

DPSS NEWS

APRIL 2021

As a CalFresh ambassador at UCR, Kalayah Wilson works to spread the word about expanded CalFresh benefits. Eligible students will receive more than \$200 each month to pay for groceries.

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Staff:

Together, we directly served one million Riverside County residents last year. I am thankful for all of you who continue to provide quality service to the families and individuals experiencing hardship and trauma in their daily lives. We are now in the process of developing our department's strategic plan that will assist in setting our priorities and overall direction for the future.

Your insight and support will be crucial as the DPSS strategic planning initiative aims to position our department on the leading edge of efforts to address the most complex issues our communities experience. In coming days, your managers will be asking each of you to bring your insight and voice to an important and fun team exercise known as a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats).

Your input will provide our strategic planning team with a framework for understanding what DPSS does well, what is lacking, the risks it faces and the greatest possible advantages for success with the goal of supporting and improving the health, safety, and well-being of individuals and families.

In 2023, our organization will turn 100 years old! We must be prepared and empowered for the next century of service in one of our nation's largest and most dynamic counties. The roadmap we are developing will foster outstanding customer service, innovation, and a strong professional workforce. We have branded our long-term journey as TOP (Transforming Organization Performance), so that it is easy to recognize in our initiatives and communications.

When I look across our county and state, I do not see a more dedicated and professional workforce than right here in our department. Our leadership team wants each of you to know you are part of our journey. You impress and inspire us every day through your work and commitment to learning. We truly have all the ingredients of a world class organization. Thank you for being a part of it.

SAYORI BALDWIN

Assistant County Executive Officer—Human Services



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WHAT'S CURRENT



JOIN THE DPSS MASS CARE AND SHELTER TEAM

Emergency Services continues to offer monthly training workshops for employees interested in making a difference in their community by joining the DPSS Mass Care Shelter Program.

The department is one of Riverside County's lead agencies to respond when a natural or manmade disaster occurs. The program relies on volunteers to help ensure people who have been displaced find a safe place to stay until they can go back home.

About 300 DPSS employees are currently trained to respond in such circumstances, but a larger mass care workforce is needed. Trained volunteers decide when they can help and will be compensated for their time.

"This effort is really an extension of what we already do here at DPSS, which is helping those who are most in need," said Marie Davis, Emergency Services coordinator.

Morning and afternoon sessions are being offered on the third Thursday of each month via Microsoft Teams.

Interested employees should ask their supervisor for permission before attending. Please email Emergency Services Coordinator Marie Davis at Mardavis@rivco.org to register.

MORE THAN A MILLION VACCINATIONS AND COUNTING IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY



Shirley Ann Gruenke, who battled COVID-19 in December, represents the millionth dose of the vaccine administered in Riverside County. Gruenke, a retired nurse from Cherry Valley, received the vaccine at the Albert A. Chatigny Sr. Community Center in Beaumont.

Riverside County surpassed an important milestone in its mission to provide COVID-19 vaccines to county residents and workers, with more than one million vaccines administered.

DPSS staff have joined the efforts in clinics and call centers countywide to help at-risk populations get their shots.

Do you need the vaccine or know someone who needs it? Visit rivcoph.org/COVID-19-Vaccine to schedule an appointment!

Shirley Ann Gruenke, 65, a retired nurse from Cherry Valley, represented the millionth dose on March 31 with cheers and fanfare from nurses and staff at the Albert A. Chatigny Sr. Community Center in Beaumont. Gruenke endured a bout of COVID-19 in December and was initially unsure about getting the vaccination.

“I’m ready for it, I’m getting my shot,” a beaming Gruenke reported.

Public Health Officer Dr. Geoffrey Leung said efforts to vaccinate more than a million county residents were impressive and that the push will continue with about 1.5 million more residents still to vaccinate.

“The county team has vaccinated people in clinics, cars, tents, trailers and in the agricultural fields,” Leung said. “We still have work ahead of us, but we are on our way to protect the residents of Riverside County from this deadly disease.”



Key partners in the effort to raise awareness and prevent child abuse and neglect are pictured from left: Tammi Graham, executive director First 5 Riverside; Dr. Sophia Grant, chief of medical services for Riverside County Child Assessment Team at RUHS Medical Center; Charity Douglas, assistant director of Children’s Services; Sayori Baldwin, assistant county executive officer of Human Services; Dariana Ortiz, program services administrator.

PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT & BRINGING HELP TO VICTIMS

DPSS Collaborates with Partners to Protect the Well-Being of Children in Riverside County

Riverside County has joined counties across the nation in recognizing April as National Child Abuse Prevention Month, emphasizing the vital role community partnerships play in preventing abuse and neglect before it starts.

“Child maltreatment can negatively impact the health and wellbeing of victims throughout their lives,” said Board of Supervisors Chair Karen Spiegel, District 2 Supervisor. She and the county supervisors thanked social workers and service providers for their dedication to children and families.

“We are a better community and a more compassionate society when we value and protect the well-being of our children,” Spiegel said. “Communities must make every effort to promote programs and activities that create strong and thriving children and families.”

More than 3 million cases of suspected abuse and neglect are reported annually nationwide. Despite the statistics, advocates say abuse and neglect can be prevented. DPSS has forged partnerships with civic, nonprofit, and faith-based agencies to prevent abuse and end generational trauma and violence.

The partners bring resources to help at-risk families learn new strategies and help victims find healing and new paths forward when abuse and neglect occur.

“Each child deserves to live in a healthy and supportive community that is committed to acting and safeguarding against emotional, physical and sexual abuse,” said Charity Douglas, assistant director of Children’s Services. “We are that community.”

Nationally, about three of every four cases reported are due to neglect. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that the annual cost of treating victims of abuse rivals other high-profile public health conditions such as stroke and diabetes.

Dr. Sophia Grant, medical director for the Riverside County Child Assessment and Sexual Assault and Forensic Examination teams at Riverside University Health System Medical Center, says that every child deserves to be respected and to be believed.

Grant likened the interdisciplinary work of partners who prevent and respond to child abuse and neglect to that of a puzzle.

“Nobody is more important. Without one person, we are incomplete,” she said. “Together, we form a complete picture.”



The Settles family of Riverside demonstrates its support for child abuse and neglect prevention by holding pinwheels, a national symbol for great childhoods. Photo: JD Juarez Photography, Family Service Association’s Alvord Child Development Center.

COLLABORATION HELPS CHILDREN HEAL

Representing joyfulness, playfulness, and a carefree nature, the pinwheel is the national symbol for child abuse prevention. During April, National Child Abuse Prevention month, individuals and businesses can purchase and display a pinwheel to raise awareness and help fund resources to prevent abuse by supporting a team that devotes itself to serving the children in our county. The Riverside County Child Assessment Team (RCCAT), also known as the Child Abuse and Neglect Team (CAN), works tirelessly to protect children who have suffered abuse or neglect.

In addition to social workers from DPSS, the team includes physicians and justice representatives. This collaborative approach, with professionals in various areas of expertise, helps give vulnerable children the help they need.

Visit ruhsfoundation.org/prevention to learn more about the Pinwheels for Prevention® project.



WATCH: DPSS team members and partners from our community share what each child deserves.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNm8cJuCrwA>

Report suspected case of child abuse or neglect by calling the 24-hour Riverside County Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-442-4918. Outside of Riverside County, please call the National ChildHelp Abuse Hotline at 1-800-422-4453.

SHINING THE SPOTLIGHT ON SOCIAL WORKERS

RIVERSIDE COUNTY SUPERVISORS RECOGNIZE MARCH AS SOCIAL WORKER APPRECIATION MONTH

When social worker Dale Vassalli visits his clients at home, he knows he's knocking on more than just their doors.

"I love bringing joy, hope, and safety to people who may not have had enough of it in their lives," says Vassalli, who is part of Adult Services and among some 1,200 DPSS social workers. "We, as social workers, shine a light into the darkest places."

The Riverside County Board of Supervisors recognized National Social Worker Appreciation Month in March and celebrated the work of professionals who protect and serve at-risk children and adults around the clock, even while suffering their own personal hardships and losses from the pandemic.

"Social workers have made heroic contributions to improve the health of children, the elderly and the disabled during these times of uncertainty," said Board Chair Karen Spiegel, Second District Supervisor. "Social workers were essential before this pandemic. They are essential now and will remain essential as Riverside County continues its recovery."

DPSS HISTORY

In 1923, DPSS began serving communities in Riverside County with just two workers. Today, the department has more than 4,000 employees. Last year, DPSS served more than one million residents in the nation's tenth most populous county.



Dale Vassalli, a social worker with Adult Services, visits a client at home.

Sayori Baldwin, assistant county executive officer of Human Services, says that social workers strive each day to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and families.

"The need for trained, dedicated social work professionals is great across the nation," Baldwin added. "Our social workers are on the frontlines every day helping people overcome crises."

Vassalli, who serves about 50 In-Home Support Services (IHSS) clients per month, agrees that it is professionally and personally gratifying to see clients making strides forward.

"I love knowing that I helped make the world a better place for someone," Vassalli says. "I love seeing the confidence in my clients as they begin to reach their potential and live more fulfilling lives."

SOCIAL WORKER FOR CHILDREN SHOWS RESILIENCE AND COURAGE THROUGHOUT PANDEMIC



Tara Cannon, a social worker with Children's Services, provides support for children ages 13 through 18 who are in both in child welfare and probation systems.

Tara Cannon, a social worker with Children's Services had just finished chemotherapy for cancer when the pandemic hit early last year. Wanting to continue working with the public, Cannon took the precautions necessary to work face-to-face with her young clients.

"I did not miss a day," said Cannon during a recent interview, noting that her work gives her a reason to get up each morning. Cannon works with dual placements, kids between the ages of 13 and 18 who are in child welfare and the probation systems.

One young man on her caseload had experienced at least 16 different placements. Finding a new home was proving to be a challenge. He was failing high school and heading for jail. After a heart-to-heart talk with the young man, Cannon reached out to his former coach. The coach agreed to give the youth a home — and a new start.

Today, Cannon has been invited to many of her young client's milestones, including high school graduation this spring. The young man will continue to gain skills and receive support from social workers and peers in the Transitional Age Youth Program through DPSS while he attends college in the fall.

"It's one thing to show up at a youth's home. It's another thing to say 'I am in this fight with you. I am in your corner,'" says Cannon, who earned a master's degree, and entered social services only after she'd seen her own son through college. "When a teen knows you care for them and that you are fighting for them, they often come around."



WATCH: Learn how DPSS social workers served our communities during the pandemic.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSnhZ-uac8Q&feature=youtu.be

SOCIAL WORKERS SHARE HOW DPSS PROVIDERS SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY

We asked some of our SSPs to tell us about what they do. Here, we spotlight some of the many ways DPSS SSPs are positively impacting the lives of countless individuals in Riverside County.



PROVIDE A SAFETY NET

"Our client population does not have a network to rely on. We become that person they can call. It is hard because while we build personal relationships, we also have experienced a lot of loss within the last year. Many of our clients and providers have had COVID. We end up feeling like we are part of their family."

—Nicole Servello

SOCIAL WORKER HELPS HOUSE HOMELESS SENIOR DURING PANDEMIC



Jose Cano works with Crisis Response Intervention Services (CRIS) at Adult Services where he helps homeless seniors and dependent adults find housing.

Drawn by a desire to help vulnerable adults, social worker Jose Cano's life took a pivotal turn just over a decade ago.

"I was a utility worker, wound up doing community outreach and found that more fulfilling," Cano said.

After going back to school and earning his bachelor's degree in psychology, Cano came to DPSS in 2013. Today, he works with Crisis Response Intervention Services (CRIS) at Adult Services — a branch focusing on housing homeless seniors and dependent adults.

"I love this work. It's definitely challenging. Many of our clients don't trust anyone so you have to build a rapport," Cano said.

He did exactly that when he found a 73-year-old man sleeping outside a convenience store in Cathedral City in 2019. Cano says the senior, who was hospitalized monthly, rejected Cano's multiple attempts to get him into stable housing. But the turning point came right as the pandemic hit.

Through building a relationship with the client and working with community partners, such as the Housing Authority and RUHS Behavioral Health, Cano and other advocates helped house the man and get him home health assistance.

"He's done a total 180. No more monthly hospitalizations. With home health assistance he's living independently. It's been so gratifying," Cano said. "Our partnerships have been an asset and helped us house 140 vulnerable adults during this pandemic."

Cano is among 1,200 DPSS social workers recognized during the month of March, which is Social Worker Appreciation Month.

"I'm glad I switched careers all those years ago. I know sometimes social workers feel unappreciated, but my commitment to this profession only increased during the pandemic because I see how great the need is."



HELP CLIENTS GET BACK ON THEIR FEET

"I like working with clients and making sure their needs are being fulfilled. While working as an Eligibility Technician, I realized I wanted to have in-depth conversations about how to help them improve their situation. I wanted to figure out what was holding them back from prospering and help them get back on their feet again."

—Ashly Villarreal



PROTECT THE VULNERABLE

"The best part is helping the elders in my community. In my family, I was taught to be loving, patient, and respectful towards my elders. These values that were instilled in me, and I learned to extend them to my clients. Working with our older population has been an easy, natural fit for me."

—Erica Cervantes

SOCIAL WORKERS UNITE FAMILIES



The Ambrose family from Murrieta. From left to right: Brian, Carter, Bailey, Linden, Heather, Reagan and Skylar Ambrose.

Brian and Heather Ambrose of Murrieta say social workers helped make their family what it is today.

The couple has three biological daughters and adopted a boy in 2015. Their son Carter is now 6 years old.

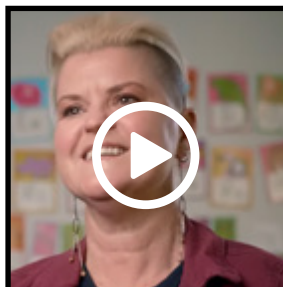
At the time, they thought their family was complete. But a surprise came four years later when the family learned Carter had a sister.

With help from community partners and the courts, Riverside County social workers united the family through adoption. "What they did gave us the chance to raise the siblings together," says Brian.

"Our social workers work tirelessly year-round to help prevent abuse and neglect. They strive to keep families together and when that's not possible, our social workers fulfill a special role uniting hundreds of families every year through adoption," says Charity Douglas, assistant director of Children's Services, a division within DPSS.

"To bring families who want children together is such a healing experience," says Vivian Dunipace, a social worker who assisted the Ambrose family.

Heather says Riverside County social workers are "unsung heroes" for being a voice for kids and meeting the needs of biological, foster and adoptive families.



WATCH: Hear the Ambrose family and other Riverside County families united through adoption share their stories of appreciation.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TAYUGboIvQ>



LEND AN EAR

"This past year has brought the struggles of our clients into sharper focus. Many of our clients were somewhat isolated already, but this year has made it dangerous for them to even leave their homes, isolating them even further. It's hard because we can't visit in person, but sometimes just having someone listen can mean so much to them. We get to do that for them."

—Stephanie Hoover



BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

"The best part of the job is the relationships we build with our clients. It is when they feel comfortable with you and trust you to confide in what their needs are. They are always happy to see you when you come and want to tell you what their needs are. The pandemic has taught us how to adapt quickly to change and effectively assess the needs of our clients, even if we aren't able to see them in person. We let them know we are there for them."

—Vanessa Steet



TOP FIVE COLLEGE CAMPUSES BY CALFRESH ENROLLMENT:

- RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT (INCLUDES RIVERSIDE, NORCO AND MORENO VALLEY CAMPUSES): **669**
- MT. SAN JACINTO COLLEGE: **467**
- UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE: **436**
- COLLEGE OF THE DESERT: **216**
- CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO: **165**

NEARLY 3,500 STUDENTS IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY ARE CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN THE PROGRAM, BUT STATE OFFICIALS SAY THAT AROUND 38,000 STUDENTS ARE ELIGIBLE.

SOURCE: RIVERSIDE COUNTY DPSS (MARCH 2021)

Kalayah Wilson, an undergraduate at UCR who works for the campus pantry, is doing her part to spread the word about expanded CalFresh benefits.

EXPANDED BENEFITS FEED COLLEGE JOURNEYS

Temporary Expansion of CalFresh Eligibility Could Help Around 38,000 Riverside County College Students

On any given Friday, Kalayah Wilson can be found filling bags with prepackaged groceries to hand to UC Riverside students who rely on their campus food pantry to make ends meet.

Wilson, 21, juggles online classes as a UCR undergraduate with her role as a campus pantry worker, guiding peers to resources during the pandemic. Wilson says one of her biggest priorities now is to spread the word that more college students can qualify for CalFresh, the state's supplemental nutritional assistance program.

"This food resource definitely helps me to live independently and eat healthy," Wilson said in a recent

interview. "It has motivated me to learn new recipes and try organic food items."

The temporary expansion of CalFresh eligibility for college students is part of the federal pandemic relief bill that took effect in January. The expansion will remain in place at least until the federal public health emergency is lifted.

Some 38,000 college and university students in Riverside County could be newly eligible under the temporary expansion, state officials say. Statewide, two in five college students are eligible for CalFresh and will receive \$234 each month—equivalent to about 60 jars of peanut butter.



Kalayah Wilson (right), 21, passes out groceries to students during the weekly food distribution at the UCR campus food pantry. Wilson works to inform students about expanded eligibility for CalFresh benefits during the pandemic.

But the expansion will only benefit newly eligible students who find out about it, which is where students leaders like Wilson, a sociology major, come in. She enjoys talking to her peers about CalFresh when they come to the pantry distribution because she is enrolled in the program, too.

The program has even helped to boost her grades, she added, because it helps her feel better overall. The UCR campus normally averages around 20 CalFresh applications per month, but campus officials have noticed a recent uptick. Outreach, which has been mostly virtual, has helped to boost numbers. The lingering pandemic has also spurred interest in the program.

“We want to ensure that our college students find out about this recent temporary expansion because they should not have to worry about being able to afford their next meal,” said Allison Gonzalez, assistant director of the Riverside County’s

HOW TO APPLY

Online: [GetCalFresh.org](https://www.getcalfresh.org)

By phone: 877-847-3663

In-person: Check campus directories for assistance or visit [rivcodpss.org](https://www.rivcodpss.org) for a DPSS office location nearest you.

Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). “Our caseworkers are ready to assist in getting our students enrolled as quickly as possible.”

Other college campuses also have dedicated resources to help students learn how to access CalFresh.

Mt. San Jacinto College (MSJC), for example, is working with a team to promote CalFresh during weekly drive-through food distributions where they insert fliers inside bags of groceries. They are also preparing a private room inside a food pantry where students can sign up for the program once their campuses reopen.

“Even with these efforts, we still struggle in helping our students to know what services are available to them,” said John Colson, vice president of Student Services at MSJC.

CalFresh ambassadors at UCR, such as Elizabeth Trinh, help fellow students determine out if they might qualify for the program by doing a prescreening interview via Zoom and following up with reminders through text messages or email. “While the application process can be challenging, once they get their card, students love this program,” said Trinh, a public policy major.

Student peer navigators are critical to inform and provide support for the application process, Wilson adds. “Sometimes all you need is that one person encouraging you to apply.”

TELECOMMUTER CONNECTION

WITH LORI



Lori Perry is a senior administrative analyst with Technology Support Services, regularly working in conjunction with the Independent Review Group-Assets Monitoring Services team. Look for her regular updates here in the Telecommuter Connection!

SPRING BRINGS A SEASON OF CHANGE

A NEW RESOURCE FOR YOUR MOBILITY NEEDS

After jumping through hoops to successfully transfer from your office space to teleworking from home during the pandemic, you're probably hoping the only new change looming around the corner is the sweet smell of cherry blossoms arriving soon! Well, hold onto your French beret, because getting your phones through Riverside County IT (RCIT) is a thing of the past; just like the rotary dial phone and 8 track tapes.

Mobility services are now under DPSS Technology Support Services (TSS). With a department of more than 4,000 people, you can only imagine the collaboration required to gear up for this massive undertaking. We appreciate your patience as we work to make the transition as smooth as possible. DPSS TSS even has a new unit in place to ensure your mobility needs are met: the DPSS Mobility Service Desk.

Need to submit a request? It's easy:

- Go to the DPSS Intranet site
- Select the General tab
- Click RIVCOHelp
- For request Type, select Mobile Devices, Services and Accessories.

If you have questions about mobility services or need to know what type of request to submit, you can email us at DPSS Mobility ServiceDesk (MobilityServiceDesk@rivco.org).

CONTACT THE MOBILITY SERVICE DESK FOR:

- CELL PHONES
- CELL PHONE ACCESSORIES
- BROADBAND ACCESS
- HOTSPOTS

CALSAWS CORNER:

A JOURNEY TO ONE



CHANGE NETWORK CHAMPIONS PREPARE FOR NEW STATEWIDE ONLINE WELFARE SYSTEM

Change doesn't bother Andrea Lewis — especially if it improves customer service. That's what Lewis expects to happen in September when Riverside County switches to the first California Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS).

Riverside County has been a leader in envisioning and developing the new statewide customer-centered platform. When CalSAWS is fully phased in, the automated, integrated eligibility and case management system will support social services customers online in all 58 California counties.

“This will be an exciting improvement,” said Lewis, an employment services counselor and one of more than 50 employee Change Network Champions who will motivate and support users on the new system. “We’re getting employees comfortable with a system that is more user-friendly and accessible.” Users on the new system can expect:

- Advanced automation, enhancing our ability to help even more people.
- Centralized processes, streamlined communication and improved data sharing.
- Upgrades to imaging, task management, system automation and performance, and data collection.
- Simpler inter-county transfers with shared data and ease of participant transition.

Lewis says staff will be able to process cases faster and more efficiently. Employees can learn more about the CalSAWS Migration on the DPSS Program Technology SharePoint page. About 3,000 employees who currently use the C-IV system are expected to begin web-based training on the CalSAWS platform in late summer.

“We’re going to guide our employees every step of the way to ensure a smooth transition,” said Administrative Services Manager Dan Kohn, a project lead for the



Employment Services Counselor II Andrea Lewis is one of the Change Network Champions helping DPSS migrate to the new statewide online welfare system. Lewis works at the Hemet office.

department's implementation and launch. Employees such as Lewis will be on hand to help.

“It's important to accept change and learn new platforms that support our customers and our ability to help them,” Lewis says. “If I can help others move to the new platform, we will all be more successful.”

KEY DATES FOR CALSAWS MIGRATION

- **June-August:** System testing begins
- **July 5-August 27:** Web-based training for Change Network Champions, supervisors, and managers
- **August 30-September 24:** Web-based training for staff

ADULT SERVICES SPECIALIST HONORED AS WOMAN OF THE YEAR

She's an advocate for victims of financial fraud and leads an award-winning team to help get the homeless off the streets. For her dedicated work, Michaela Williams with Adult Services received this year's Woman of the Year award for California's 31st Senate District.

"I'm honored and most importantly, I'm honored to do this work," Williams said. "Protecting vulnerable adults is why I come to work every day."

The Woman of the Year event was founded in 1987 in celebration of Women's History Month. Each March, senators and assembly members recognize women who are making a difference in communities across the state and invite them to the State Capitol. This year, honorees were recognized in an online celebration.

Williams coordinates a specialized team of medical, behavioral health, social services, law enforcement, and housing authority professionals who have received national recognition for helping homeless seniors get into stable housing.

"Ms. Williams has helped get justice for those who've been financially



Senior Community Program Specialist Michaela Williams holds her Woman of the Year award at the County Administrative Center in downtown Riverside. At left, Assistant Director of Adult Services Todd Bellanca; at right, DPSS Managing Director Jennifer Claar.

exploited and has played a critical role in getting resources and support for our most vulnerable residents during this pandemic," said State Senator Richard Roth, who selected Williams for the award.

Williams grew up in Cambridge, England, and came to California in 1989. In 1999, she started working for Riverside County and in 2005, she shifted to Adult Services where she's a Senior Community Program Specialist. Williams is a supervisor

with the C.A.R.E. Program (Curtailling Abuse Related to the Elderly) and leads the department's annual Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Symposium.

"We congratulate Michaela on her well-deserved award. She has brought key community partners together to meet the complex needs of at-risk seniors and raise awareness about adult abuse and neglect," said Todd Bellanca, assistant director of Adult Services.



IEHP presented Riverside County DPSS Regional Manager Matt Daniels (at center) with a plaque honoring his ACAP Honorable Mention Award at a recent Governing Board Meeting. At left, IEHP CEO Jarrod McNaughton; at right, IEHP Governing Board Chair and Riverside County Second District Supervisor Karen Spiegel.

SELF-SUFFICIENCY REGIONAL MANAGER EARNS NATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN ADVOCACY AWARD

Self-Sufficiency Regional Manager Matteu (Matt) Daniels was recently recognized for his decade-long commitment to getting underserved populations access to healthcare.

Each year, the Association for Community Affiliated Plans (ACAP) recognizes individuals who go above and beyond to help vulnerable populations receive access to safety net health programs. This year, Daniels earned an honorable mention award from ACAP, a trade association representing 78 nonprofit health plans across the country.

In a nomination letter to ACAP, Jarrod McNaughton, IEHP CEO, commended Daniels for being a tireless advocate of Medi-Cal, California's Medicaid program, and the populations it serves in Riverside County. About one in three of the county's 2.5 million residents relies on Medi-Cal for health insurance coverage.

"For a community-based health plan to thrive, partners like Matt are essential," said McNaughton. "Matt fights with passion and purpose to ensure care and support for more than 870,000 Medicaid eligible individuals in Riverside County."

McNaughton highlighted several original projects and key initiatives that Daniels and his team collaborated on with IEHP. These included developing processes to help members retain benefits, collaboration to reinstate more than 1,000 Medi-Cal recipients who were mistakenly disenrolled during the pandemic, and efforts to better support various groups by leveraging data.

In recognition of his honorable mention, Daniels was presented with a plaque and has been invited to attend this year's Annual ACAP CEO Summit in June.

"Thank you to IEHP for the nomination and to ACAP for recognizing me and Riverside County DPSS with this honorable mention. It is our mission to serve our communities and to establish partnerships with agencies, such as IEHP, with the goal of exceptional service delivery. Many wonderful, dedicated people work within DPSS to ensure our partnerships are a success and that our residents receive the healthcare benefits they need."

Matt Daniels
Regional Manager



Riverside County’s Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Workforce Solutions Department dispatched its 12-station RV unit to serve customers experiencing homelessness while the Lake Elsinore offices are closed for repairs.

PARTNERS PROVIDE A WAY TO CONTINUE OFFERING ESSENTIAL SERVICES

When smoke and water damages forced the Lake Elsinore offices to close for repairs in March, county partners rolled out reinforcements to make sure customers experiencing homelessness could still access emergency help.

“We are very grateful to our county partners at HHPWS for prioritizing the needs of our vulnerable neighbors and stepping in to make sure essential services continue uninterrupted at this site,” said Marianna Sarmiento, assistant director of Administrative Services at DPSS.

The Mobile Workforce Development Center is open during business hours next to the Lake Elsinore offices while facility repairs are under way. The county’s Department of Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Workforce Solutions (HHPWS) dispatched the sprawling RV with 12 workstations to assist during the building closure.

Repairs of the Lake Elsinore building are expected to take a few months, at least. Non-emergency customers are being redirected to offices in Temecula and Perris or are being encouraged to access services online or by telephone.

EMPLOYEE OVERCOMES OBSTACLES TO BECOME FRAUD INVESTIGATOR

When Samantha Reilly attended a job shadow program with the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) a few years ago, she knew she wanted to become an SIU investigator. She expected a challenge but couldn’t have anticipated the impending obstacles.

herself. She was determined, though, and worked through the injury. Yet another roadblock came in November when she contracted COVID-19.

Reilly, a former supervisor with Children’s Services in Hemet, worked to get in top physical condition and complete a series of requirements to become eligible to be hired as a Fraud Investigator. Then, while training through the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department Basic Academy more than a year ago, Reilly suffered an injury that forced her to withdraw from the program.

“It was one setback after another but she persevered,” said Chief of Investigations Shawn Ferris.

After completing nearly 1,000 hours of certified law enforcement training, Reilly was sworn-in as a law enforcement officer in late February.

“We congratulate her and are excited to welcome her to our team,” Ferris said.

Reilly will be stationed in the Desert Hot Springs Office and cover investigations in the Desert Region.



From left to right: DPSS Managing Director Jennifer Claar, Assistant Director of Administrative Services Marianna Sarmiento, Investigator Samantha Reilly and Investigations Chief Shawn Ferris celebrate Reilly being sworn-in on February 25, 2021 at the Ben Clark Public Safety Training Center in Riverside.

SENIORS SAY THANKS TO STAFF

A partnership between the Department of Public Social Services and Office on Aging is ensuring that thousands of Riverside County seniors are getting scheduled for their COVID-19 vaccinations.

Employees from both agencies are staffing a call center during business, evening, and weekend hours to help seniors schedule appointments at vaccination clinics across the county.

Public Health officials prioritized seniors for the vaccine earlier this year due to their increased risks of health complications from the disease. Since the call center launched in February, almost 50,000 customers have been contacted by phone and nearly half have been scheduled for their shots.

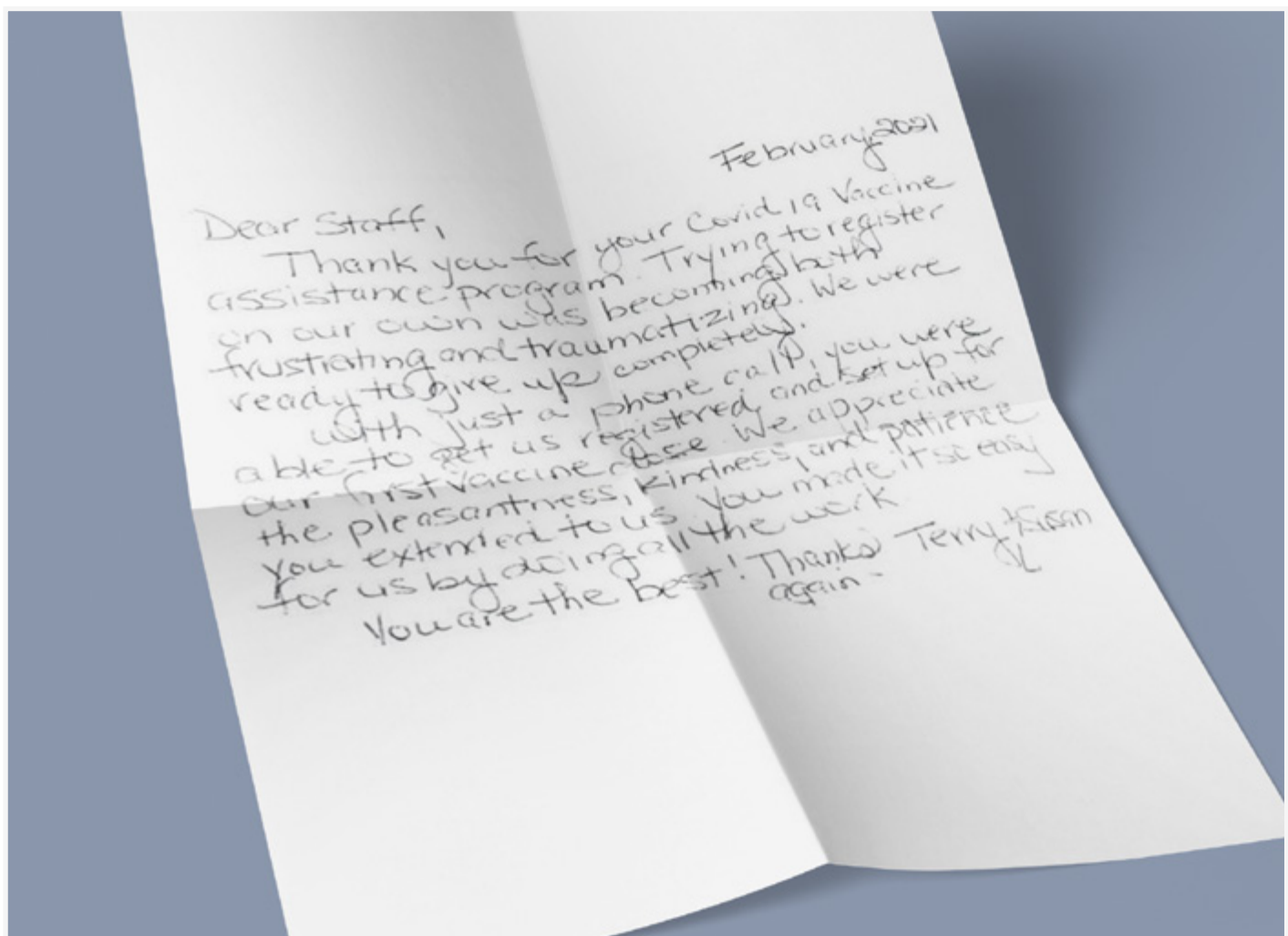
“What an awesome accomplishment when we partner together,” said Jennifer Claar, managing director of DPSS.

“Our customers are always best served through a spirit of service and collaboration, especially now when many are experiencing isolation and uncertainty.”

Customers are expressing gratitude for the help they’re getting through the call center, agreed Jewel Lee, executive director of Office on Aging.

“Thank you, all, for this meaningful partnership,” Lee said. “Reducing the health risks COVID-19 poses to our seniors will allow them to begin reconnecting to their loved ones, friends and communities.”

Riverside County residents who are age 60 or older, have multiple medical conditions, and/or have challenges navigating the vaccine registration portal should call the Office on Aging for assistance at 951-867-3895.



SHARE YOUR STORIES WITH DPSS NEWS

We hope you've enjoyed the April edition of DPSS News! Sharing your stories and highlighting the positive contributions you make to individuals and communities is the best part of our job. With more than 4,000 DPSS professionals demonstrating compassion, dedication, and a commitment to improving lives, we have many wonderful stories to share.

Would you like to see your story in a future issue of DPSS News? We'd love to tell it! For consideration, send your stories, reflections and pictures with us to dpssinfo@rivco.org.

Kimberly, Gene, Angela, Tina, Sydney

MISSION

Riverside County Department of Public Social Services is dedicated to supporting and improving the health, safety, independence and well-being of individuals and families.

VISION

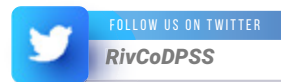
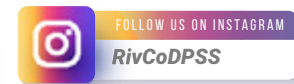
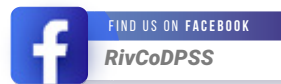
An innovative organization where caring professionals collaborate to provide the most effective solutions to customers.

VALUES

Accountability, Collaboration, Respect, Diversity, Integrity, Customer Focus

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RIVERSIDE COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

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