



**For Immediate Release**

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## **CenCal Health and Community Action Commission Partner to Tackle Rising Senior Hunger Rates and Reduce Effects of Malnutrition and Isolation**

*CenCal Health Executives visit Senior Lunch Program as Partnership Continues*



*(From left to right) CenCal Health COO, Paul Jaconette; Senior Lunch program chef Donna Hall; and CenCal Health CEO, Bob Freeman, at a recent senior lunch held at the Goleta Valley Community Center*

**Santa Barbara, Calif., Nov. 15, 2016** – [CenCal Health](#) executives and staff recently spent time with local seniors at the Goleta Valley Community Center, one of 11 sites across the county where the [Community Action Commission of Santa Barbara County \(CAC\)](#) provides a nutritious meal for seniors in need.

At the beginning of the year, CenCal Health entered into a partnership with CAC to help the organization continue to serve 150,000 meals to more than 1,400 seniors in 2016.

“After experiencing the senior lunch program, it is clear that not only is CAC helping provide vulnerable seniors with the proper nutrition they need, but they are also providing a space for them to socialize and develop a community,” said Bob Freeman, CEO of CenCal Health. “We hope this collaboration continues into a long-term partnership between our organizations to better serve the Central Coast’s vulnerable seniors.”

In Santa Barbara County, 34.3 percent of seniors live below the [Elder Index](#), a measure of poverty devised by experts using widely accepted and credible national and state data sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide an evidence-based indicator of the actual basic costs faced by older adults.

Senior citizen hunger rates have risen for low-income seniors living on the Central Coast, causing nutrition and hunger to become the number one issue for local seniors. Rising hunger rates among seniors pose significant public health consequences as persistent hunger and malnutrition can lead to chronic diseases, expensive hospitalization, and indefinite nursing home residence.

The Community Action Commission serves approximately 150,000 meals to 700 homebound seniors and 700 seniors at centers annually. CAC provides seniors in need with seven nutritious meals a week and prepares their lunches from scratch using local fresh produce. Meals are planned by a local dietician to optimize nutrition for senior health.

In San Luis Obispo County, CenCal Health has partnered with Senior Nutrition Program of SLO County to provide 36,500 meals to 100 seniors.

The partnership with CAC and the Senior Nutrition Program launches as CenCal Health is in the process of developing a special needs program that would allow it to provide the full spectrum of health care benefits to low-income seniors that qualify for both Medicare and Medi-Cal. The program is slated to launch in 2019.

### **About CenCal Health**

CenCal Health provides health insurance to the largest number of people on the Central Coast, providing health coverage for approximately 20 percent of residents in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties. CenCal Health coverage is accepted by the vast majority of local health providers. CenCal Health also provides education and assistance to its members in order to reduce potential health problems from chronic illness such as diabetes and asthma. For more information, visit [www.cencalhealth.org](http://www.cencalhealth.org). Find CenCal Health on [Facebook](#).

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