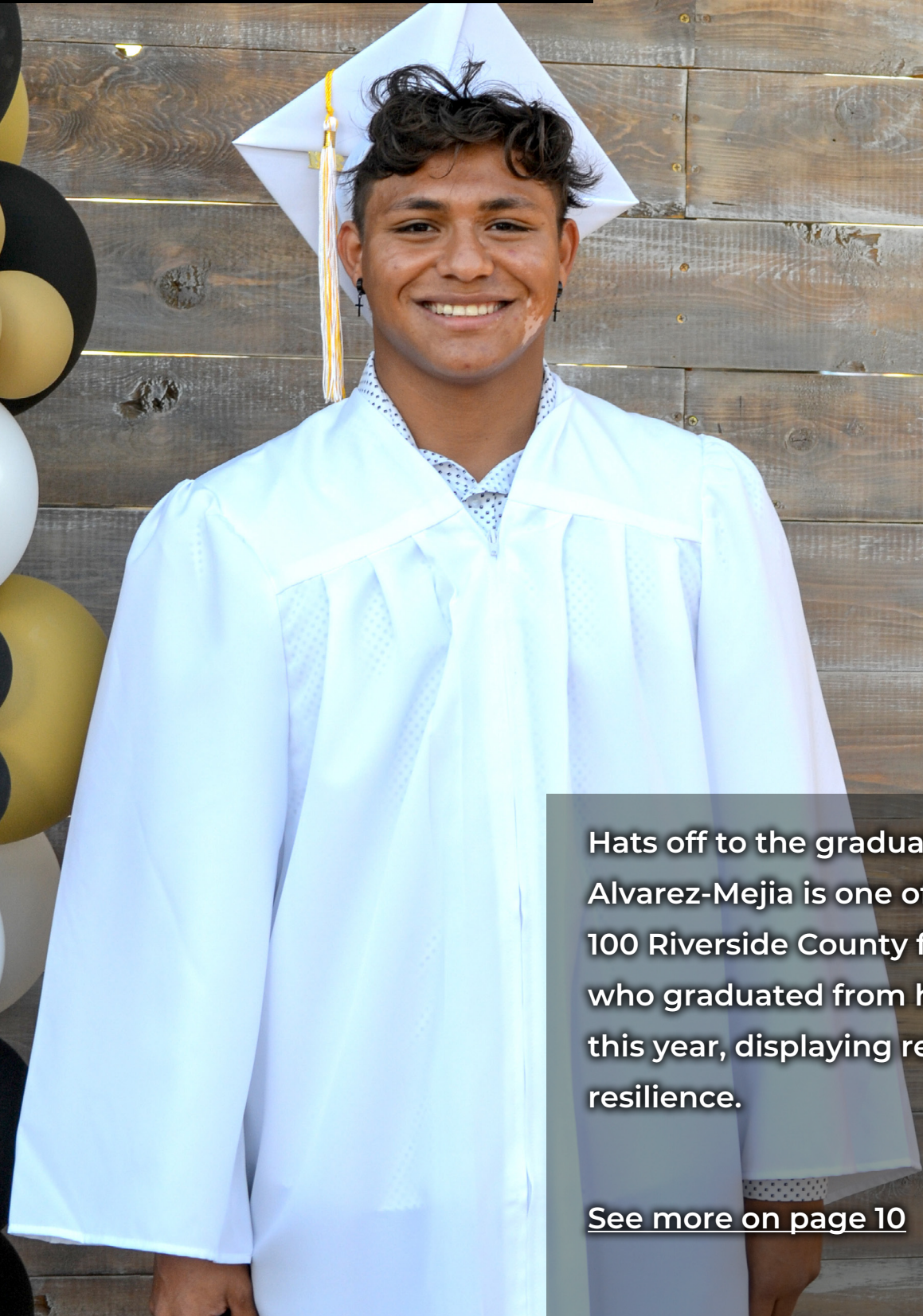


DPSS NEWS

SUMMER 2021



Hats off to the graduates! Kevin Alvarez-Mejia is one of more than 100 Riverside County foster youth who graduated from high school this year, displaying remarkable resilience.

[See more on page 10](#)



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Staff:

June is a special time when our nation has chosen to observe a historical moment when the last enslaved people in the Confederacy became free. The spirit of this day is important as we actively address racism and racial inequity, and work to overturn negative implicit biases within ourselves and our systems. In the words of Vice President Harris: “We have come far, and we have far to go...It is also a day for us to reaffirm and dedicate ourselves to action.”

June is also the month when we celebrate Father’s Day, knowing that at DPSS we celebrate dads and moms every day. A loving parent can positively shape the well-being of a child for an entire lifetime. This June, we thank all the dads in our own DPSS family who fill that vital role for a child. Strengthening children and families is at the core of our mission and our mission unites us as an organization.

Actions matter. Over the past couple weeks, my leadership team and I had the opportunity to meet during your division meetings. We took heart in your enthusiasm and support for development of a strategic plan to guide our journey to becoming a world class learning organization. We also took your suggestions to heart about ways we can improve and grow. The feedback you continue to provide is essential to fostering a culture of inclusion, engagement, trust, and transparent communication.

You have my commitment that our conversations are just the beginning. In coming weeks, we will take a deeper dive into priority objectives, implement some of your recommendations, and put a formal structure in place to obtain your feedback regarding the things we need to do to advance our mission. By listening to one another with open hearts and minds, we are creating an environment where being a world class learning organization is not just possible — but probable. Thank you for all that you do and, once again, happy Juneteenth and Father’s Day!

In partnership,

SAYORI BALDWIN

Assistant County Executive Officer—Human Services



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JUNE IS PRIDE MONTH

In June, we celebrate the LGBTQ+ community, reflect on progress toward inclusion and recognize work that still needs to be done.

WHAT'S CURRENT

IHSS PUBLIC AUTHORITY GOES VIRTUAL TO HIRE MORE CAREGIVERS

An online job fair on June 1 boosted Public Authority's efforts to deal with a big need — finding more in-home caregivers for the growing aging and disabled population. Public Authority's goal is to hire 1,000 in-home caregivers in Riverside County.

One in every five of Riverside County's 2.5 million residents is age 60 or older, and it's a population that's projected to double in coming decades. That makes In Home Supportive Services more vital than ever in the efforts to help older community members and those with disabilities remain safely in their homes.

Of the 50 people registered for the all-day hiring event, eight of them applied. The online forum, which Riverside County Workforce Development helped set up, provided job seekers with live chat to get questions answered, details about available positions, and a link to apply.

"This is important, rewarding work that makes a difference in peoples' lives," said Senior Community Program Specialist Tiffany Nelson, part of the Public Authority team who managed the event. "We're considering another hiring event like this soon because the need is truly great and we're continuously looking at a variety of ways to meet that need."

DPSS employees who know anyone interested in becoming an IHSS caregiver can encourage them to apply by contacting Public Authority at 888-960-4477 Mon. to Fri. from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



Dana White with his IHSS caregiver Diane Long outside White's home in Corona.

W.E.C.A.R.E CONFERENCE ENCOURAGES STAFF TO ‘UNMASK’ THEIR POTENTIAL



Children's Social Services Supervisor Tamera Trotter was the emcee at the W.E.C.A.R.E. conference.

Unmask your potential! DPSS leaders and motivational speakers took that theme to heart as they celebrated the department's employees at the 2021 W.E.C.A.R.E conference in June.

W.E.C.A.R.E began more than 30 years ago — in October 1990. This year's online conference, designed to boost employee morale, job satisfaction and self-esteem, also encouraged self-care and authenticity.

"Think about your 'why' in this job. We care about you. You are our biggest asset," Managing Director Jennifer Claar told attendees.

The conference saw its highest attendance ever. Nearly 1,000 employees participated virtually over

four sessions in June in contrast to the 250 or 300 employees who historically attended in-person events.

"It was an exciting conference. The guest speakers were so uplifting. We needed this encouragement," said Intake Specialist Pamela Reed.

Director Sayori Baldwin praised employees for their adaptability and acknowledged how expanded technology was one positive outgrowth of the pandemic. She highlighted how technology will play a growing role in a department with more than 4,000 employees at 40 locations across a 7,300-square mile county.

"I celebrate you all and everything you've accomplished during this pandemic and recovery,"

said Baldwin, who thanked the W.E.C.A.R.E. committee for its outstanding work.

Leaders also expressed appreciation for W.E.C.A.R.E. executive sponsor Renee Sauve, a deputy director in the Self Sufficiency division. Sauve led W.E.C.A.R.E. for the last three years. The 2021 conference is her last as she plans to retire in December after 31 years with the department.

Tamera Trotter, who emceed the conference, applauded employees for the hope they provide year-round to individuals and families. Trotter introduced three motivational speakers who shared stories of childhood abuse and addiction battles but found purpose in life through support from others and positive thinking.

PUBLIC AUTHORITY EMPLOYEES BOND OVER BOOKS

Reading a good book can help you relax, re-charge and open your mind to ideas you've never thought of. It's doing exactly that for some IHSS Public Authority employees — and helping them bond, too.

Late last year, with the help of DPSS's Morale Committee, Supervisor Alejandra Juarez-Espinosa started the IHSS Public Authority book club, known as No Shelf Control. The club is currently reading their third book *Of Women and Salt* by Gabriela Garcia. Before that, they read *The Time in Between* by Maria Duena and *Mexican Gothic* by Silvia Moreno-Garcia.

Books are selected by employees in the club who are chosen at random. Juarez-Espinosa typically guides the discussion and has a list of questions or topics to discuss to encourage conversation. All genres are welcomed.

"It's exposed us to new topics for discussion, and some employees say it's improved their self-care," says Juarez-Espinosa.

The club, which is open to all Public Authority employees, consistently attracts more than a dozen staff members and meets online every few months. The next meeting is in July.

"I applaud Alejandra and others involved in this club," says IHSS Public Authority Executive Director Eva Krottmayer. "I was also fortunate to join a meeting and enjoyed the lively discussions and different opinions. This book club has provided employees support and helped staff bond during the pandemic."



Social Services Practitioner Sarah Rosenberger reads *The Time in Between* by Maria Duenas, one of the three books read so far in the IHSS Public Authority Book Club.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
ALEJANDRA JUAREZ ESPINOSA AT AJESPINO@RIVCO.ORG**

OFFICE REFRESH

The Administration building on County Circle Drive in Riverside is getting new paint and carpeting. Staff spent weeks boxing up their offices and filing cabinets to prepare for the refreshing of the administrative headquarters.

Crews now are scraping away wallpaper. Dark maroon walls are disappearing beneath bright white and soothing blue paint. Faded decorations are being carted off to storage facilities. The overhaul is scheduled to be done in midsummer.



Left: Wilson Segura, administrative services manager with RADs Unit packs up filing cabinets containing years of information about the department. **Right:** Leticia Fortunato, DPSS secretary, moves files in preparation for the interior refresh.



DPSS executives participate in a huddle board to help determine strategic initiatives for the department.

CHARTING A ROADMAP TO THE FUTURE



In May, dozens of directors and managers attended a two-part retreat to lay out a strategic plan that supports DPSS's priorities: Operational Excellence, Workforce Development, and Customer Service Partnerships.

Juan Perez, chief operating officer for the Riverside County Executive Office was the keynote guest on the second morning. Perez, who has dedicated 30 years to public service, described the work of DPSS as “beyond than meaningful...tremendous...and life changing.”

As part of strategic planning process, DPSS leadership teams have also been meeting with staff to collect input that will help them draft a roadmap for the department's future. Stay tuned for much more to come!



Riverside County's Chief Operating Officer Juan Perez addressed the attendees in May at DPSS's strategic planning retreat.

TOP INNOVATOR

WITH JENNIFER CLaar



For each publication, Jennifer Claar recommends a staff member or team to be spotlighted: an individual or group who demonstrates the spirit of innovation and learning. Claar has her MSW and PHD in Social Welfare from University of California, Los Angeles, and has led several innovative initiatives in her more than 20 years with the department. “A TOP culture is supported by a spirit of innovation and learning that should be recognized and celebrated,” Claar says.



Blythe’s Self-Sufficiency team gathers outside the DPSS office off Hobson Way. From left to right: Julie Sandoval, Maria Hernandez, Lindsey Boyens, Janiece LeVeck, Krysta Sanchez, Anna Phipps and Laura Hernandez.

TEAM BLYTHE’S HEART FOR COLLABORATION AND COMPASSION FOR COMMUNITY DRIVES INNOVATION

JENNIFER CLaar’S TOP PICK FOR SUMMER: SELF-SUFFICIENCY TEAM, BLYTHE

Amidst vast desert agriculture fields and remote mountains, rests Blythe — a city on the eastern border of Riverside County next to the Colorado River and state of Arizona. To the 8.5 million vehicles that hurl past on I-10 each year, this city of 20,000 might be footnote on the map. But a global pandemic and a small Self-Sufficiency team proved that Blythe is big.

When COVID-19 hit early last year, public health orders shuttered businesses to reduce the spread. Mom-and-pop shops closed. Unemployment skyrocketed. Households struggled to pay for food, housing, and medical care. Blythe’s Self-Sufficiency office — staffed by many team members who are also residents of Blythe — was suddenly overwhelmed by neighbors in need.



“WE HELD ON TO EACH OTHER LIKE WE WERE FLOATING IN AN OCEAN. WHERE ONE HAD A WEAKNESS, ANOTHER HAD A STRENGTH. WE RELIED ON ONE OTHER AND COMMUNICATION TO GET OUR JOBS DONE.”

Krysta Sanchez
Eligibility Technician II, Blythe

“I was processing applications as if I were on the other end. Many customers were out of their element applying for assistance they did not want. I treated them like I would want to be treated — with compassion and respect,” recalls Laura Hernandez, eligibility technician II (ETII).

Her colleague, Krysta Sanchez, also an ETII, remembers crying with some applicants: “People who’d built businesses from the ground up lost everything. They were embarrassed. We let them know this is what we are here for.”

Overall, Riverside County with 2.5 million residents experienced a 20% increase in self-sufficiency applications in 2020, even as DPSS reduced in-person lobby hours and shifted most of its 4,300 employees to telework. The Blythe office was already down a supervisor and

Eligibility Technician III due to attrition. The pandemic was bringing new challenges to Self-Sufficiency teams countywide.

“We were seeing a high rate of denied applications that should have been accepted, lost time on benefits, and customers coming back,” Deputy Director Brandi Ramos says.

In the first quarter of 2021, program leaders engaged some offices and staff at all levels. They observed processes, analyzed data, and tested solutions using Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA). The process determined that missed appointments and failure to provide verification were the top reasons CalFresh applications were being rejected.

Now, staff call customers 24 to 48 hours ahead of their appointments to verify the appointment time and remind them what documents they

need to bring. A new Amazing Race themed challenge is helping teams continue their focus on improving application approval rates. Between March and April, mighty Team Blythe achieved the greatest increase in application approvals out of all Self-Sufficiency teams: 6.6%

“I want to praise them,” says Jose Beltran, regional manager. “Being down a seasoned supervisor and an eligibility technician III could have been a recipe for disaster, but it was completely the opposite. The Blythe team came together and said, ‘We’re going to get this done.’”

No longer is the Blythe Self-Sufficiency office on Hobson Way carrying a smaller caseload than other offices that serve larger regions, Beltran points out. “They are a very small office and they are collaborating with two desert cities to carry the same workload.”




“TEAM BLYTHE DOES NOT IDENTIFY A CHALLENGE AS AN OBSTACLE. NOT ONLY WERE THEY ADJUSTING TO A HIGHER APPLICATION VOLUME OF 20%, BUT THEY PARTICIPATED IN HELPING OUR OTHER DESERT CITIES THAT WERE RECEIVING MORE APPLICATIONS.”

Jose D. Beltran
Regional Manager
Self-Sufficiency Services



Elizabeth Young (center), 18, and her parents attend the 2021 Riverside County Foster Youth Class graduation celebration on June 9 at Harvest Christian Fellowship Church in Riverside. (Photo courtesy of Skyler Holt)

FOSTER YOUTH OVERCOME YEAR TO ACHIEVE GRADUATION MILESTONE

 year of adversity did not deter 18-year-olds Kevin Alvarez-Mejia, Isiah Ortiz, and Elizabeth Young from accomplishing their academic goals. They are three of more than 100 foster youth who completed high school and celebrated their hard-earned success during an in-person graduation event at Harvest Christian Fellowship Church in Riverside on June 9.

“This past year has not been easy with online learning and being isolated at home away from my peers,” said Young, who graduated from Banning High School on June 17 and plans on attending California State University, San Bernardino in the fall to study business. “I’ve been excited

about this,” Young says about the event.

The outdoor gathering brought together graduates and their friends, families, social workers, faith-based leaders, service providers, and other stakeholders. The festive evening would not have been possible without the collaborative efforts of community-based partners including 12 local churches. Several photographers also volunteered their time to capture images of the graduates who proudly donned black or white caps and gowns.

Each graduate received a personalized basket filled with gifts worth up to \$75, a candy lei, and several gift cards. Hosted by Harvest, this year’s celebration theme was “The tassel was worth the hassle.”



Kevin Mejia-Alvarez, 18, plans to attend California Baptist University and major in history and Spanish. (Photo courtesy of Skyler Holt)

“Our heart is to serve the community,” said Mark Arenas, director of outreach and events at Harvest. “Considering all the challenges these kids face, we wanted to come alongside and do our part to serve them.”

Sayori Baldwin, assistant county executive officer of Human Services and DPSS director, commended the graduates for their resiliency, resourcefulness, adaptability, and persistence.

“As you move forward, this entire community is here to assist you,”

Baldwin said while addressing the graduates at Harvest. “Please don’t hesitate to ask for assistance.”

Ortiz, a graduate in attendance, shared that he was the first of six siblings to earn a high school diploma. Despite his own personal struggles, being behind in credits, and the coronavirus, the 18-year-old was delighted when he found out he had met the requirements to graduate.

“I am proud of myself!” exclaimed Ortiz. “This is my moment.”



Isiah Ortiz (left), 18, with social worker Cristal Ramirez, SSP II, during the celebration.

Thank you, community partners!

- Centerpoint Church, Murrieta
- CrossWord Christian Church, Moreno Valley
- Eden Lutheran Church, Riverside
- Faith Lutheran Church, Riverside
- Harvest Christian Fellowship Church, Riverside
- Immanuel Lutheran Church, Riverside
- Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP)
- La Sierra University Church of the Seventh-day Adventists, Riverside
- New Beginnings Community Church, Norco
- Olive Branch Church, Corona
- Riverside Woman’s Club
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Riverside
- Trinity Lutheran Church, Riverside
- Victoria Presbyterian Church, Riverside
- Youth Advisory Council from Supervisor Hewitt’s Office, District 5

A DECADE OF TRANSFORMING DREAMS INTO DIPLOMAS

The room where Project Graduate began was tiny, but the impact on at-risk foster youth in Riverside County has been mighty.

Ten years ago, a group of concerned professionals met in J-5 of the Riverside Juvenile Court to devise a plan. They intended to find a way to help foster youth who did not have a parent or guardian to advocate for their educational goals. The plan was called “Project Graduate.”

Since then, there have been more than 30 graduates enrolled in the program who have successfully completed high school and furthered their education by attending a community college, culinary school or four-year university.

Potential participants are selected by a committee based on specific criteria such as below-average GPA and not having a permanency plan. The youth are then contacted and can decide whether they'd like to be part of the program. In turn, the foster youth acquire a robust support system to help them complete their GED or high school diploma. They are carefully matched to a mentor — called an educational representative — who reports to the court about their academic progress. Lawyers and their staff volunteer to become court-appointed mentors.

Therefore, participating youth are sponsored by the court, the Riverside County Bar Association, DPSS Children's Services, the Juvenile Defense Panel, and the Office of County Counsel. They hold monthly discussions to address the needs of



Nevaeh Hall celebrates graduation at the Project Graduate ceremony held at Crestmore Manor on June 30.

each minor and strategize ways to help them overcome any obstacle they face in order to graduate.

“This past year was especially hard due to the pandemic which has presented many unforeseen challenges that these young people had to confront,” said Sherry Jansen, Project Graduate’s in-house coordinator and a social services supervisor in Children’s Services. “But they were determined. We are excited to see them graduate and feel they truly deserve some pomp and circumstance.”

An annual luncheon is held to celebrate the completion of the program. Last year, there were two graduates who were honored virtually via Zoom.

This year, the ceremony will be

held at the Crestmore Manor in Jurupa Valley on June 30 at noon. Five graduates are expected to receive a commemorative plaque, a laptop, and a cash gift totaling the number of incentive points they earned throughout the program. Youth can earn points by attending class, maintaining a high GPA, and participating in leadership or volunteer opportunities.

“We have learned from our youth how hard it is for them to see a path to graduating from high school,” said Brian Unitt, Project Graduate’s steering committee chair and attorney at Holstein, Taylor & Unitt in Riverside. “Project Graduate helps change that perception. The students begin to believe in themselves and their futures. We help them see how they can turn their diplomas into a plan to achieve their dreams.”

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT PROJECT GRADUATE OR TO BECOME A MENTOR, PLEASE VISIT RIVERSIDECOUNTYBAR.COM/FOUNDATION/PROJECT-GRADUATE.

VOLUNTEERS CREATE MORE THAN 100 GRADUATION BASKETS FOR THE CLASS OF 2021



It was all hands on deck to bring support and love to foster youth graduating high school this year as Children's Services social

workers and community partners joined together to assemble gift baskets.

In early June, the group put baskets together and collected gift cards for more than 100 high school students one week before an in-person celebration at Harvest Christian Fellowship Church.

More than 10 community partners, including many churches, contributed to the baskets which included household items, school supplies and gift cards. The baskets support foster youth headed to college or independent living. Volunteers gave the baskets to graduates at the Harvest celebration, and social workers delivered the remaining baskets later.

Social Services Supervisor Emilee Tran, one of the DPSS employees who volunteered to assemble the baskets, was happy to honor the students' success.

"I am proud of them, and the whole community is proud of them," Tran said.

Irene Capen, manager of Riverside County's Faith in Motion program, joined the basket-assembling celebration.

As a mother of five, Capen mentioned



Children's Services employees and a community partner show off foster youth graduation baskets inside a room at Children's Services in Riverside. Back row, from left to right: Cynthia Powell, Irene Capen (with Faith in Motion), Emilee Tran, Dominique Vasquez and Carrie Mosiello. Front row, from left to right: Krystal Elliot and Lydia Galvan.

how grateful she is to DPSS and faith-based communities who stepped in to help.

"Ultimately, the end goal is for them to graduate and build a better life for themselves," said Capen. "We are all here for the kids... I am always impressed by the social workers and their enthusiasm and commitment to these kids. Their heart is for these kids."

Carrie Mosiello, DPSS regional manager for Youth and Community Resources, expressed gratitude to co-workers and community partners who've helped foster youth celebrate

an important milestone.

"It's been a hard year for all of us, especially for youth who've struggled with online learning during COVID," she said. "Seeing them accomplish their goals and having this in-person event is huge for us."

Those interested in donating to support foster youth can reach out to Lydia Galvan at LGalvan@rivco.org. Donations from faith-based organizations can be sent to Irene Capen at Faith in Motion at icapen@fosterall.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

Youth in foster care represent one of the most vulnerable and academically at-risk student populations statewide. The 2020 high school graduation rate for foster youth in California public schools was just 58%, compared with 84% for all students, according to the latest data from the California Department of Education.

Source: cde.ca.gov

PARTNERSHIPS STRENGTHEN SAFETY NET FOR AT-RISK ADULTS

JUNE IS ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS MONTH, A TIME TO SPOTLIGHT THE GROWING PROBLEM OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT AGAINST OLDER AND DISABLED ADULTS.



Strong partnerships with like-minded advocates are enhancing Adult Services' ability to help victims of elder abuse with complex needs.

Social workers from Adult Services, alongside Riverside County mental health experts, doctors, and legal experts have forged multidisciplinary teams that safeguard at-risk adults and bring justice to those who have been harmed.

"That holistic approach makes a difference in the lives of our elders," says Adult Services Assistant Director Todd Bellanca. Adult Protective

Services confirmed 6,000 allegations of abuse or neglect against older and disabled adults last year.

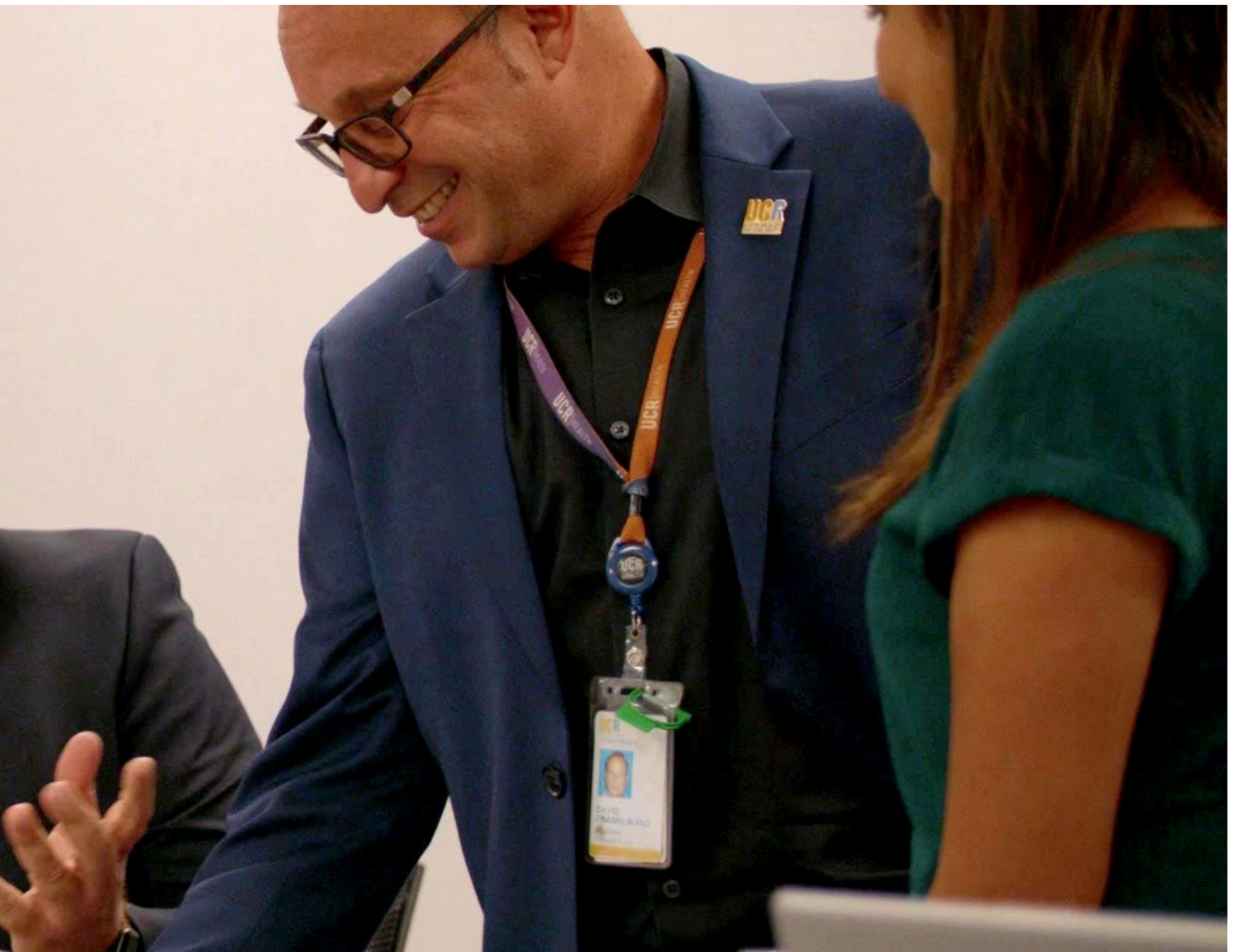
Adult Services leaders spotlighted the partnerships and the growing problem of abuse and neglect during Elder Abuse Awareness Month in June. In Riverside County, one of every five of its 2.5 million residents is 60 years or older — a population expected to double in coming decades.

Financial exploitation is among the most common types of abuse affecting seniors, according to attorneys with the District Attorney's office — a core member of the

multidisciplinary team.

"Seniors rely on family members or close personal friends to help manage their money and, unfortunately, people will take advantage of that," said Deputy District Attorney Maureen DuMouchel, who described how caregivers isolate at-risk adults and misuse positions of trust to access bank accounts. "Before a senior knows it, they've basically lost all their money."

When social workers face complex cases involving a criminal investigation or medical concerns, they know they're not alone. The



Dr. Wael Hamade (at left), Geriatric Medicine Division Chair at Riverside University Health System and Associate Director of the Elder Abuse Forensic Center discusses a case at a multidisciplinary team meeting with David Franklin, PsyD., a clinical neuropsychologist at the University of California, Riverside and Director of the Riverside County Elder Abuse Forensic Center.

multidisciplinary team provides experts who step in to help.

During home visits, doctors, mental health providers and social workers come together to get seniors appropriate support. According to Dr. Wael Hamade, Geriatric Medicine Division Chair at Riverside University Health System and Associate Director of the Riverside County Elder Abuse Forensic

Center home visits also identify risk factors and potentially eliminate risks that could lead to hospitalizations or nursing home placement.

“Each representative of the multidisciplinary team is acting in the best interest of vulnerable adults,” says Dr. Hamade. “I believe in what we do.”



WATCH: Adult Services celebrates the partnership that works toward protecting adults from abuse and neglect.

<https://bit.ly/3cDCPb8>



Maricela and Joseph Moore, Riverside County foster parents recognized for their reunification efforts, outside their home.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES RECOGNIZES THOSE WHO DO EVERYTHING THEY CAN TO REUNITE FAMILIES

Joseph and Maricela Moore never imagined themselves becoming foster parents. That changed one evening when they were getting ready for bed and heard a loud knock at their door. A sheriff's deputy stood there with three of their young relatives. The children needed a place to stay while their parents worked some things out.

Despite the surprise, the Moores sprang to action. They quickly bought bunk beds, installed smoke alarms, and fulfilled all other requirements to become an approved resource family home to care for the siblings. "We hit the ground running," said Joseph. "We didn't have jars of peanut butter in the house anymore because our kids are all older, so we started to buy it in bulk."

They were all in. Eventually, the Moores were left with only the youngest of the three siblings who stayed with them for 18 months. During that time, they set up a unicorn-themed room filled with story books, clothes and toys.

Joseph and Maricela did everything they could to continue the two-hour weekly visits with both biological parents and kept the lines of communication open. "We kept encouraging them to complete the process and supported them in any way we could so they could reunify as soon as possible," added Maricela.

Children's Services considers the Moore family "reunification heroes," recognizing their efforts to help reunify their relative with her birth parents. The department is honoring families in June for National Reunification Month. This year's theme is "All in for Reunification 2021."

Reunification is, by far, the permanency option achieved by most children who exit foster care, according to data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System. In Riverside County, there were 1,613 foster children that exited care between April 2020 and March 2021. Of those, 937, or 58.1%, were reunifications.

“When a child is able to reunify, we believe it is an achievement worth celebrating,” said Charity Douglas, assistant director of Children’s Services. “Especially when that means a child is safe, secure, and has the opportunity to thrive, which is what our program hopes to achieve with every case.”

The Moores were not the only ones recognized for their reunification efforts. Akua Birago and Kwame Appiah were two more. This Ghanaian couple specializes in caring for medically fragile children, something they are trained

to do as both are licensed nurses. One child received a kidney transplant while in their care and is now in the process of reunifying.

“We tell their parents we are here to help their child while they work on what they need to do to get them back,” said Birago. “We believe every child deserves to enjoy family life and being back with their biological parent is the most desirable outcome for us all.”

For the Moores, their nest feels empty since their little one went back home. “We miss her, but are glad she is back where she belongs,” said Maricela, who on a recent Friday afternoon was taking out some toys and preparing her old room for a scheduled weekend visit. “Luckily, this story has a happy ending.”



To learn more about becoming a foster parent in Riverside County, please call 1-800-665-KIDS (5437).

[Click here for more information on National Reunification Month.](#)

Akua Birago and Kwame Appiah, Riverside County foster parents who were recognized for their reunification efforts in June, stand outside their home with their social worker Judi Ukiru, SSP III.

MEET TWO C.A.R.E. COORDINATORS WITH A LOT OF CORAZÓN

Older and dependent adults in Riverside County are fortunate to have Shirley De Santiago and Karina Mariscal on their side because they both have a lot of *corazón* (heart).

The bilingual community program specialists “show endless passion and determination when assisting and advocating for their clients who have been victims of a scam or a fraud,” says their supervisor Jamie Jones. “They also have a special place in their hearts for the Spanish-speaking community.”

Besides working directly with clients, they also provide educational presentations and facilitate multidisciplinary team meetings where professionals from across the country come together to address complex cases of elder and dependent adult abuse. De Santiago and Mariscal have worked together for more than a year, going wherever they can to get the word out: senior centers, churches, women’s groups, and even schools. “We are willing to go wherever we are invited,” said Mariscal.

Even though the COVID-19 pandemic made outreach a little more challenging, that has not stopped these two dedicated employees. Recently, they presented for the Mexican Consulate and were hosted by TODEC Legal Center on June 17. They were also guests on the second podcast episode of “the Service Station” or “*la Estación de Servicio*.”

During these anti-fraud virtual sessions, they describe services the C.A.R.E. program offers, review common scams, teach how to protect oneself from these types of

“I AM TRULY HONORED AND PROUD TO WORK WITH THESE TWO INDIVIDUALS WHO CONSISTENTLY DEMONSTRATE THEIR COMMITMENT TO SERVING OUR COMMUNITY.”

Jamie Jones
Supervising Social Worker II

fraudulent activities, and provide information on how to report these dishonest schemes. “We want our Spanish-speaking population to know they are not alone, and we are here to help them,” said De Santiago.

C.A.R.E. (Curtiling Abuse Related to the Elderly) provides consumer fraud advocacy support to elder and dependent adult victims of consumer crime in Riverside County. Program staff will reach out to victims, provide assistance in reviewing documents, write letters, complete forms,

identify resources, and provide additional support as needed.

When someone is victimized by a scammer or a fraudulent business transaction, C.A.R.E. coordinators, like Shirley and Karina, provide guidance throughout the whole process, says manager Julie Orozco. “It can be overwhelming and confusing. Luckily, nobody has to do it alone. We have a team to help.”

The goals of these services are to guard and retain assets, preserve client dignity, protect privacy, and prevent future abuse from occurring. Adult Protect Services investigates an average of 300 allegations of financial abuse each month. Of these, approximately 28% involve a scam.

“*No queremos asustarles, sino informarles,*” said Mariscal recently, emphasizing that their objective is to inform rather than scare anyone. “Education is power. The more people know, the less likely there are to fall for a scam,” she added.



Karina Mariscal



Shirley De Santiago

Submit ideas for future podcasts to dpssinfo@rivco.org and keep your eyes (and ears) open for more information on theServiceStation.



Listen Up!

THE SERVICE STATION | ESTACIÓN DE SERVICIO

“theServiceStation”

AMPLIFIES DPSS

VOICES – ADVOCATES

FOR SENIOR ABUSE

PREVENTION SHARE

THEIR STORIES.

Testing. Testing 1-2-3...Did you hear the news? Our DPSS podcast called “the Service Station” or “la Estación de Servicio” is now available for download on all major platforms such as Apple, Google, and Spotify. The podcast is one of many tools our organization is using to connect with our one million customers in a county of nearly 2.5 million residents and counting.

The monthly podcast is hosted in English by Gene Kennedy and Spanish by Angela Naso, both from the Community and Government Relations team. In coming months, “the Service Station” or “la Estación de Servicio” will be adding special hosts to bring a wider diversity of voices to the microphone that will cover relevant issues that deeply affect our communities.

In June, the DPSS podcast features two fraud and scam prevention experts from Adult Services, Shirley De Santiago and Karina Mariscal, who will offer timely advice about how to keep older adults from being financially exploited and how to recover from losses related to abuse.

“Unfortunately, scams are on the rise and scammers are very crafty,” De Santiago said. “It is vital that the public be educated to avoid becoming a victim.” See the article on the facing page for more about the team helping protect older adults from scams.

DID YOU MISS OUR FIRST EPISODE?

Don't worry! You can listen to Marivel Castañeda from our Community Outreach Branch share how to access CalFresh, the state's largest food assistance program. Just search for theServiceStation on Apple, Google, Spotify, or anywhere you get your favorite podcasts You can also find the DPSS podcast right here: www.buzzsprout.com/1746297. Thank you all for tuning in!

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!

If you are requesting something outside of the established DPSS Computer-Related or Mobility Related Matrices, please include a justification for needing the item/service. This information will help with the decision-making process.

SUBMITTING A SUCCESSFUL TICKET

Guidance for DPSS employees submitting RIVCOHelp/ServiceNow requests

If you put in a ServiceNow request that was rejected by TSS, don't get discouraged — we still love you! In fact, we want you to try again, but this time with a little help from us.

Barbara Simpson-Lara, a senior administrative services analyst with Technology Support Services created this handy reference list that covers some of some of the frequently asked questions we get from people who either aren't sure how to submit their request — or stumped as to why it was rejected.

- Computer issues. If your computer isn't working, please open an incident through RivCoHelp or contact the RCIT Help Desk at (951) 955-9900. Your computer-related equipment must be evaluated by an RCIT Field Technician.
- Ergonomic equipment. Only DPSS Human Resources Compliance Unit can request Ergonomic Equipment (including replacements), so please contact them for these requests.
- Headsets. Currently, DPSS is not issuing wireless headsets or replacement batteries for the wireless headset. If you request

a wireless headset, it will be substituted with a wired headset.

- Mobility equipment & services. If you are experiencing issues with or need to request a cell phone, cell phone accessories, broadband access, or a hotspot, please submit an Incident through RivCoHelp.
- Printers. Per DPSS Executive Management, DPSS Staff are not to take printers home, so any requests for telecommuter printers won't be accepted.

If you're still unsure about your request, just let us know. We're happy to help! For questions about mobility, email mobilityservicedesk@rivco.org. For questions about hardware, email assetsmanagementhelpdesk@rivco.org.

KNOW YOUR NETWORK

When Requesting a computer for new staff, check the right box!

- CWS = Children's Services
- C-IV = Self-Sufficiency Benefits Staff
- DPSS = All Others

CALSAWS CORNER: A Journey To One



Anastasia Wolff will test the functions of the new BenefitsCal system before customers begin using it in September. It's part of Riverside County's migration to CalSAWS, a new statewide online welfare system.

TEAM TESTS NEW STATEWIDE WELFARE SYSTEM BEFORE SEPTEMBER GO LIVE

Before employees and customers switch to a new statewide online welfare system in late September, they can rest assured it'll be thoroughly tested. Eligibility Technician Anastasia Wolff is one of dozens of DPSS employees lending a hand in that effort.

Employees began testing the new California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS) in June. "They're giving us mock cases and scenarios and we have to make sure the system is functioning properly for the county and the customer," said Wolff, who works in the CalWORKS unit, helping families access cash and housing assistance.

Thousands of DPSS employees use the C-IV system to manage their caseload and will switch to CalSAWS in September. Meanwhile, customers will use BenefitsCal to apply for and manage their benefits. It will replace C4Yourself. Wolff will test the BenefitsCal system for 6 weeks starting at the end of July.

"It's exciting! I haven't done anything like this before and will test this from the customer's viewpoint," she said. "I believe it's going to improve efficiency and online customer service."

She'll report to project leaders, informing them on what's working and what may need to be improved.

"Our staff is doing a great job. Many people are working together to make sure the system works correctly to ensure a smooth transition," said Deputy Director Rocio Aguiniga who manages Program Technology, the team overseeing the CalSAWS Migration.

Wolff began with DPSS in 2007, when the C-IV system was pretty new. She's embracing the changes and says customers will see improvements such as the ability to submit online applications for General Assistance and screening tools to help determine which programs to apply for. The enhancements will also help process eligibility faster.

ADDITIONAL CUSTOMER IMPROVEMENTS THROUGH BENEFITSCAL

- Available in 12 languages starting in September (English, Spanish, Armenian, Cantonese, Hmong, Korean, Lao, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Tagalog, & Vietnamese) with an additional 9 languages coming July of 2022.
- Dashboard that provides easy access to benefits information such as EBT balances and Medi-Cal program status.
- Screener tool that helps customers determine what assistance they may be eligible for.

CELEBRATING JUNETEENTH

On June 17, 2021, President Biden signed legislation that officially made Juneteenth a federal Holiday. Here is the proclamation from the White House Briefing Room.



A Proclamation on Juneteenth Day of Observance, 2021

JUNE 18, 2021 • PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS

On June 19, 1865 — nearly nine decades after our Nation’s founding, and more than 2 years after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation — enslaved Americans in Galveston, Texas, finally received word that they were free from bondage. As those who were formerly enslaved were recognized for the first time as citizens, Black Americans came to commemorate Juneteenth with celebrations across the country, building new lives and a new tradition that we honor today. In its celebration of freedom, Juneteenth is a day that should be recognized by all Americans. And that is why I am proud to have consecrated Juneteenth as our newest national holiday.

Juneteenth is a day of profound weight and power.

A day in which we remember the moral stain and terrible toll of slavery on our country -- what I’ve long called America’s original sin. A long legacy of systemic racism, inequality, and inhumanity.

But it is a day that also reminds us of our incredible capacity to heal, hope, and emerge from our darkest moments with purpose and resolve.

As I said on the 100th Anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre, great nations don’t

ignore the most painful chapters of their past. Great nations confront them. We come to terms with them.

On Juneteenth, we recommit ourselves to the work of equity, equality, and justice. And, we celebrate the centuries of struggle, courage, and hope that have brought us to this time of progress and possibility. That work has been led throughout our history by abolitionists and educators, civil rights advocates and lawyers, courageous activists and trade unionists, public officials, and everyday Americans who have helped make real the ideals of our founding documents for all.

There is still more work to do. As we emerge from the long, dark winter of the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, racial equity remains at the heart of our efforts to vaccinate the Nation and beat the virus. We must recognize that Black Americans, among other people of color, have shouldered a disproportionate burden of loss — while also carrying us through disproportionately as essential workers and health care providers on the front lines of the crisis.

Psalm 30 proclaims that “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” Juneteenth marks both the long, hard night of slavery and discrimination, and the promise of a brighter morning to come. My

Administration is committed to building an economy — and a Nation — that brings everyone along, and finally delivers our Nation’s founding promise to Black Americans. Together, we will lay the roots of real and lasting justice, so that we can become the extraordinary country that was promised to all Americans.

Juneteenth not only commemorates the past. It calls us to action today.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR., President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 19, 2021, as Juneteenth Day of Observance. I call upon the people of the United States to acknowledge and celebrate the end of the Civil War and the emancipation of Black Americans, and commit together to eradicate systemic racism that still undermines our founding ideals and collective prosperity.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eighteenth day of June, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-fifth.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR.

JUNE IS PRIDE MONTH



In June 1, 2021, the White House released a statement in which President Biden proclaimed June 2021 as LGBTQ Pride Month, stating, “I call upon the people of the United States to recognize the achievements of the LGBTQ+ community, to celebrate the great diversity of the American people, and to wave their flags of pride high.”

Pride month is a month-long celebration for the LGBTQ+ community. It is a time to celebrate love, freedom, and expression. June is also a time to uplift LGBTQ+ voices, reflect on the progress made toward inclusion and recognize the work that still needs to be done.

LGBTQ+ people often experience disproportionately poor health comes. As a response, the County of Riverside is aligning with statewide efforts to better meet the healthcare and mental health needs of the LGBTQ+ community.

As part of Riverside County's It's Up to Us campaign, the department of Behavioral Health at Riverside University Health System created a resource list for mental health specifically for the LGBTQ+ community. Resources can be found at up2riverside.org/resources/resources-for-lgbtq/

Dear Staff:

Once again, you've inspired us with your many accomplishments and unwavering service to individuals, families and one another before and during the pandemic. Your compassion and spirit of service are a beacon of hope to individuals and families in crisis, and a reminder that we are resilient in our mission to improve the health and well-being of individuals in our communities.

We will be taking a hiatus from publishing the DPSS newsletter over the summertime to focus on production of the 2020-2021 Annual and Strategic Plan reports. We will resume publication in late September. In the meantime, please keep in touch! Email us your story ideas, your pictures, your 'bright news,' or events to DPSSInfo@rivco.org. We want to continue celebrating your great work on our expanding media platforms.

Kimberly Trone, Gene Kennedy, Angela Nasso,
Tina Bellanger, Chelsea Godfrey



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

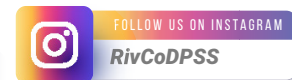
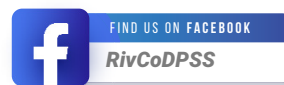
An innovative organization where caring professionals collaborate to provide the most effective solutions to customers.

VALUES

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

CONNECT WITH US!

Stay up to date on all things DPSS by following us on your favorite social media platform.



RIVERSIDE COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

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