



## The Perspective of SteppingStone's Nurses

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California officially ended the COVID state of emergency on February 28 of this year. We thought it would be a good time to get the perspective on the agency's nurses on what they see at their Centers in providing care to participants.

Each of our four Centers has both a registered nurse (RN) and licensed vocational nurse (LVN). SteppingStone also has a nurse practitioner (NP), who assists agencywide. As part of the clinical team nurses assess participants when they enroll, help develop care plans and monitor clients' health responding to any issues that may arise. Their perspective on the clients they serve and the community that exists at each Center is unique.



*"I am seeing participants with more depressive symptoms due to being isolated while sheltering-in-place and from losing loved ones to COVID. Many clients are returning to the center with worsening physical and neurocognitive conditions, depression, increase in falls and more frailty. The participants who get COVID are more likely to develop new health conditions such as diabetes, blood clots, and other cardiovascular complications.*

*"Unfortunately, due to fear of COVID many clients are less active than before and engaging in more sedentary activities. Many are also seeing their primary care provider less than before the pandemic. At our Center I provide nursing care, emotional support, and education in English and Tagalog. For participants that speak other languages, I work in collaboration with center staff to ensure that their needs met." Wil Tayo, LVN Mabini Center.*

All the nurses made very clear that though the state of emergency was over, COVID remains and is a major factor in their work and the operations of each Center.

*"COVID is not over, and I believe it will be with us forever. For that reason, our prevention efforts remain unchanged. All participants have their temperatures checked when they arrive, and we make sure they are not feeling sick. We offer them COVID tests if they want one. All staff are tested twice a week, and everyone still wears masks in the Center. I personally think people are less afraid than*



*they were. We are all survivors.” George Wu, RN-Golden Gate Center.*

When asked to consider the changes between 2019 before COVID and today, the nurses identified many changes.

“Things are very different from 2019. For example, we now provide emergency services to participants that can’t make it into the Center, something we didn’t do before COVID. Many clients have been slow to return to their full care schedule because they are afraid or have generally withdrawn from many activities.

“Many of the clients from 2019 have not returned, some having died from COVID or other illness. We have enrolled many new clients as well, which is of course a big change.” Ursula Munka, RN-Presentation Center



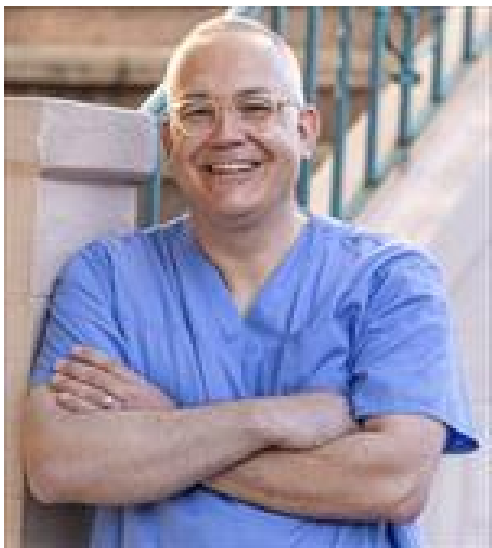
The enrollment of new clients is echoed by many of the nurses as impacting their work because they need to both assess all enrollees and help develop their care plans.

*“It has been busy at Mission Creek with all the new initial intakes and more people attending in-person services now. I did not work here pre-pandemic but notice that many participants' stamina level is not where it used to be. For example, many attended our program daily pre-pandemic. but attend only one or two days now.*

*“I believe that when they come to our centers daily, they are building up their stamina and strength to pre-pandemic levels or better. It also makes it easier for staff to monitor them for any changes when they are here in-person daily. Also, as a Cantonese speaker, I feel that the Cantonese speaking participants breathe a sigh of relief when they are able to voice their concerns to me.” Grace Huang, RN-Mission Creek Center.*

The monitoring of participants’ health at the Center is fundamental to SteppingStone’s program as would be expected in serving a population all of whom have significant disabilities and ongoing medical challenges. All staff participate in observing clients looking for changes in health status, such as weakness,

confusion, bruising, etc. At every Center some clients need their vital signs such as blood pressure or glucose levels taken regularly, which is done by nurses, often the LVN. Where directed by a participant's primary care provider, nurses may also provide or monitor medication use. These supports vary among Centers, but occur at all of them daily, led by the nursing team.



Because of the care provided, SteppingStone's nurses are hopeful for their clients as they return to their Centers. COVID has changed much, but the need for adults with disabilities, particularly seniors, to benefit from a robust program of adult day health care remains.

*"One of the major benefits of adult day health programs is the access our participants have to licensed clinicians, including registered nurses. Our ability to meet with participants throughout the week and to conduct regular health reassessments ensures that we are catching any health changes much sooner and getting our participants any additional care they require from their regular medical providers. The pandemic took a toll on*

*everyone, but older adults and persons with disabilities were especially impacted because their social networks were greatly diminished. Since returning to the centers, we have noticed that our participants are thriving. They are engaged in the various activities we provide and living better lives as a result."* Jim V. Gatewood, PhD, MSN, AGPCNP-BC, RN, Nurse Practitioner, SteppingStone.

SteppingStone operates four Adult Day Health Care Centers in San Francisco. Nearly all program participants have their care covered by managed care insurance (Medi-Cal, VA), so they have no out-of-pocket expenses. For more information, including reading past issues of this newsletter, visit our website: [steppingstonehealth.org](http://steppingstonehealth.org).

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**Photos: (Top left)** Wil Tayo, LVN Mabini Center  
**(Middle 1)** George Wu, RN-Golden Gate Center  
**(Middle 2)** Urszula Munka, RN-Presentation Center  
**(Middle 3)** Grace Huang, RN-Mission Creek Center  
**(Bottom)** Jim Gatewood, PhD, MSN, AGPCNP-BC, RN, Nurse Practitioner, SteppingStone

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