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We Are Now Justice in Aging

As of March 2, we became Justice in Aging. When we asked members of our network to tell us what Justice in Aging means to them, we got some great responses via email, postcard, and social media. Ideas ranged from creating more affordable housing for seniors to building a better long-term care system. Now that we have a blog on our new website, [we created this blog post](#) to share some of these ideas with you.

Thank you for being part of the conversation. Your ideas will help to inform our vision of Justice in Aging as we work to bring about the changes we need to ensure that all seniors are able to age in dignity, free from the stresses of poverty.

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Justice In Aging and Partners File Lawsuit Against Social Security for Discriminating against SSI Recipients in Same-Sex Marriages

Hugh Held has been married to his spouse Orion Masters since 2008 when same-sex marriage became legal in California. Unfortunately his legal marriage was not taken into account by Social Security when his SSI benefits were calculated. Even though he informed

Social Security of his marriage three times, it took the agency over a year to realize they overpaid him. The agency is now going after him for money he was overpaid (and has long since spent on food and other necessities) through no fault of his own.

Since the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was struck down by the Supreme Court in June 2013, federal agencies have been required to recognize the legal marriages of same-sex couples in situations like that of Mr. Held. On March 10, 2015, Justice in Aging, along with Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD), with Foley Hoag LLP as pro-bono council, sued the Social Security Administration (SSA) for discriminating against married same-sex SSI recipients by failing to recognize their legal marriages for months, and sometimes over a year after DOMA was struck down.

As a result of SSA's failure to follow the law, SSA paid married individuals at the benefit rate for singles, resulting in overpayments. SSA is now going after extremely low-income and sometimes disabled beneficiaries for thousands of dollars they were overpaid through no fault of their own.

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Justice in Aging Signs on to Supreme Court Amicus Brief on Same-Same Sex Marriage

As the Supreme Court prepares to hear a series of same sex marriage-related cases from different states that do not yet recognize same-sex unions, Justice in Aging, along with [Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders \(SAGE\)](#), and other partners [submitted an amicus brief on the benefits of marriage for older LGBT couples](#). The benefits of legal marriage are important for everyone, but when the marriages of older LGBT couples are not recognized the hardship can be significant, when it comes to hospital visitation rights, powers of attorney, and rights of inheritance. We are proud to be able to join with our partners in educating the court about the particular needs of older LGBT married couples.

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Reforming California's Long-Term Care System

The need for reform of California's Long-Term Care System is getting lots of attention in the California State Legislature with the release of a new report by Senator Carol Liu's office, "A Shattered System." We are continuing our extensive work to ensure that low-income seniors have access to long term-care. We are partnering with groups across the state to improve the implementation of the Coordinated Care Initiative and [we are spearheading an effort to improve consumer protections in Assisted Living facilities in California](#). Our efforts were recently featured in an article on the need to do more to serve California's seniors.

[The article](#) endorses Senator Lui's recommendation that Governor Brown appoint an Aging Czar and suggests that the Aging Czar start by consulting a list of progressive Californians

dedicated to solving the problems of aging Californian's, including Justice in Aging attorneys. Nice shout-out!

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New Fix List for California's Coordinated Care Initiative

Earlier this week, [we released a new Fix List for the California Coordinated Care Initiative \(CCI\)](#). As we continue to monitor the roll-out of CCI, we periodically release updates on problems we hear about from advocates in the field that we communicate to officials at Department of Healthcare Services (DHCS) and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

This Fix List summarizes new problems that have cropped up since the release of the last one as well as the steps the agencies report they have taken in response. We also testified at a [California Assembly Budget Committee hearing](#) this week – providing recommendations for action that can be taken to address problems with the roll-out of the CCI.

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Culturally Competent Outreach Strategies

As dual eligibles experience rapid and sometimes confusing changes in their healthcare coverage through California's Coordinated Care Initiative, it's important that advocates have the tools to communicate changes to different populations.

Since not everyone receives and understands information in the same way, culturally competent outreach models like the one featured in a recent issue brief, we authored with Advocates for African American Elders (AAAE), are necessary.

The brief, [Thinking Outside the Box: Culturally Competent Outreach Strategies in Health Care Transitions](#) offers practical tips on how to communicate changes in a person-centered and engaging manner.

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In Review is a monthly publication of Justice In Aging. [Vanessa Barrington](#), editor, [Katrina Cohens](#), design & circulation.

Justice In Aging is a non-profit organization whose principal mission is to protect the rights of low-income older adults. Through advocacy, litigation, and the education and counseling of local advocates, we seek to ensure the health and economic security of those with limited income and resources, and to preserve their access to the courts.

We have offices in Los Angeles and Oakland, CA and in Washington, DC. For more information, visit our Web site at www.justiceinaging.org. To contact us, write info@justiceinaging.org.

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