non-profit over the years, such as when LAS added its housing practice group in 2017 to help seniors avoid homelessness. However, it is the purposeful navigation toward collaboration and team building within the legal department that has enabled it to grow, transform and become more productive and successful over the years.

Over a decade ago, LAS recognized the need to cross-train its attorneys in order

to better serve its older adult clients. This cross-training meant that attorneys would not be separated from their peers by practicing only one substantive area of the law. Attorneys were trained in two or more areas of LAS' practice, leading to a better understanding of LAS practice areas, increased flexibility within the legal team, more resiliency and responsiveness to change in caseloads and staffing, consistency and reliability in services for clients, and far greater stability for the organization.

Supervising Attorney Mariel Kusano credits Legal Director Kirsten Voyles' leadership style with steering LAS in the direction of partnership. "Kirsten communicates and networks with so many people both internal and external to LAS. She created a culture of collaboration with an expectation that we support one another in our common goal of helping our clients. As a team, we are encouraged to share ideas and work together to solve problems," Ms. Kusano said. Practice area groups hold regular meetings where attorneys and advocates share information about court procedures, trends in the law, and client needs and challenges. "LAS created a positive feedback loop that helped everyone. We feel supported by our teammates, and as a result, we provide better services to our clients," Ms. Kusano continued. It also made challenges presented by sheltering-in-place from the COVID-19 pandemic easier to deal with as an office because good communication was already in place.

This collaborative and approachable system led to many unanticipated benefits, including retention and recruitment of attorneys at LAS. Legal Director Kirsten Voyles and Supervising Attorneys Mariel Kusano and Kristen Boney have been at LAS for over 15 years. During their tenure, they have recruited and trained many legal interns. Many former interns have returned to LAS after graduation to become integral members of the legal team, including Christine Sung, Katie Burba, Kathleen Thaete, and Christian Ramos. When asked why she returned to LAS, Ms. Sung said, "as an intern, I felt very welcomed and fell in love with the work. Coming back to LAS felt right because I knew I would be mentored and supported."

The internal transformation led LAS attorneys to partner with organizations outside of LAS. "LAS recognizes that our clients' legal issues are often the tip of the

iceberg, so we partner with other organizations who can address our clients' non-legal issues." said Supervising Attorney Kristen Boney. For example, LAS is a member of the Alameda County Kinship Collaborative ("ACKC"). ACKC partners provide caregiver support groups and summer- and after-school programs. Our membership in the collaborative allows us to provide our clients with the resources for those supportive services. LAS is also a member of the Family Violence Council, the Alameda County Bar Association's Community Projects Committee, Alameda County Elder and Dependent Adult Multidisciplinary Team, and a partner in multiple housing working groups collaborating with other agencies and the court. Working with these community partners increases our outreach to Alameda County's diverse communities.

In Fiscal Year 2020-21, LAS' legal team supported 1,238 individuals throughout Alameda County in matters ranging from elder abuse to guardianship and from conservatorship to housing. With teamwork at its core, the LAS legal staff builds their knowledge of the law and assists as many individuals as possible during these difficult times. As the 50th Anniversary of LAS' founding approaches in 2026, we hope that our organization will continue to grow and serve ever more seniors who call Alameda County their home.

A Word From Our Sponsors

Watch Our YouTube Channel

for Content on Issues Affecting Seniors from Our Webinar Series

LAS' YouTube Channel is building original content that may be helpful to seniors, their caregivers and family members. If you did not have the opportunity to attend any of the seminars from our 2021 Webinar Series on Elder Abuse, we encourage you to visit our LAS YouTube Channel:

[Subscribe to LAS on YouTube](#)


The content from our 2021 series includes such topics as: working with caregivers; money management plans for aging adults; understanding the role of the guardian ad litem; and victims' rights in the criminal justice system. Each of these four webinar sessions were attended by over 100 individuals each, and received an average score of 4.6 out of 5.0 from the 97 individuals who responded to last year's survey. We'd like to take this opportunity to once again thank our primary host, Golden Gate University, for their role in helping to produce such a widely attended and thought provoking series. We'd also like to thank our sponsors, once again, for their support of this annual event.


Take a moment to read about a few of our long-time sponsors, who they are and what they do to assist older adults right here in our community:

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Holland & Knight thanks Legal Assistance for Seniors for its commitment and dedicated staff in assisting the most vulnerable of our community.

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