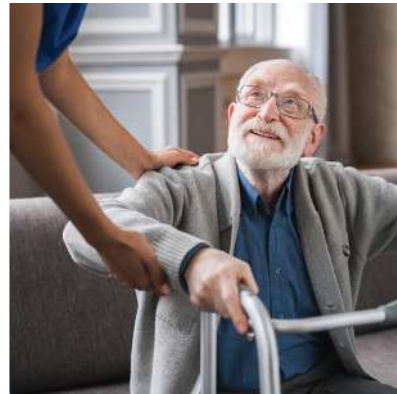


Centennial Edition



# ANNUAL REPORT

2023/24



RIVERSIDE COUNTY DEPARTMENT  
OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES



# CONTENTS



**02** Director's Message

**04** Department Overview

**22** Adult Services Division



**35** IHSS Public Authority

**40** Children's Services Division



**66** Self-Sufficiency Division

**88** Administrative Services Division

**115** Finance & Forecasting Division



**121** DPSS Investigations Unit

**122** DPSS Executive Leadership Team

**123** County Leadership



## Director's Message

### Charity Douglas

### A New Vision for the Next Century of Service

I am pleased to introduce the centennial edition of the DPSS Annual Report. This report celebrates our department's 100-year journey from its founding on July 9, 1923, through Fiscal Year 2023/24 when we served nearly 1.2 million children, adults and seniors in Riverside County. The stories in these pages are not just about the accomplishments of our 4,800-member workforce today, but the enduring impact our cumulative contributions have made to individual lives and communities over many generations. Not often do we find ourselves crossing a bridge from one century to the next as DPSS has done this year. I am honored to be here now, alongside a dedicated and dynamic workforce that continues building on our department's long legacy of service to vulnerable people and communities.

As DPSS embarks upon its next century of service, we do so with a brand new five-year strategic plan in hand and a bold new vision for "Thriving communities where pathways to success are accessible to all, ensuring safety and prosperity." Our vision reflects the strong bonds we are forging with local families and community partners to inspire equitable and accessible services that elevate the health and well-being of all Riverside County residents. I am extremely proud to lead the extraordinary DPSS team into the next 100 years, and to be part of a community that values the safety and stability our social service professionals bring to so many of our neighbors. When one life is strengthened, a community is made stronger.

I truly believe the year ahead holds tremendous opportunities for growth and transformation in the way we deliver services and connect with our communities. Thank you to the many partners and stakeholders who are part of our journey and for helping DPSS write the next chapter of excellence in its service to Riverside County.

▲  
Charity Douglas

“

*I am honored to be here, now, alongside a dedicated and dynamic workforce that continues building on our department's long legacy of service to vulnerable people and communities.*

”



## OUR VISION

Thriving communities where pathways to success are accessible to all, ensuring safety and prosperity.



## OUR MISSION

DPSS is dedicated to supporting and improving the health, safety, independence and well-being of individuals and families.



## OUR VALUES

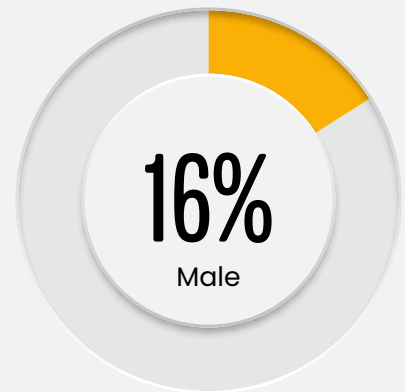
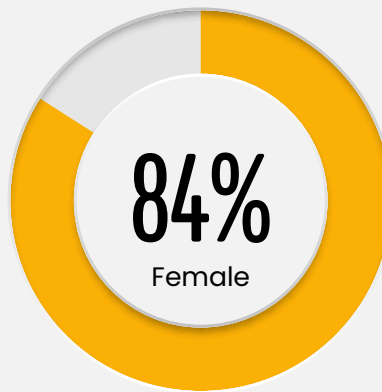
Accountability  
Collaboration  
Respect  
Diversity  
Integrity  
Customer Focus  
Learning



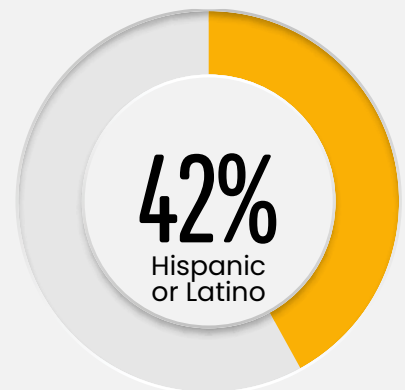
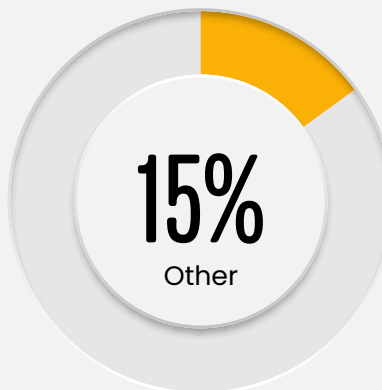
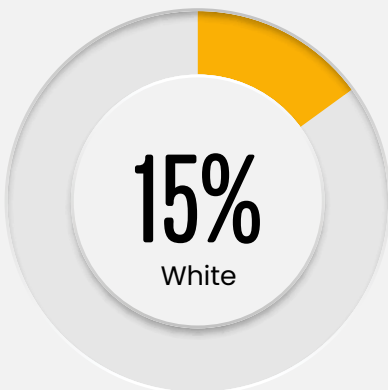
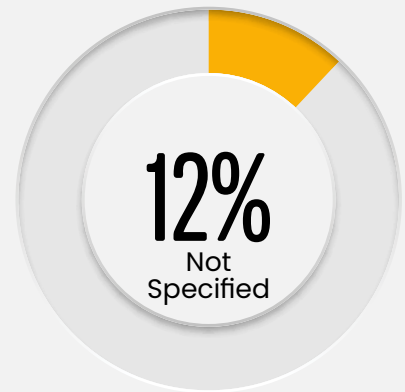
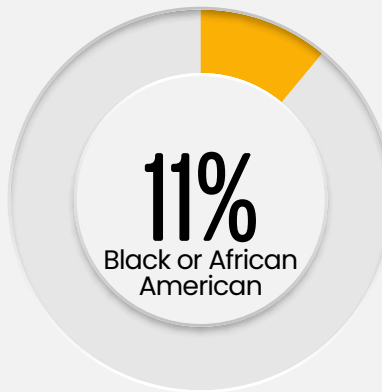
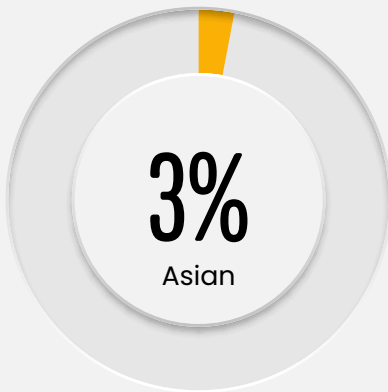
# DPSS Employee Demographics

## *Diverse Workforce*

By Gender ▶



By Race/Ethnicity ▼



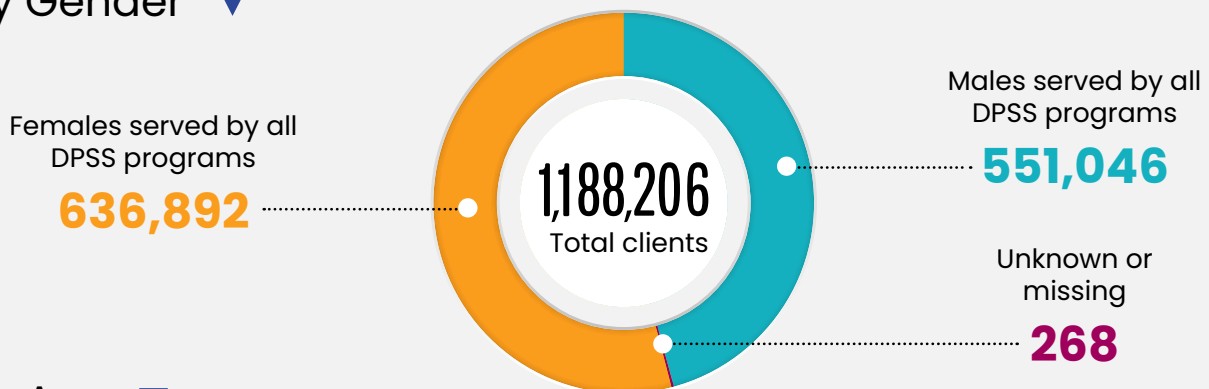
# Breakdown of DPSS Workforce *by Divisions and Special Units*



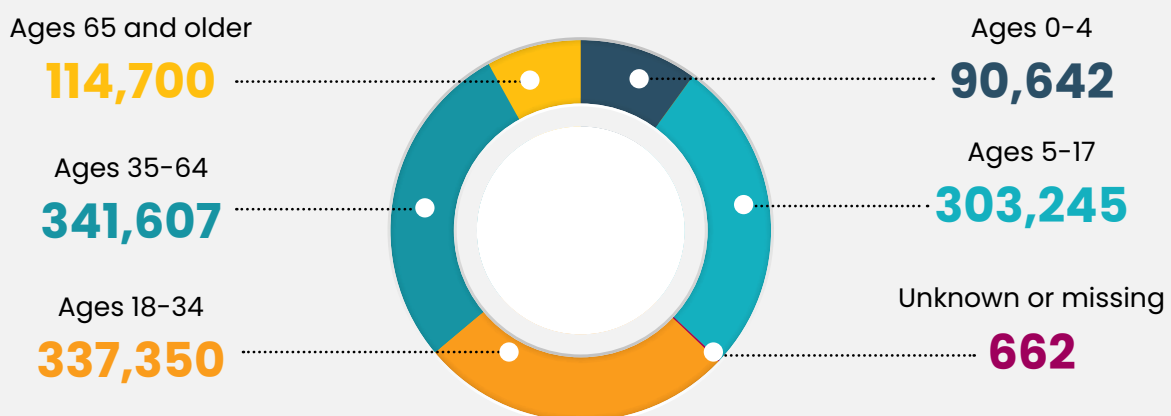
# *Fiscal Year 2023/24*

## Customer/Client Demographics

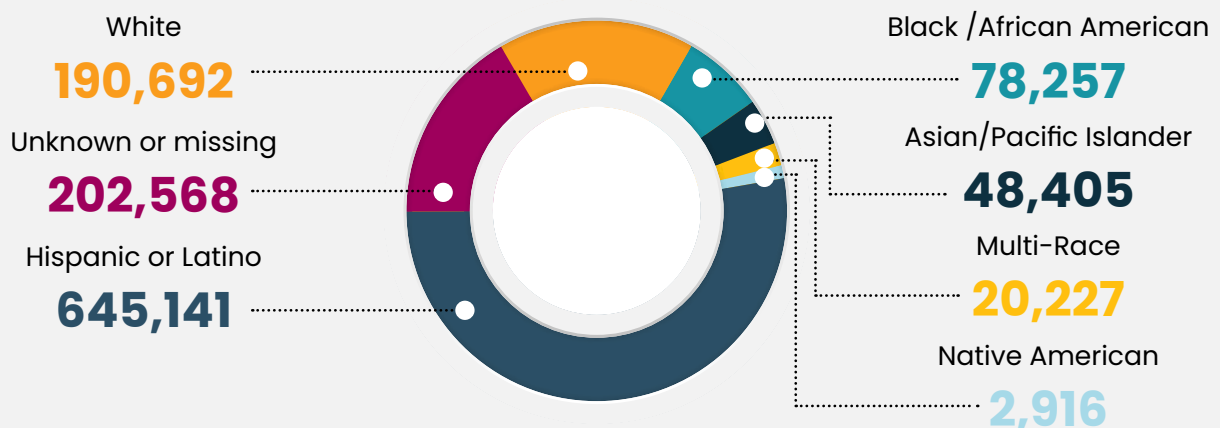
### By Gender ▼



### By Age ▼



### By Race/Ethnicity ▼



**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

relation of from  
point of view.  
**Civil Rights** a  
basic rights tha  
equal treatment  
or re  
what

*In 1973,*

the department expanded its Affirmative Action Program with a focus on hiring Spanish-speaking applicants to align with county labor statistics and reaffirmed its commitment to equal opportunity for all people, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age or national origin. An Affirmative Action Representative is hired to implement and monitor progress.



**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

# *From July 1923 to Today* A Centennial Celebration!

From its founding in 1923 through the Great Depression, World War II, a global pandemic, government policy changes, and economic cycles, the Department of Public Social Services has served generations of Riverside County residents with dignity, professional compassion, and a wide-open door. The department's centennial celebration reminds us of the incalculable contributions our work has made to the well-being of Riverside County residents through all the challenges and changing circumstances of life. From its genesis in the basement of the Riverside Historic Courthouse to serving nearly 1.2 million people a year, the critical mission of DPSS to protect the vulnerable and improve lives throughout Riverside County is steadfast and unchanged.





**1923** – The Board of Supervisors establishes the Riverside Welfare Department on July 9 with an annual operations budget of \$4,425.51. The agency and its two employees, including new **Director Jane Dodge** (left), work from the basement of the **Riverside Historic Courthouse** (left page) primarily to serve children without families.

**1933** – During the Great Depression, California law requires counties to begin providing relief to the poor including healthcare services and general assistance.

**1934** – Riverside County's population reaches 81,000. More than 25,000 county residents are receiving social assistance. The average monthly benefit is \$8.

**1938** – The Welfare Department has 36 employees countywide, some of whom are parttime. Monthly salaries ranged from \$213.75 for the Director and between \$100 and \$150 for case workers.

**1942** – John McIntyre, 30, is appointed to replace the current director who was called up to serve in World War II.

**1945** – The department adds its first child welfare services worker and marks the beginning of Children Services.

**1973** – Riverside County's population is 497,000. The Department of Public Welfare employs 750 employees in ten offices countywide and begins offering childcare assistance. Computers make their very early debut.

**1974** – The Riverside County Department of Public Welfare is renamed Riverside County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) to reflect a shift in focus from welfare to a stronger focus on self-sufficiency.

**1975** – DPSS launches Adult Protective Services to include In-Home Supportive Services with 28 employees, now called Adult Services with 700 social workers and supportive staff.

**2020** – The COVID-19 global pandemic emerges and hits Riverside County in early 2020. The unprecedented event transforms DPSS' traditional business model into a 21st century workplace.

**2024** – With 2.5 million residents, Riverside County is the nation's tenth most populous county. DPSS has a professional workforce of more than 4,800 employees, serving almost 1.2 million residents annually.

*The timeline is a snapshot that reflects only a handful of events. The highlights chronicled are based on available information.*



## *New Five-Year Strategic Plan*

### A Compass for Excellence in the Century Ahead

Input and collaboration from DPSS staff, executive leaders, and county partners provided a solid foundation for the department's new five-year strategic plan, a road map to excellence that was adopted in late 2023. The plan centers upon continuous quality improvement, enhanced communication, a thriving professional workforce, and cohesive partnerships that expand customer access to services and improve their well-being.



The new plan is a living, breathing document that recognizes the department's need for agility and innovation in its next century of service, says DPSS Director Charity Douglas. The plan steers DPSS away from a siloed system of internal and external services and replaces it with seamless pathways supported by shared-information platforms among multiple county partners and coordinated services tailored for the unique needs of each individual and family.

By eliminating barriers and keeping customers in the center of its decision making, Douglas says DPSS and its partners are raising the bar of excellence, improving lives and contributing to a brighter future for all Riverside County residents.

As the strategic plan moves forward, the DPSS Office of Strategy and Project Management is equipping staff and leading implementation as a key partner in the countywide Integrated Services Delivery initiative. During Fiscal Year 23/24, the OSPM team began rolling out Lean Six Sigma training and putting new quality improvement tools into action across the department. Any staff member with an idea is encouraged to suggest areas for evaluation and improvement at their team level or through a SharePoint portal where their recommendations are reviewed by the OSPM. The plan lays out priorities for evaluation and shared learning throughout the implementation, and recognitions of staff who have successfully led projects to improve efficiencies and customer services.

“

*I believe in the power of our dedicated workforce to bring about meaningful change in our practices and services. I am optimistic that through strategic coordination and the unwavering dedication of our teams, we will achieve our mission.*

— Charity Douglas

”



**OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE** – Strengthen and stabilize individuals and families, through timely, quality, and efficient delivery of programs and services.

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT** – Build a learning organization with a high performing and engaged workforce focused on customer centered outcomes.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE PARTNERSHIPS** – Compassionately meet our customers' complex needs through coordinated delivery system.



*Office Assistant III Kesslyn Milo works in a cross-county client information platform to process referrals for DPSS services.*

## County's Integrated Partners Aim for the "North Star" on California's Healthy Places Index



The county-wide Integrated Services Delivery initiative took shape in Fiscal Year 23/24 with DPSS and county partners adopting new processes and information platforms to improve customer experiences and outcomes.

"The purpose of the Integrated Service Delivery system is to streamline our collective ability to best serve customers through cross-departmental collaboration among many county partners," says Barbara Andrade DuBransky, deputy director of the Office of Service Integration at the Riverside County Executive Office.

Andrade DuBransky says departments across the county's Health, Human Services, Public Safety, Public Works and Internal Services portfolios are piloting or designing pilots to test their participation and embed the system known as "RivCoOne" into their operations.

"DPSS has been involved from the beginning," Andrade DuBransky says. Through the "Strengthening Blythe Community" project, the Self-Sufficiency team has forged strong relationships to register residents into integrated services. The In-Home Supportive Services team in Perris has enrolled hundreds of seniors into integrated services. Children's Services is collaborating closely with external partners to support and stabilize at-risk families and improve the experiences of youth and children in foster care. DPSS is planning to add community health workers into its programming in Fiscal Year 24/25 to increase community outreach, and the Hemet Self Sufficiency office is on track to enter the pilot with more DPSS programs entering over time.

"We have set a North Star for ourselves," Andrade DuBransky says. Among California counties, Riverside County ranks in the 39.3 percentile on the Healthy Places Index (HPI). Riverside County's social services and public health leaders have set a goal to increase its HPI by 30 points, rising to the top one-third of the state's 58 counties over the next 30 years.

The HPI tracks and maps data on social conditions that drive health outcomes, such as education, job opportunities, and the environment. Service providers use the neighborhood-level data to prioritize resources in areas most disproportionately impacted by health and racial inequities.





## Aligns with Strategic Goals for Staff and Customers

**T**he DPSS Equity, Access and Opportunity initiative aligns with the department's strategic goal of a strengths-based culture in which learning, growth, engagement, inclusion and diversity are embedded in all policies and practices, says Sean Sullivan, a deputy director in the Self-Sufficiency Division and the leader of the recently formed EAO Steering Committee.

“Creating a culture of belonging and trust that celebrates and values our differences is paramount to a healthy workplace and a satisfied workforce,” Sullivan says. “We want to be an organization where people want to work, thrive, and remain throughout their career.”

The EAO steering committee is made up of representatives from workgroups in each DPSS division, along with representatives from Staff Development and the Office of Communications. In Fiscal Year 23/24 the committee got busy developing communications tools, a new SharePoint site, training modules and plans for staff engagement to launch in calendar year 2025. One priority includes making sure the department's policies and procedures support Equity, Access and Opportunity for all employees and customers, including vendors and service contractors.

The effort aligns with work that's under way in departments across the county, and dovetails with the



Integrated Services Delivery initiative. For example, many DPSS programs are using zip codes to identify underserved neighborhoods and collaborating with partner agencies to link residents to resources and programs that address their needs in a comprehensive and holistic way. Often, households within those zip codes are struggling with complex challenges stemming from poverty and issues that disproportionately impact underserved communities.

“An EAO culture provides a direct positive benefit to the way we do business and benefits all individuals and families,” Sullivan says. “When we are empowering our neighbors in need, everybody wins.”

# Harmony Haven Children and Youth Center *Becomes Focal Point for Services and Healing*

**R**iverside County's first 24-hour transitional shelter for children and youth was licensed by the State of California in Fiscal Year 23/24 — its first full year of operation. During that time, the 48-bed shelter served 734 individual children and youth experiencing disruptions in their foster care placements.

In collaboration with DPSS Children's Services, county and community-based partners are bringing a growing array of wraparound services to the 123-acre campus near Beaumont to stabilize and improve the journey of Harmony Haven's children and youth experiencing trauma from abuse, neglect, behavioral challenges and upheavals in their circumstances.

---

**734** Individual Children and Youth  
Served in Fiscal Year 23/24

---

"Harmony Haven's home-like environment and programs are designed to provide high quality trauma-informed care and supportive services to youth as they navigate a range of issues that have negatively impacted their well-being," says Dana Young, a deputy director and the shelter's top administrator. "Our goal is to impart resilience, hope, and trust, to stabilize these young lives for placement in nurturing environments where they can thrive and pursue their dreams."

Partners such as Riverside University Health System—Behavioral Health, Child Support Services, Probation, Riverside County Sheriff's Office, Beaumont Unified School District and many others are imperative to effectively address the needs of diverse youth and advocating for systemic improvements, Young says. Many of the partners are collaborating to expand resources and community support for youth and staff at the Harmony Haven shelter.

RUHS—Behavioral Health has introduced "Friday Night Live" onsite. The youth-adult led program engages young people in multicultural and prevention activities



## *Harmony Haven Children and Youth Center*

48 beds total. Four cottages that include large bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchens, living space, and office space for staff and security, with flexibility to adjust for population needs. The cottages are on a section of the 123-acre campus of the former Child Help, USA, which Riverside County closed escrow on early in Fiscal Year 23/24.

to promote mental wellness and curtail the use of drugs, alcohol and other substances. RUHS-BH is providing youth with Mobile Crisis Case Management, substance abuse prevention and therapy groups. Community partners are bringing new educational programs to the campus and life skills workshops such as money management, self-care and job skills are underway. Improvements to the campus infrastructure are also in progress.

"Our foster youth deserve and require more than their basic physical needs met, especially in times of crisis," Young says. "Supportive adults and programs like we are bringing together can help them on their path toward adult sufficiency, create a sense of belonging and improve their confidence along the way."



# Office of Health and Wellness

## *Promotes Resilience and Thriving Workplace Culture*



**Top left:** Peer Support Coach Rebekah Taylor, LCSW and OHW Deputy Director Lonetta Richardson Bryan at a staff recess break. **Bottom pictured in order from left to right:** OHW Governance Council members Donald Williams Jr., Ratnesh Prasad, Felix Minjarez, Brenda Vertiz, Rochiele Davis, Steven Prado, Melissa Gaston, Heather Dalmases, Isabel Cervantes, Samantha Lee, Jaime Pineda, Starla Porter, Shatanja (Sha) Hammond, Monica Williams, Michael Spivey. (Feledier Thrower, not pictured)

The Office of Health and Wellness was established in early 2023 with support from the DPSS and Riverside County executive offices, to promote the well-being of social services professionals through confidential coaching, resources, and self-care tools. “The OHW orchestrated a comprehensive array of initiatives for staff throughout Fiscal Year 23/24,” says Deputy Director Lonetta Richardson Bryan, who leads the OHW team. “We are here to help staff flourish, be resilient in their work, and celebrate a thriving culture that recognizes the value our workforce brings to the community.”

The OHW is driven by staff input, which includes a governance council of social service professionals from the Adult’s, Children’s, and Self-Sufficiency divisions. Richardson Bryan says the OHW strives to be inclusive in its engagement and learn from the experiences of all staff. “We have a wonderfully diverse and dynamic workforce,” Richardson Bryan says. “It’s truly an honor to serve professionals who consistently respond to the needs of others and who sometimes find themselves on the frontlines of crisis and trauma.”

The OHW expanded services throughout the year. Peer

“

*It was really nice to go into Recess on lunch break and do some arts and crafts. Peer coach Rebekah was very fun and informative on available services from Office of Health and Wellness.*

— Recent Participant

”

Support Coach Rebekah Taylor, LCSW, began onsite support twice a month for the staff at the Harmony Haven Children and Youth Center. The OHW SharePoint site continues to evolve as a resource for information and scheduling confidential coaching appointments. Combined, these efforts benefited about 2,800 staff members, yielding overwhelmingly positive feedback. Participations expressed appreciation for the mental breaks, stress relief, and internal community- building facilitated by the OHW initiatives and its coaches.

## Fiscal Year Activities *by the Numbers* | 2,800 Staff Engaged in Fiscal Year 23/24

### RECESS EVENTS

26

730+ Participants

### WELLNESS PRESENTATIONS

28

1300+ Participants

### EXTERNAL PRESENTATION PARTNERSHIPS

for Well-Being Institute  
(UC Davis)

50 Participants

### CONFIDENTIAL COACHING SESSIONS

78

101 Participants

### POST-CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSES

20

95 Participants

### TOWNHALL EVENTS

2

900 Total Participants

### WELLNESS WEDNESDAY EMAILS

46

46 Total

# Hues of Health

## Winners

**Left to right:** Peer Support Coach Rebekah Taylor, LCSW, Assistant Director Children's Services Bridgette Hernandez, SSP II Ema Jean Batongmalaque, Self-Sufficiency Eligibility Services Clerk Serenity Pitts, Self-Sufficiency Eligibility Technician William "Alex" Pena, DPSS Director Charity Douglas, Deputy Director OHW Lonetta Richardson Bryan.



**H**ues of Health in June 2024 was the Office of Health and Wellness's first wellness campaign. Staff were invited to illustrate what wellness means to them. The campaign attracted dozens of brightly colored entries from across the department. The special focus provided an opportunity to highlight OHW services and celebrate National Recess at Work month in June. More than 700 staff members, from top executives to line staff, attended OHW recess breaks in Fiscal Year 23/24, as OHW peer support coaches continued expanding their engagement with teams serving in communities across Riverside County

**CONTACT OHW**EMAIL: [OHW@rivco.org](mailto:OHW@rivco.org)

PHONE: 951-791-CARE

SHAREPOINT: Office of Health and Wellness



## Office of Communications



**Left to right:** Media Production Specialist Daniel Medina, TAP Specialist Bamboos Pourgol, DPSS Senior Public Information Officer II C.L. Lopez, Public Information Specialist Angela Naso, Senior Public Information Specialist Gene Kennedy.

## Award-Winning Office of Communications *Educates and Informs Stakeholders*

**T**he Office of Communications is a vital link between the Department of Public Social Services and the community. Through effective communication strategies and innovation, the office advances the health, safety, well-being, and independence of children, families, and adults in our community. By leveraging the power of communication, including public information/media relations, video, forms, graphic design, digital media, photography, and marketing, the office aims to educate and inform residents about the life-transforming services of DPSS, which can uplift and empower individuals and families in their journeys toward self-sufficiency and improved quality of life.

**Polaris Award** in Internal Relations for "DPSS Connected" Public Relations Society of America Inland Empire Chapter

**Award of Distinction** in Internal Communication for "DPSS Connected" California Association of Public Information Officials



### Special Events Program:

Adoption Day The National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences – Pacific Southwest Chapter Emmy Nominations

See it here:



### Public Service Announcement:

Riverside County DPSS The National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences – Pacific Southwest Chapter Emmy Nominations

See it here:



## Forms and Graphic Design *Adds Visual Impact*

In addition to forms, our graphic designers create a variety of visual products including reports, brochures, posters, banners, and print and digital fliers. Some of this year's most notable projects include DPSS' 2023-2028 Strategic Plan and the 2023-2024 Grand Jury Report for Children's Services. Each project reflects extensive collaboration with staff throughout the department and adds a powerful visual to the stories of the department, staff and customers.



## The Service Station Amplifies Important Conversations

The Service Station is a community-driven podcast that informs Riverside County residents about department services and how DPSS is helping its customers. During Fiscal Year 23/24, The Service Station had 820 listens with topics ranging from EBT theft and child abuse prevention to career advancement support and streamlined help for struggling families. Guests included department investigators, customers success stories, and partners with Riverside County Office of Education and Riverside University Health System.

## New Video Campaign Increases “My Why” Audience Engagement

Beginning in 2022 as a poster and social media campaign, “My Why” recognized DPSS employees and celebrated their inspiration for serving Riverside County’s children, families, seniors, and adults. My Why transitioned to a video campaign to reach a larger audience. The videos debuted on social media and in the DPSS Connected employee newsletter in February 2024. The videos created an even more personal and engaging representation of employees’ testimonies. The experiences of staff in their own heartfelt words generated increased engagement on social media, generating thousands of plays.

See it here:



### Social Media *by the Numbers*

DPSS Facebook, Instagram,  
X, LinkedIn, and YouTube

**1,849** posts

**8,667** post reactions

**368,039** post impressions

**12,998** followers

Hear it here:



*Adult Services Division*

## *Assistant Director's Message*

### *Barry Dewing*

Congratulations to our dedicated staff and partners who have worked tirelessly to serve the residents of Riverside County for the past 100 years. It is a great honor to work alongside all of you as you deliver quality social services to the public! Surprisingly, the field of Adult Protective Services and In-Home Supportive Services was not formed until 1975! It was then that it was realized vulnerable adults and elders needed the protection and support offered by our great programs and teams of caring professionals.

Over the years, many dramatic changes have occurred in this field, which started with a handful of social workers manning both the hotline and responding to needs in the community. The Adult Services Division is now more than 700 employees strong with a variety of specialized programs that recognize the diverse needs in our communities!

Many challenges are ahead of us. The general increase in population growth in Riverside County, combined with the dramatic growth of the elderly population across our nation, will drive us further toward innovation and efficiency while we keep the client's interest at the forefront of our efforts. In the Adult Services Division we are proud of our history, we are proud of our service to the community, and we are committed to creating a better future.



Barry Dewing



*The Adult Services Division is now more than 700 employees strong with a variety of specialized programs that recognize the diverse needs in our communities!*



**A CENTURY OF SERVICE***1973 seniors*

In 1973, the City of Riverside Parks and Recreation Department officials reached out to DPSS to see what could be done to meet the needs of thousands of local seniors who qualified for help but were unaware of the department's services. That summer, two social workers began outreach to seniors at a Riverside center to assist with financial, medical and social services, and plans began to expand across the region and county. Two years later, Adult Services was formally established.



### *Adult Protective Services*

#### Adult Protective Services *by the Numbers* | Fiscal Year 2023/24

CLIENTS SERVED

16,341

HOTLINE CALLS

31,308

HOTLINE CALLS ANSWERED

96%

REPORTS OF ABUSE RECEIVED

20,195

### APS Social Workers Safeguard *the Well-Being of Dependent Adults and Seniors*



Social Workers in Adult Protective Services (APS) respond around the clock to suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation of dependent adults (age 18-59 who are disabled), and seniors aged 60 and older. They investigate cases involving physical abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and finances. Through multidisciplinary teams and public forums, they collaborate with health, law enforcement, justice and community partners to resolve the most difficult cases involving dependent and senior adults. They respond to at-risk adults living in private homes, hotels, hospitals, or who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. APS social workers are dedicated to creating an environment of stability and safety where Riverside County adults can thrive today and in the future.

## APS Social Worker of the Year *Serving Co-workers and Clients Brings Joy and Purpose to Magaly Munoz de Avila*

**S**ocial Worker of the Year, Magaly Munoz de Avila, doesn't have to look far to find inspiration for her professional journey in Adult Protective Services.

"Every day, I draw motivation from the incredible support of my colleagues and supervisors who inspire me to strive for excellence and remind me to enjoy every moment of this journey," says Munoz de Avila. "Working in Adult Protective Services has truly been a transformative experience that has exceeded all my expectations."

Her colleagues and supervisors say the APS Social Worker of the Year embraces teamwork, transparency, communication, and passion. All are part of the culture in Region 6, where Munoz de Avila serves dependent and senior adults. They describe Munoz de Avila as a role model and inspiration to her colleagues and clients; someone who always has a smile on her face and a "little hop" in her step. She makes the work setting "more fun," by always greeting staff with her smile, positivity, and inclusiveness.

When Munoz de Avila came to Adult Services in 2022, she says she felt gratitude for the opportunity to engage in outreach again. As she settled into her role, she discovered a "profound sense of fulfillment in being there for others."

"APS has given me a deep sense of purpose as an advocate



*Magaly Munoz de Avila*

and an empowerer of others. Being able to serve both my coworkers and clients fills me with immense joy and drives me to support the most vulnerable in our community. It's a reminder of the strength we gain when we come together," says Munoz de Avila. "This role has not only enriched my life but also reaffirmed my commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of those who need it most."

### APS Social Workers of the Year *by Region*

Marcos Coronel.....	Region 1
Cynthia Urrutia.....	Region 2
Lorena McIntyre.....	Region 3
Jose Diaz-Solorio.....	Region 4
Araceli Castro.....	Region 5
Magaly Munoz de Avila.....	Region 6
Robert Esparza.....	Region 7
Nidia Lopez.....	Crisis Response and Intervention Services
Ashley Wilhite.....	Central Intake Center
Rosanna Bonasera.....	SSR Specialized Services Region

## Crisis Response and Intervention Services Team *Houses 500 Adults*

The Crisis Response and Intervention Services (CRIS) program began in late 2018 with one supervisor and five social workers. Today, five supervisors and more than 30 staff work to house homeless seniors and dependent adults in communities across Riverside County. The CRIS team collaborates with community and county partners on solutions, while keeping their clients at the center of their decision making. Their work brings stability and resources to some of Riverside County's most at-risk adults. In Fiscal Year 23/24, the CRIS team housed over 500 adults across Riverside County.



## Housing Vouchers Turn the Key for *Once Homeless Seniors*

Nearly 40% of adults experiencing homelessness are age 50 and older, according to the California Budget and Policy Center. In fact, older adults are the fastest growing population experiencing homelessness in California, and the largest share of individuals experiencing homelessness for the first time due to fixed incomes and skyrocketing housing costs. The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program is the major federal program for assisting very low-income families,

the elderly, and disabled to afford decent and safe housing in the private market. Housing assistance is provided, so participants can find their own housing, including single-family homes, townhouses and apartments. Through collaboration with the County's Housing and Workforce Solutions Department & Housing Authority, the Housing Choice Voucher program, helped CRIS bring stability and safety to hundreds of at-risk seniors and dependent adults in Riverside County during Fiscal Year 23/24. Here are a few of the individuals celebrating their new homes.



## Arlene Aljanich, 85

**ARLENE ALJANICH TURNED TO CRIS** in August 2023 after leaving her son's South Dakota home and returning to the Coachella Valley without a safe plan in place. She stayed with a friend while applying for the Housing Choice Voucher and was able to move into her own apartment in April 2024. Aljanich reconciled with her daughter soon after and, today, they visit together on a regular basis.



## Anna Paulino, 69

**ANNA PAULINO CAME TO CRIS** at the end of the last fiscal year when she, her son and grandson could no longer afford their apartment and were forced to move out. The family was sleeping in their car and staying with friends when CRIS assisted Paulino in making a successful application for the Housing Choice Voucher. Despite multiple barriers, the family secured an apartment in May 2024 in Riverside's La Sierra Heights neighborhood.



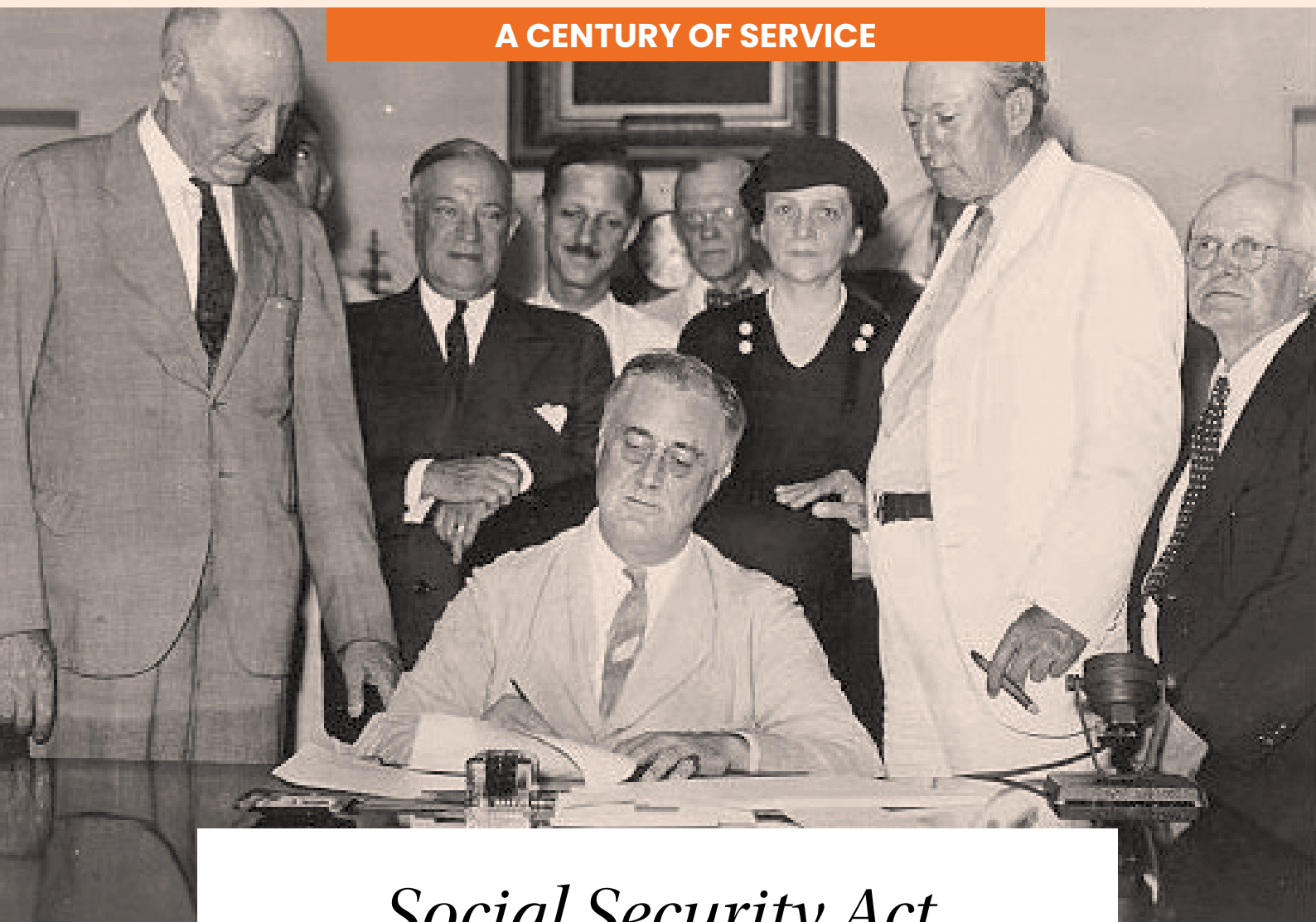
## Claud Knapp, 89

**DESPITE BEING ALMOST 90-YEARS OLD**, Claud Knapp had been experiencing homelessness for a year when he turned to CRIS for support in November 2023. In March 2024, Knapp signed a lease on a one-bedroom apartment home in Indio. Knapp is making new friends, enjoying his new apartment and has almost finished setting up his home gym.



## Arlie Suits, 70

**ARLIE SUITS WAS HOMELESS** for more than 25 years. He'd spent the last 10 of those years focused on sober living. In January 2024, Suits received services from the APS CRIS team. By late March, he'd received the keys to his one-bedroom apartment. Today, Suits is receiving additional case management through the Office on Aging Senior Homelessness Integrated Partnerships (SHIP) program and enjoying the simple pleasures in life. He is most excited about not having to share his ice cream and getting to sleep in his own queen-sized bed.

**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

## *Social Security Act*

In 1974, Congress amended the Social Security Act, which was first signed into law in 1935 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The amendment required all states to establish adult protective services units (APS) for adults aged 18 and older. The U.S. House of Representatives held hearings and sponsored investigations about elder abuse throughout the middle to late 1970s.



## Law Enforcement Summit *Brings Social Service and Justice Partners Together*

**T**he Adult Services Division's Elder Abuse Forensic Center (EAFC) along with multiple agencies held the Law Enforcement Summit in Riverside on October 5, 2023. The event focused on enhancing collaboration among investigative agencies while providing training, resources, and updates that impact elder and dependent adult abuse investigations. Attendees included professionals from the following fields: law enforcement, District Attorney's Office, state investigators, Department of Justice, Community Care Licensing and social services.



## Intensive Stabilization Unit (ISU) *Ensures Safety of Cognitively Impaired Clients*

**A**PS social workers often encounter clients with significant cognitive impairment which impacts their ability to ensure their own safety and make sound decisions. If the client does not have a quality and trusted support system, they may be referred to the Public Guardian for conservatorship. This provides them with a legal representative to ensure the safety of their person and assets. The Intensive Stabilization Unit (ISU) submits referrals to the public guardian, provides case management services to clients pending conservatorship, attends probate court hearings to represent the client's needs, partners with the Public Guardian's office throughout the process, and educates APS staff regarding the conservatorship process. ISU

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**58** Referrals submitted for conservatorship in FY 23/24

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submits conservatorship referrals to the Public Guardian and provides vital support to additional cases that can be stabilized without conservatorship.

Monthly multidisciplinary team meetings between Adult Protective Services and Public Guardian ensure all stakeholders are informed about case progress and changes in the status of conservatorship referrals. Regular communication enhances effective support for clients and streamlines processes.



## Financial Abuse Specialist Team (FAST) *Supports Investigations and Prosecutions*

Cases involving financial exploitation are complex, time consuming and challenging to investigate. The COVID-19 pandemic made elder and dependent adults even more vulnerable to fraud. Many became more isolated and less engaged with family and community-based organizations. Riverside County APS and the Riverside Sheriff's Office responded to the need by developing the Financial Abuse Specialized Team (FAST). FAST APS social workers collaborate with Sheriff's investigators and law enforcement agencies to conduct thorough investigations, secure assets, provide

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**1,194** client investigations managed by the FAST unit, 95% of them aged 60 or older, during Fiscal Year 2023/24

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brief case management services and move the case to criminal prosecution when warranted. FAST relies on a variety of tools to support its investigations, including a FAST multidisciplinary team to consult on complex cases and a forensic analysis program to evaluate complex records.

## APS-Initiated Restraining Orders *Strengthen Protections*

The APS Initiated Restraining Order (AIRO), born out of a legislative proposal from Riverside County, identified a gap in services to protect clients from financial abuse. The bill became law on July 1, 2016, and allows an APS agency to file an Elder or Dependent Adult Abuse Restraining Order on behalf of a client who has been a victim of elder abuse or neglect, but due to diminished capacity, is unable to protect their person or assets.

"It's a really good tool we use for protection of our clients and their assets," says Michaela Williams, Senior Community Program Specialist. APS utilizes the AIRO to provide immediate protection for a client in need while a long-term intervention plan is put in place. Since its inception, Riverside County has successfully obtained 28 Temporary Restraining Orders, with 18 transitioning to a Permanent Restraining Order.



## Annual Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Symposium *Spotlights Protections*

*Maureen DuMouchel, Riverside County Elder Abuse Prosecutor*

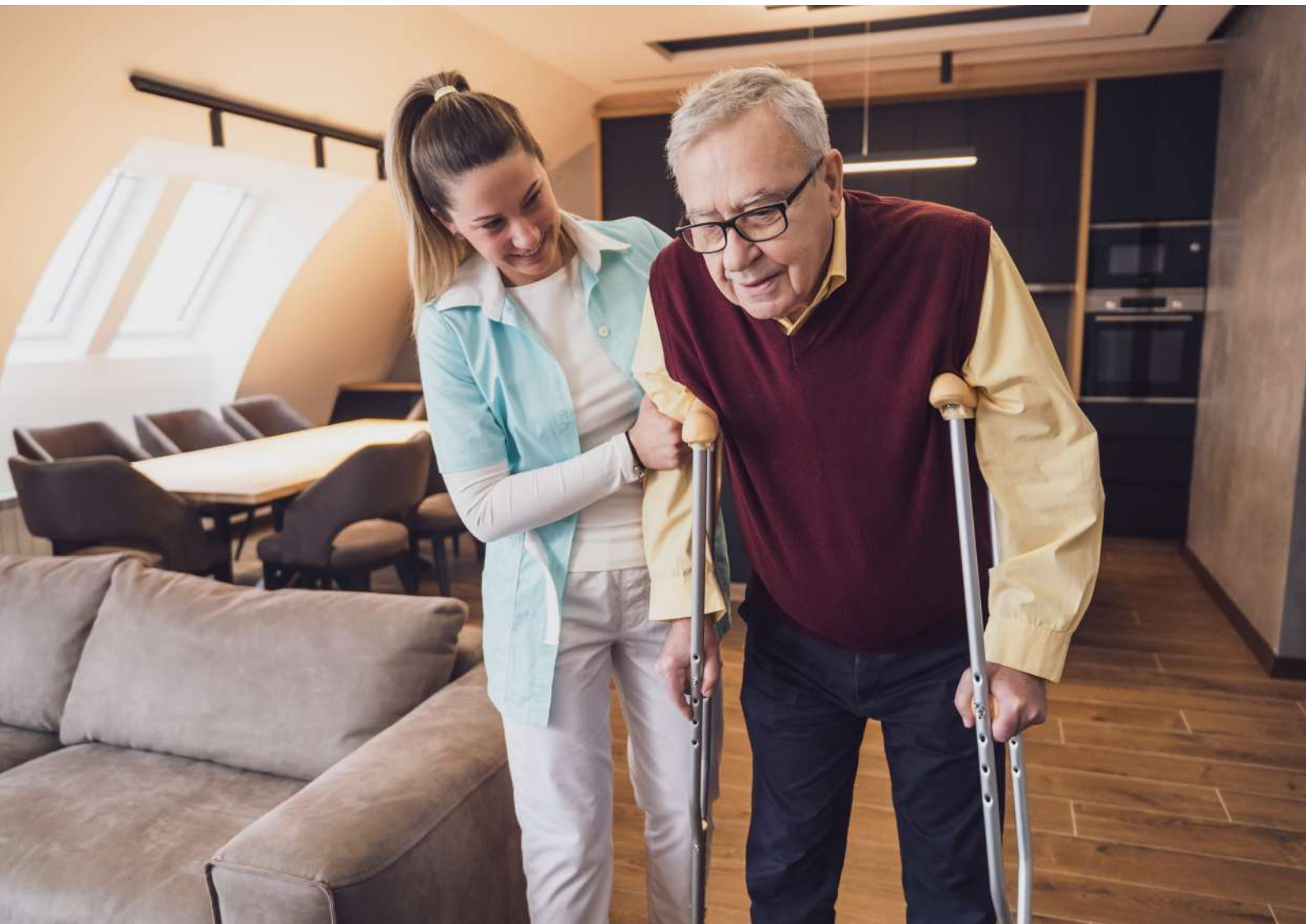
The Annual Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Symposium on June 13 brought together more than 475 professionals dedicated to protecting vulnerable elders and dependent adults from abuse. This event, designed to foster collaboration among community partners, featured 16 breakout sessions led by experts from social services, law enforcement, and medical fields.

The symposium focused on key issues, including communication challenges faced by dependent adults and the growing problem of real estate fraud and financial exploitation. One of the event's highlights were presentations by Barry Dewing, Assistant Director of DPSS Adult Services Division, and Riverside County Deputy District Attorney Maureen DuMouchel, who provided invaluable insights on these critical topics.

Participants engaged in comprehensive discussions and workshops, gaining essential knowledge and skills to enhance their professional and personal development. The event also offered ample opportunities for networking, allowing attendees to connect and collaborate with peers from various agencies dedicated to direct-client services.

Feedback from the symposium was overwhelmingly positive, with 96.8% of participants rating the event as highly successful. Attendees praised the quality of the sessions, and the relevance of the information presented, emphasizing the practical benefits and resources gained. The symposium continues to play a crucial role in equipping professionals with the tools and knowledge needed to safeguard elder and dependent adults from abuse, ensuring a safer community for these vulnerable populations.

### *In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)*



## *IHSS Yields Savings and Improves Quality of Life for Dependent and Senior Adults*

**T**he In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program provides in-home assistance to eligible aged, blind, and disabled individuals as an alternative to out-of-home care. The program allows recipients to live safely in their own homes with support from caregivers who assist

with daily tasks such as meal preparation and bathing. IHSS is a Medi-Cal program, funded by federal, state, and county dollars. The annual cost savings of IHSS care for a single client in Riverside County is about \$80,000 less than if they were to live in a facility outside the home.

*IHSS by the Numbers* | Fiscal Year 2023/24

INDIVIDUAL CLIENTS SERVED

59,479

ACTIVE IHSS CLIENTS

52,460

IHSS CAREGIVING PROVIDED 76 MILLION HOURS

IHSS APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

20,632

IHSS CAREGIVERS

45,157

## IHSS Social Workers *Connect At-Risk Adults to In-Home Support*



IHSS Social workers are committed to the well-being of Riverside County's aging and dependent adults. They provide professional in-home assessments of the needs of at-risk adults who require IHSS caregivers to help them with daily activities, and to live more independently in familiar settings. IHSS social workers engage with multiple public and community partners to safeguard vulnerable adults from fraud and abuse and provide access to a variety of resources, oversight, and care.

# IHSS Social Worker of the Year *Iman Taylor Finds Adventure and Opportunity in Each Day*



Iman Taylor, IHSS Social Worker of the Year

“

*Every day is an opportunity to put our best self forward, whether to support our peers, our clients, or our families.*

”

Each day serving clients and colleagues represents an adventure and new opportunity for Iman Taylor, Social Worker of the Year for the In-Home Supportive Services program.

“Every day is an opportunity to put our best self forward, whether to support our peers, our clients, or our families,” says Taylor, a Social Services Practitioner III who started in the field at age 19 and now, 24 years later, brings her professional compassion to IHSS clients. “I strive to apply my values, my strengths and skills toward my community and take pride in breakthrough victories.”

Her colleagues and supervisors in the Lake Elsinore region say Taylor consistently exhibits leadership, is always searching for new efficiencies, and always prepared to assist her colleagues and help new social services practitioners navigate the challenges of a profession that Taylor says can be “demanding, daunting and draining. However, it can be equally rewarding and fulfilling.”

For the most part, Taylor says she enjoys working behind the scenes, problem solving and helping wherever she can. Having her peers recognize her contributions is something she calls an “incredibly humbling experience.” Taylor says caring for senior and dependent adults and making sure they receive support to live safely at home is “a constant reminder to keep our humility and find joy in the simple things.”

## In-Home Supportive Services Social Workers of the Year *by Region*

Elizabeth Hernandez.....	Region 1	Jim Thor.....	Region 6
Thania Valdez-Yakuta.....	Region 2	Maria Mendiola.....	Region 7
Iman Taylor.....	Region 3	Rosina Morris.....	Central Intake Center
Cristal Arroyo Martinez.....	Region 4	Jade Coronado.....	Public Authority
Alicia Martinez.....	Region 5		

*IHSS Public Authority Program*

# Executive Director's Message

David Dai



David Dai



*Reflecting on the achievements and challenges of the past year, we remain committed to our caregivers and community.*



As we celebrate a century of service to our community, the Riverside County In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Public Authority (PA) reflects on its inception in 2002. The PA was born from Assembly Bill 1682 and was created to enhance the existing IHSS program to support the home care needs of the elderly and individuals with disabilities. Over the decades, the PA has continually evolved to meet the growing needs of the most vulnerable population in this community so they can remain in their homes safely and independently.

At its core, our mission is to deliver high-quality services to our clients. We understand that achieving this goal hinges on our caregivers. This past year, we have launched several initiatives to increase our caregiver registry. Expanding recruitment efforts and enriching training and support for those embarking on a career in caregiving has not only addressed the rising demands but also empowered individuals to make profound impacts in the lives of others.

Access to our services remains a focus of our mission. We recognize timely access to care can significantly impact our clients' well-being. Therefore, we have worked to remove barriers and enhance accessibility. Our commitment to equity, access, and opportunity extends to every member of our diverse community.

Reflecting on the achievements and challenges of the past year, we remain committed to our caregivers and community. None of our accomplishments would have been possible without the tireless efforts of our dedicated staff, the resilience of our caregivers, and the support of our leadership team in Riverside County.

I sincerely appreciate the continued support and partnership that have been instrumental in our journey. Together, we will continue to transform the lives of our clients and caregivers, ensuring every member of our community receives the compassionate care and support they deserve for generations to come.

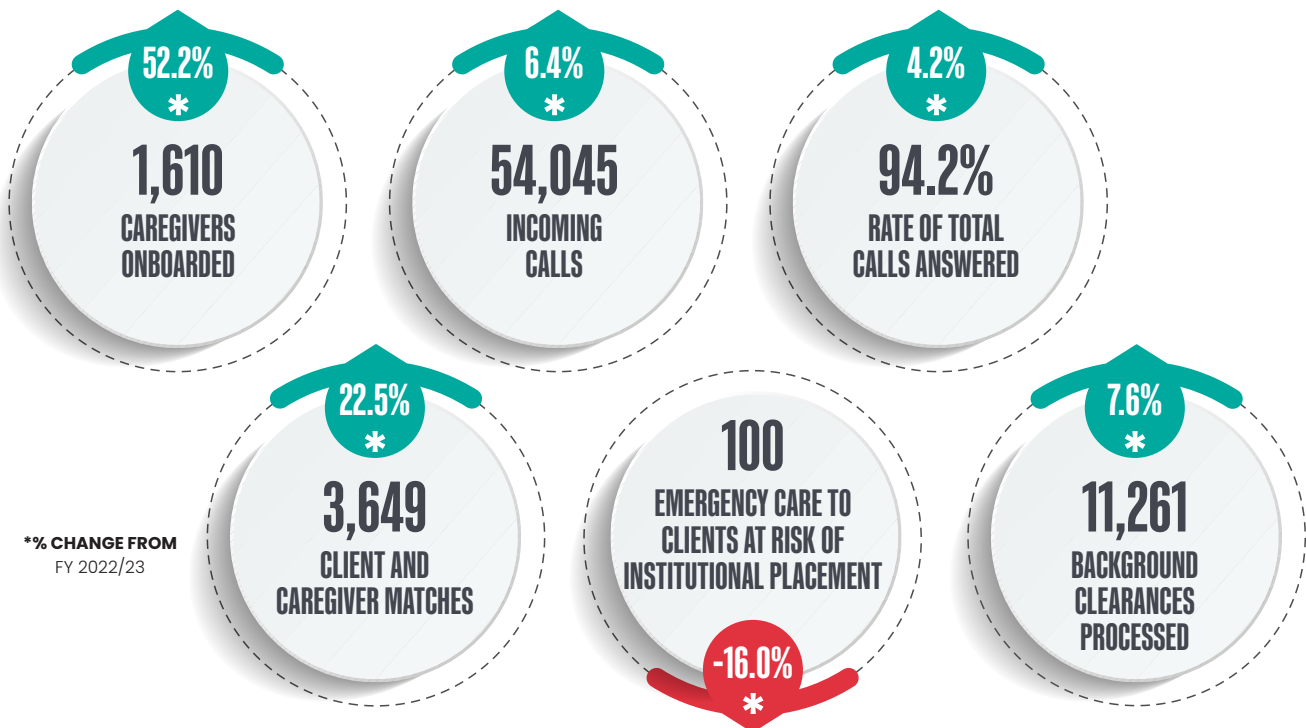


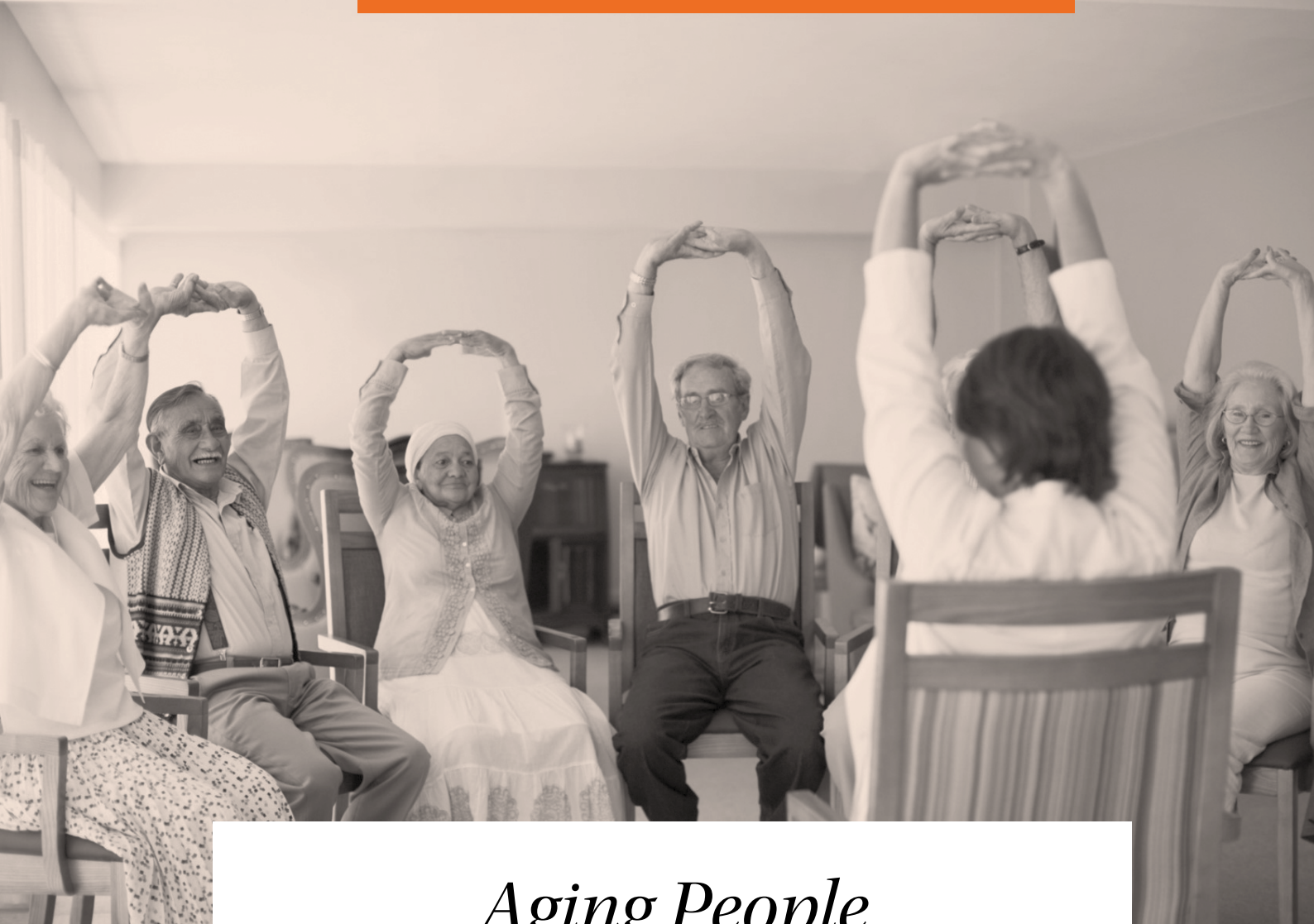
## Strategic Efforts *Strengthen Community Care*

The IHSS/Public Authority marked significant growth and improvements in service delivery during Fiscal Year 23/24, reflecting a strong commitment to supporting caregivers and clients throughout Riverside County.

Strategic efforts including increased onboarding enhanced operational efficiency, and strengthened community care, continuing to ensure quality support for those who need it most.

### IHSS/Public Authority *by the Numbers* | Fiscal Year 2023/24 (compared to FY 22/23)



**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

## *Aging People*

In 1923, when Riverside Welfare Department (now DPSS) was established, the entire population of Riverside County was about 70,000. Today, 366,000 residents aged 65 and older reside in Riverside County. The 65 and older population in Riverside County is projected to grow to 900,000 residents by 2060.





## Caregiver Appreciation Events *Celebrate Contributions of IHSS Workers*

The In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program provides in-home assistance to eligible aged, blind, and disabled individuals as an alternative to out-of-home care. The program allows recipients to remain safely in their own homes, with family and friends nearby. IHSS caregivers are crucial to the success of this program.

In Fiscal Year 23/24, more than 45,000 IHSS caregivers helped Riverside County clients with their activities of daily living. The IHSS Public Authority collaborates closely with the United Domestic Workers (UDW) Union and other community

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*I'm a caregiver for IHSS and I've been in the Public Authority for 15-plus years. I'm feeling very loved here with the encouragement and teaching us what to do in certain situations. There is a lot of information and I'm soaking it up as a sponge.*

— Elizabeth Ruiz,  
IHSS caregiver

”

partners to honor and celebrate the compassion and dedication of this significant workforce, and to recognize the contributions they make to improving the quality of life for thousands of at-risk adults. In late 2023, hundreds of caregivers came together at the annual Caregiver Appreciation and Resource Fairs in Riverside County; 216 caregivers were on hand at the Moreno Valley Conference Center and at the Palm Springs Pavilion 103 caregivers were in attendance. Attendees enjoyed a special luncheon, gifts, and appreciation for the care and compassion they provide every day to vulnerable adults across Riverside County.



## Client Living in Isolation Now Thrives at Home with Support

“Jennifer,” a resilient elderly resident of Riverside County, was facing the daunting challenge of living alone without family or community support. Loneliness was taking a toll. She is not alone. The U.S. Census Bureau reports about 28% of people 65 and older live by themselves. Like Jennifer, many are experiencing vision or hearing loss, cognitive challenges and struggling to care for themselves.

A team from Riverside County Public Authority stepped in to bring Jennifer the invaluable gift of caring and resources. Connecting proved difficult at first due to Jennifer’s difficulty with communication and forgetfulness. The turning point came with a home visit by Social Services Supervisor Alejandra Munoz and a potential caregiver.

The caregiver brought a sense of warmth and connection to Jennifer’s world, replacing the loneliness, sorrow, and isolation she had been experiencing since the death of her beloved son. With assistance from the Riverside County Public Authority and the registry caregiver, Jennifer’s life underwent a remarkable transformation. She is now thriving in the comfort of her own home.

Thanks to the compassionate efforts of the Riverside County Public Authority and its dedicated team, Jennifer’s story is one of resilience, hope and hope for a brighter future.

# Thriving at Home

*Children's Services Division*

## *Assistant Director's Message*

Bridgette Hernandez

I am so grateful to be part of the Children's Services' team and the significant strides we are making to enhance the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families in our communities. This report highlights some of our key initiatives in Fiscal Year 23/24, including the implementation of a new System Improvement Plan for Riverside County Children's Services and the Probation Department. The five-year plan prioritizes family preservation, promotes equity, continuous quality improvement, and integration of services to address poverty, eliminate system barriers and strengthen at-risk families. The plan establishes the groundwork for a kinship culture that prioritizes placement of a child with a trusted family member or a friend and creates opportunity for that child to stay connected to kin and community in a stable and supportive environment. It builds upon a foundation of excellence that was started a century ago, when our department first began serving children and families in Riverside County.

Importantly, Children's Services continues to expand on its commitment to equity in our child welfare practices and workforce. We are actively engaging families and stakeholders to incorporate their experiences and recommendations into our strategies and actions. We are forging partnerships with internal stakeholders such as Self-Sufficiency, to bring wraparound case-management and improve the outcomes for at-risk families through programs such as Linkages. We are continuously strengthening the safety net for children and families by collaborating with like-minded public and private partners to evaluate our activities, measure outcomes and identify areas for improvement.

Thank you to our department and county leaders, our community partners and the entire 1,330-member team of Children's Services for being present for children and families in this pivotal year as we mark 100 years of service and embrace the challenges and opportunities in the century ahead.



Bridgette  
Hernandez



*We are continuously  
strengthening the safety net  
for children and families.*



**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

## *Cruelty to Children*

In 1875, the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, above, was incorporated, becoming the world's first child protective agency. At the time, impoverished, homeless or orphaned children were often placed into indentured service where they experienced abuse and neglect. Today, Riverside County joins with counties and agencies across the country in the prevention of child abuse and neglect, safeguarding the rights of children and protecting them from harm.



# Bridgette Hernandez Honored

## *for Her Profound Impacts in the Field of Child Welfare*

After Bridgette Hernandez graduated from the Title IV-E Child Welfare Training Project at Cal State University San Bernardino in 2000, she brought her passion, expertise and innovation to several different roles within Riverside County Children's Services. She served as a social worker for youth placed in group homes, supervisor for the 24-hour child abuse hotline and Metro Region, assistant regional manager of the Training, Adoptions, and Metro regions and regional manager of Placement/Resource Family Approval. She rose to become Deputy Director for a variety of regions, to include both operations, centralized, and administrative programs.

In 2023, Hernandez was appointed Assistant Director of Children's Services, overseeing a children's social services workforce of more than 1,300 professionals. Her two-plus decades of service were honored in March 2024 when Hernandez was named CSUSB's Title IV-E Alum of the Year. The Title IV-E project offers educational stipends each year to a handful of students who are determined to make a positive difference in the public child welfare system. The award recognizes Hernandez's "exceptional dedication and profound impact within the field of child welfare, spanning over two decades of exemplary service." Hernandez was credited for her leadership in areas such as staff training, extended foster care, relative placements, and implementation of the Welcome Center for youth experiencing challenges in their foster placements.

Hernandez was celebrated during a special ceremony at the CSUSB Obershaw Dining Hall. Her "compassion, and unwavering commitment to excellence serve as an inspiration...a beacon of hope and inspiration for all those who aspire to make a difference in the lives of others," Stephanie Schneider, Title IV-E Project Coordinator for the School of Social Work at Cal State University San Bernardino, wrote in a letter.



*Nathan, alongside his mom, Children's Services Division Assistant Director Bridgette Hernandez, her mom Eva, and husband Jamie, join DPSS Director Charity Douglas in celebrating the award from Cal State University, San Bernardino.*

Hernandez says she was thrilled and humbled by the recognition from CSUSB. She credits her peers and mentors in Children's Services for supporting her journey, and the children and families who are at the core of her professional mission to make a meaningful difference in their lives.

"At the end of the day, we are all here to promote the well-being, permanency, and safety of children and families in Riverside County," she said. "They are always at the forefront of our work, our mission, and decision making. When we improve the lives of children and youth, we are improving our whole community."

Children's Services Division *by the Numbers* | Fiscal Year 2023/24

TOTAL CHILDREN SERVED ANNUALLY

38,572

HOTLINE CALLS

64,387

REFERRALS RECEIVED

37,086

REFERRALS INVESTIGATED

24,205

DEPENDENT CHILDREN IN OPEN CASES

5,424

Point in time June 30, 2024

DEPENDENT CHILDREN IN HOME

1,927

Point in time June 30, 2024

DEPENDENT CHILDREN IN PLACEMENT

3,497

Point in time June 30, 2024

**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

## *Orphans*

In the early 1900s, the Riverside County Board of Supervisors would attest to a child's status as an orphan or half orphan to be eligible for the state payment of \$6.55 for one child or \$11 a month for two children. Today, a blend of federal, state, local and charitable funding supports dependent children, and kin placement is a top priority for many child welfare agencies, including Riverside County.





## Social Workers Fill Diverse Roles *in the Mission of Children's Services*

Children's social workers, also known as social services practitioners, offer compassionate professionalism and resources to children, youth and families. Their work is complex. They meet children and families in their most vulnerable moments, bringing hope, empathy and help to those who are hurting. They help restore families. They unite children who can't go back to their families of origin with loving and stable homes. In Children's Services, social workers fill many different roles that include investigative and continuing services, specialized programs such as extended foster care, enhanced medical services, adoptions, and resource family approval.

Investigative Services conducts investigations of child abuse/neglect referrals made within Riverside County.

Continuing Services provides support to families with the goal of reunification and supportive services to stabilize a family once children are returned home. Extended Foster Care completes assessments, develops transitional plans, and provides resources for youth 18 and older, preparing them to emancipate from foster care. The Resource Family Approval team conducts home assessments, background checks, and family evaluations to ensure that prospective relatives/non-related extended family members (NREFM) requesting placement meet standards in accordance with State regulations.

Whatever role they're fulfilling in their day-to-day, our dedicated social workers answer the call around the clock to ensure the safety and well-being of Riverside County's children, youth, and families.

## Children's Services Social Worker of the Year

### Kristal Cota-Chavez: An "Empowering Source" Who Guides Families to Change and Safety

Since being assigned to the Family Maintenance Voluntary unit in late 2022, Social Services Practitioner Kristal Cota-Chavez has helped dozens of families successfully complete their case plans, safety goals, and graduate.

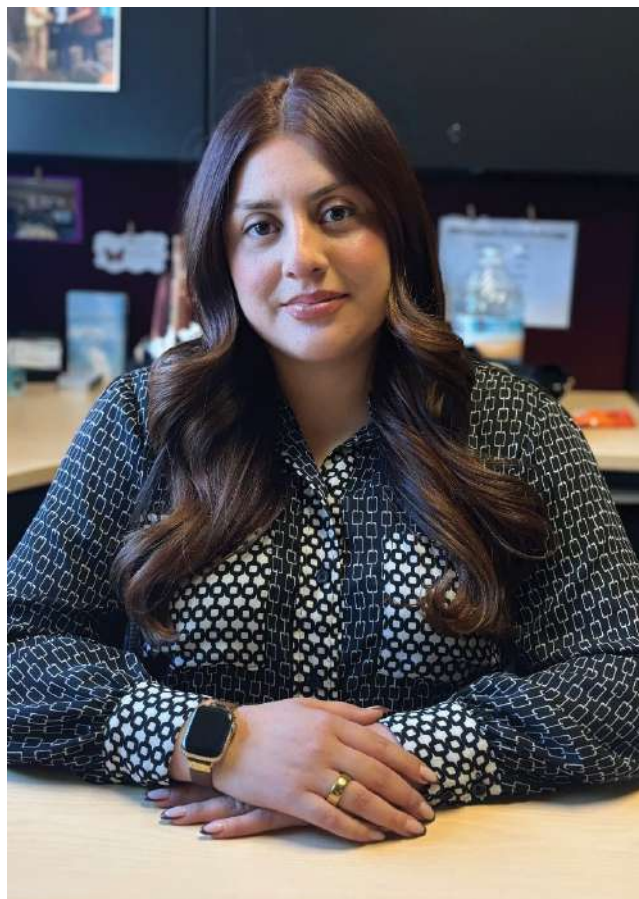
Her advocacy for families, leadership in the FMV unit, and willingness to go above and beyond for her colleagues and families earned Cota-Chavez the title of Children's Services "Social Worker of the Year."

"Families always highlight her as their empowering source, leading and guiding them to make life-changing commitments that address the issues that led to their involvement with Children's Services," Social Services Supervisor Berenice Acevedo wrote in her nomination of Cota-Chavez. "She is a role model for other social services practitioners. Her commitment and dedication to Children's Services is exemplified by her brand, which reflects the agency's mission and values."

For Cota-Chavez, who's been an SSP for about three years, the desire to help families is personal. The Family Maintenance Voluntary program is offered to some families whose child is at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation, allowing the child to safely remain in the home while the family willingly accepts services and engages in corrective actions. The voluntary program is limited to a matter of months without court oversight, and case plan goals must be achieved within that period.

"We get the opportunity to make a positive impact on families and guide them in breaking generational cycles," Cota-Chavez says. "As someone who was exposed to childhood trauma, I hope to be the individual who – in my lifetime – showed me empathy and motivation for a better outcome, not only for myself but for my family."

Cota-Chavez says she learns from the families and children she's had the opportunity to work with. "They've shown me resilience and the power to change when



*Kristal Cota-Chavez*

people have the proper supports in place." The messages and letters of gratitude Cota-Chavez receives from her clients after their cases have closed "make the long hours all worth it and gives me fuel to keep going."

Since joining DPSS, Cota-Chavez says she is noticing the strides Riverside County has made in prevention services such as the Family Maintenance Voluntary unit. She hopes through engagement with families and the community, Children's Services can expand understanding that it is here to "support families – not to create perfect families, but safe families."

## Children's Services Social Workers of the Year *by Region*

Nelly Sambrano .....	Central Intake Center
Carla Martin .....	Court Services
Mia Reyes .....	Command Post
Kristal Cota-Chavez .....	Desert Region
Beatriz Ramirez .....	Diamond Valley
Susana Torre Blanca .....	Harmony Haven
Bianca Pacheco .....	Metro
Christopher Enhelder .....	Mid-County
Daisy Galvan .....	Placement
Amonexay (Mone) Phomphakdy .....	Resource Family Approval
Dr. Laura Andrade .....	Specialized Operations and Adoptions
Jennifer Whited .....	Southwest
Melissa Nayotl .....	Training
Sandra Sanchez .....	Valley
Anne Marie Maturino .....	West Corridor
Alison Haddad .....	Youth and Community Resources

# 1945

The Riverside County Welfare Department added its first child welfare social services worker in 1945 at an annual salary of \$2,400. Today, Riverside County Children's Services employs 1,330 staff with recruitment of children's social workers a top priority of the department.





# Saying “Yes” to Children in Need

## *Riverside County Recognizes Foster Families of the Year*

National Foster Care Month in May draws attention to the many children and teens who need safe, loving foster homes, and the families who open their doors and hearts to answer their needs. In Riverside County, more than 3,315 children and teens are being cared for in safe, compassionate homes thanks to adults who are willing to say “yes.” Still, more homes and adults are needed to serve an active role in the lives of children and youth in care. In May 2024, Riverside County recognized four local families as Foster Parents of the Year for the love and positive impacts they bring to the children and teens in their care. Each family says foster parenting can be challenging but all agree

*“it’s worth it!”*



## Isaiah Haro

As a single parent, Isaiah didn't hesitate before saying "yes" when he was asked to provide foster care to three siblings for three months. He learned the children in his care had four sisters. The girls were separated in two different homes. Isaiah said "yes" again. "I decided to bring them all together so they wouldn't be apart," he says. Of the seven siblings, four still live with Isaiah. He's helping them see the world with a new vision. "Once kids start believing in themselves, they can do any goals. You can see it in the kids' eyes - hope!"



## Tom and Emma Jackson

When they were dating, Emma wanted to make sure her now-husband, Tom, was open to fostering or adopting a child in the future. Turns out he was. "I have always had a passion for children...How would it be to raise a child who really needs a home?" Emma says. "If you're thinking about being a foster parent, it's the most rewarding thing you can do." Tom agrees. "There is joy in seeing a child thrive," he adds. "To know a kid was in this kind of condition but now he has achieved a lot - that's joy."



## Mohan Kanthasamy and Monique Morales

Caring for three children, all under age 3, might be daunting for some people. But Mohan and Monique have embraced their foster babies and toddlers as an extension of the blessings in life they've enjoyed. "We have been really blessed," Monique says. "So why not give kids an opportunity to have a better life when they're going through a hard experience?" The couple say they've seen how love can turn timid and quiet children into confident youngsters eager to learn new things in a safe and loving environment. The couple also knows younger children have an easier time being placed. "Teenagers can be more difficult," Monique says, with her eye on the future. "And we want teenagers."



## Chris and Christina Keener

Before their foster daughter moved into the Keeners' home, she'd already started calling them "mom and dad." Overnight, the parents of three biological children added a fourth. "That's how much she wanted to be part of our family...There is not an end date ...we have four children, and we are so grateful," Christina says. Hearing their foster child tell him and his wife she loved them "pretty much hit home," Chris says. "My advice is to let somebody in, just so you know how much more love is available out there."

A photograph of a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a red t-shirt, holding a young child. The child is smiling and wearing a brown cord jacket and a green identification band. A large white number '100' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# 100

Riverside County children were united with loving permanent families during the County's 15th Annual Adoption Day on November 4, 2023.

**Riverside County Marks Milestone**  
*for Families and Record Numbers on Adoption Day*



**F**inalization ceremonies were held in multiple courtrooms at the Larson Justice Center in Indio and the downtown Riverside Historic Courthouse during the daylong event. The celebration marked a milestone for Riverside County, as it was the first time 100 adoptions were finalized in a single day in the department's 100-year history.

During Fiscal Year 23/24, a total of 373 adoptions by relative and non-relative families of children in care were accomplished, permanently uniting toddlers, children and teens with their forever families. Individual contributors and organizations such as Faith-in-Motion, which represents hundreds of local churches, Cake4-Kids, and the Riverside County Heart Gallery were on hand to ensure the day was complete with festivities and gifts for children and their families.

From a child and family's perspective, Sophia Williams, regional manager over Adoptions, says the most fulfilling aspect of the adoption is the joy of finalizing their "forever family. They have the overall comfort of knowing their journey through the child welfare

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**373** **adoptions**  
during Fiscal Year 2023/24

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system is complete and a new chapter of hope and new memories can begin."

Superior Court Judge Charles Koosed, who presided over some of the ceremonies in November, said he hoped the high-profile day would inspire people who are considering adoption "to make that all-important decision to adopt."

*Watch it here:*



**Call 1-800-665-KIDS (5437)**  
for more information on becoming a foster or adoptive parent.

**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

## *Licensed Homes*

When the Riverside Welfare Department was established in 1923, no inspected and licensed homes for children existed in Riverside County. By 1954, 327 licensed daycare and fulltime homes were operating. Today in Riverside County, there are 1,459 state-licensed foster, small family, transitional and short-term residential therapeutic homes capable of serving multiple youth.

\* These numbers do not include the number of relative caregivers fostering only children and youth who are their kin.





## High School Graduates in Foster Care *Earn Their Golden Tickets*

**F**aith-based partners and community supporters pulled out the stops to celebrate graduates in the Class of 2024 at the annual foster youth high school graduation dinner. More than half of the 122 high school graduates in Riverside County foster care attended the Willy Wonka-themed event, hosted by Harvest Fellowship Church in Riverside. Speakers, including Bridgette Hernandez, Assistant Director of Children's Services, applauded the graduates for their resilience and for overcoming hurdles that keep nearly half of foster youth statewide from achieving high school graduation.

"Never stop dreaming. Dreaming is what got you here today. As you stand at the beginning of this next chapter in your life, I want you to remember the power of dreaming. Dreams help ignite your passions and shape your journey ahead. Hold onto your dreams tightly," Hernandez told the graduates and their guests. "Each dream you nurture today has the potential to blossom into something extraordinary tomorrow."

### *Graduates by the Numbers*

- 8** graduates going to a 4-year college
- 55** graduates going to a community college
- 2** graduates going to trade school
- 2** graduates enlisting in the military

The Youth and Community Resource Region of Children's Services sponsors the celebration each year. This year's graduates received a gift basket, and a gift card purchased with donations from the community. Dinner with appetizers and dessert and plenty of treats, including a popcorn station and photo booths, added to the festivities. Graduates were able to print photos from the evening and receive a 4x6 frame commemorating the special event and the milestone they achieved.



*Monique Carrillo on her graduation day.*

# PROJECT GRADUATE

## *Helps a Teen in Foster Care Find Her Wings to Fly*

**S**he was just a little girl when her parents' constant drug use and abusive behaviors landed Monique Carrillo in foster care for more than 14 years.

"I would miss school all the time because of it," Monique recalls. "I was a difficult little kid. Nobody wanted to take care of a kid with ADHD. It was just too much. I would have random outbursts, bouncing off the walls. I started to self-harm. I just did not want to be around anymore. I started to run away."

Like nearly half of California's youth in foster care, Monique was not on track to graduate high school. Project Graduate stepped in to help. Established in 2011 as a philanthropic program of the Riverside County Bar Association (RCBA), Project Graduate works in collaboration with the Riverside Superior Court and Riverside County's Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) to assist foster youth to graduate high school, to continue their education beyond high school, and to plan for a successful future.

“

*This is like a chrysalis almost.  
I am watching (Monique's)  
wings come out.*

— Attorney Mary Reyna,  
educational mentor

”



*Social Services Supervisor Elizabeth Estrada, Monique Carrillo, Attorney Mentor Mary Reyna.*

Since its inception, Project Graduate has helped 55 foster students in Riverside County graduate from high school with a diploma or GED.

In 2024, Project Graduate helped four Riverside County youth achieve high school graduation, including Monique. This spring, she joined hundreds of students in her senior class, beaming with pride in her cap and gown, diploma in hand. She will be entering Riverside Community College in the Fall.

Attorney Mary Reyna served as Monique's mentor, meeting the teen at fast food restaurants, encouraging her to complete her school assignments, coming alongside to help her focus on what needed to be done. Reyna describes their relationship as a "gradual unfolding."

"Because of her life experiences, Monique is not quick to form attachments – I found out quickly. I backed off and I let her get to know me and I got to know her at her speed." Monique, who expresses gratitude for Reyna's support, also received support from a team of partners, including Social Services Supervisor Elizabeth Estrada.

"I knew I could trust her," Monique says of her relationship with Estrada. "She promised she would be there for me. Ever since then, I've grown a connection with her, and she's been there for me."

The partnerships between the educational mentor, the judge at court, the foster family agency social worker and many others are key to helping youth in care, such as Monique, overcome the many hurdles they face, Estrada says.

"The consistency between all our partnerships has been everything."

“

*When you sit next to someone you care about, that's when they can rise to the occasion of whatever they hope to accomplish. That to me has been the biggest benefit of seeing Monique succeed and graduate.*

— Elizabeth Estrada  
Social Services Supervisor

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**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

## *Reporting Laws*

In the early 1960s, states across the country began adopting mandatory child abuse reporting laws. California enacted its first reporting law in 1963, requiring physicians to report evidence of physical abuse. This fiscal year, Children's Services hotline received 64,387 reports of suspected abuse or neglect of a child.





## Partnerships and Outreach Increase Community Support for Children and Youth in Care

**T**he smiles and thank you notes say it all. Birthdays for some children and youth in foster care come and go with few, if any, gifts or celebrations to mark the passing of another year. But a pilot project that's grown from a partnership between Children's Services and Riverside University Health System Foundation is surprising foster children with handwritten cards and cookies on their special day. The Birthday Circle delivered 500 personalized cards from community volunteers and 1,000 cookies in a happy birthday box to foster children in the desert region during Fiscal Year 23/24.

"We are grateful to our community members who have a heart for our foster kids—who understand their need to be celebrated on special days, to enjoy the activities and resources many parents provide their children as part of a normal family experience," says Lisa Walcker, a regional manager in Children's Services. Walcker wears a second hat with RUHS Foundation as development director for foster children. Resources and funding for youth in foster care have greatly increased in the first full fiscal year of the DPSS/RUHS Foundation partnership.

The First Annual Purses, Poker & Pours Night Out in August 2023 was supported by local businesses and raised \$55,000 for the needs of youth in foster care. AT&T contributed \$5,000 while advertising company Lamar donated 17 billboards to promote the Pinwheels for Prevention fundraiser in April. Funding from the Pinwheels fundraiser will be used in Fiscal Year 24/25 to remodel family meeting rooms in the Moreno Valley Children's Services offices.

Corinne Awad is Senior Director of Development for RUHS Foundation. The Foundation has been raising funds for pediatric work at RUHS Medical Center for more than 35 years. In recent years, the Foundation expanded fundraising support to other RUHS agencies and partners. Awad says RUHS and DPSS serve many of the same children and families, and the partnership expands and strengthens Riverside County's safety net. "Bringing hope and healing to a child who has suffered trauma and loss is something we can all get behind."

Walcker says she expects Fiscal Year 24/25 to bring an even greater expansion of resources and funding to foster youth as business and community leaders become more informed about their needs.



## The Racial Disparity and Disproportionality (RDD) Initiative *Empowers Equity and Inclusion*

**R**iverside County Children's Services Division (CSD) is committed to racial equity in its practices. The Racial Disparity and Disproportionality (RDD) Collaborative in CSD has a goal to address the overrepresentation and disparate experiences and outcomes of children of color, in particular African American children in Riverside County, at all decision points in the child welfare continuum. This effort seeks to evaluate the experiences, examine existing practices and develop solution-focused strategies that support preventative services, increase timely and successful exit to permanency and reduce re-entry for children of color.

The scope of RDD is to focus on changes in policy and practice at decision points by evaluating our prevention, reporting, investigation, service provision, visitation, out-of-home care, and permanency for children of color. The RDD Collaborative is led by a Steering Committee and comprises four key subcommittees: Workforce Development, Continuous Quality Improvement in Practice, Community Focused Partnerships and the newly formed Healthy Crownz Sub-Committee. The RDD Collaborative is led by guiding principles that:

- All children and families shall be treated fairly and equitably.
- CSD social services practitioners shall know how race, class, culture and socioeconomic conditions contribute to their perception and service delivery to Black families.
- Community, faith based, and culturally specific service providers shall have an enhanced view of Black family strengths and achieve superior engagement and improved outcomes.

Now in its third year, the RDD Collaborative is making strides toward fulfilling its mission for equitable services and treatment of all children. Highlights include a new Equity Lens Tool to ensure policy content has integrated racial equity language, a staff quarterly newsletter, a new resource directory of services, and an eLearning video to facilitate staff discussion on hair care for Black children. Continuous Data Monitoring and Analysis is being used to identify disproportionate geographical populations in need of services, and collaborative work on mandated reporting training presentations and child and family team meetings is enhancing prevention efforts.



# Healthy Crownz

## *Expands Community Supports for Textured Hair*

**H**ealthy Crownz is part of Children's Services Racial Disparity and Disproportionality Collaborative. The initiative is designed to provide educational awareness and hair care resources for children, staff and caregivers.

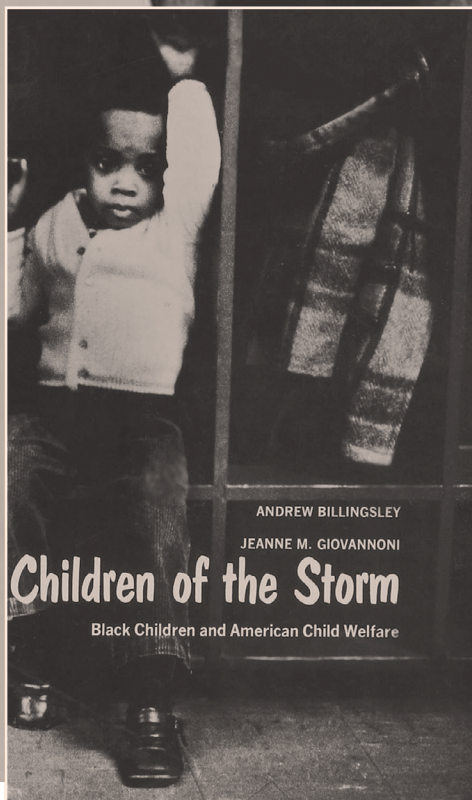
In Riverside County, we believe every child deserves to feel confident and empowered, says Renita Lewis, a deputy director and executive sponsor of the Racial Disparity and Disproportionality Collaborative in Children's Services Division. Healthy Crownz is tailored to address the unique hair care needs of Black foster children and youth in out-of-home care, in addition to building self-esteem, skill development, and a sense of identity.

Healthy Crownz has collaborated with business partners in the field of Black Hair Care to facilitate Hair Care Resource Fairs throughout Riverside County. These events have provided a platform for sharing knowledge, fostering connections, and promoting healthy hair care practices.

Healthy Crownz also collaborated with local salons, non-profit agencies, hair care specialists and local businesses to facilitate Hair Care Events for Black foster youth. Almost 100 youth participated in two hair care events where they received personalized services and instruction about hair care, nail care and makeup services in a fun and vibrant atmosphere.

"Hair in Black communities is a significant source of pride and beauty," Lewis says. "Knowing how to manage Black hair and ensuring youth have the resources they need to care for their hair does build their confidence while also enhancing their sense of belonging in a multicultural environment."

Children's Services has also launched a directory of local stylists who specialize in Black hair to support the needs of children and families throughout the year.

**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

## *Children of the Storm*

In 1972 a groundbreaking book entitled “Children of the Storm: Black Children and American Child Welfare,” brought national attention to the over representation of Black children in the U.S. child welfare system. Today, Children’s Services is focused on equity in its practices and decision making and eliminating the disproportionate number of Black children in Riverside County’s child welfare system.





## New Five-Year System Improvement Plan Sets Path for Kinship Care, Integration, Prevention

Children's Services collaborated with multiple public agencies and community stakeholders to develop a five-year System Improvement Plan aimed at continuous quality improvement, strengthening interagency partnerships, and expanding community involvement in the safety permanency and well-being of children to include prioritizing kinship placement. In 2023, the state approved Riverside County's plan, which is directly linked to targeted federal goals for improving outcomes for children in the child welfare system, says Regional Manager Michele Kapp.

The plan represents an agreement between the California Department of Social Services, Riverside County Children Services Division, and Riverside County Probation to collectively strengthen child welfare practices through an integrated and holistic approach to helping at-risk families.

A key element of Riverside County's improvement plan is to shore up the foundational supports for families by leveraging partnerships through integration of services. Within DPSS, the Linkages program between the Children's Services and Self-Sufficiency divisions offers families coordinated case management to eliminate barriers to resources. The plan also seeks to establish a kinship culture that prioritizes placement of a child with a family member or trusted friend. By maintaining stability and connections to their communities and families,

### *2023-2027 Strategies*

1. Improve the rate of child placements with relatives (kin) and improve the timeliness of second placements with relatives for children entering foster care, to promote stability and reduce re-entries.
2. Increase prevention services to reduce recurrence of maltreatment.
3. Improve interagency collaboration between CSD and the Self-Sufficiency Division (SSD) to increase concrete supports to families with the aim of reducing recurrence of maltreatment and foster care re-entries.

children who cannot stay safely in their original homes are more likely to experience better outcomes.

"The plan sets out a roadmap for improvement and accountability. It establishes actionable steps to goals of reducing re-entry into foster care, reducing recurrence of maltreatment, and improving placement stability," Kapp says. "Riverside County has adopted a targeted and strategic approach to improving outcomes for children and families and it's a path we are firmly committed to following."

**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

## C.O.A.S.

In 2001, the California State Legislature adopted Assembly Bill (AB) 636, the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act, which established the California Outcomes and Accountability Systems (COAS). To improve child welfare outcomes for children and families, COAS required all 58 counties to develop and maintain a System Improvement Plan (SIP). Riverside County's most recent SIP was adopted this fiscal year.



## Linkages Aims to Reduce Recurrence of Child Maltreatment and System Re-Entry



### **LINKAGES IS A COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVE**

between CalWORKs and Child Welfare to serve families who are involved with both programs.

Through coordinated case management, Linkages establishes a continuum of services and supports to address poverty and promote child and family well-being. The Linkages program helps qualified families at all levels of Children's Services intervention, to include prevention, investigation and ongoing services. The outcomes of families who received Linkages supporting services are promising.



## Community Partners Forum *Strives to Educate and Prevent Child Maltreatment*

More than 70 Riverside County public, nonprofit and faith-based partners convened Nov. 1, 2023, for the annual Community Partners Forum in Moreno Valley. The forum attracted 240 participants from various agencies, all of whom came with a focus on preventing the maltreatment of local children and youth.

The forum is an element in Children's Services Five-year System Improvement Plan, a partnership with the California Department of Social Services and Riverside County Probation Department. The forum actively promotes engagement and community input on best practices, identifies the needs of children and families, and creates a space where ideas can be shared with a broad audience.

"Collaboration – that's the heart of it," says Administrative Services Manager, Drew Miller, who helped organize the 2023 forum. "We wanted to share stories about abuse-prevention success." In the afternoon keynote session,



seven panelists from agencies including Children's Services, Probation, Behavioral Health, and Olive Crest brought different perspectives and angles to their mission of protecting children and preventing abuse, Miller says. "They were sharing their proactive approaches to prevention before a situation rises to the point of needing abuse intervention."

## Anti Human Trafficking Forum *Spotlights Prevention Roles of Professionals and Community*

**T**he Annual Anti Human Trafficking Awareness Forum in January 2024 took a new approach from the day-long seminars of years past. Instead, the forum offered one-hour weekly online sessions with a question-and-answer period at the end of each session.

The accessible bite-sized modules attracted 250 participants including public and nonprofit partners who are committed to preventing the commercial sexual exploitation of at-risk children and adults. The sessions offered different perspectives on how each discipline in law enforcement, human rights, public health, and child welfare plays a role in prevention. Guest speakers were from the Human Migration Institute, Barbara Sinatra Children's Center, California Baptist University, Children's Services, and Riverside County Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force.



*Self-Sufficiency Division*

## Assistant Director's Message

### Allison Gonzalez

The 100th Anniversary Annual Report offers a glimpse of the tremendous support Riverside County's self-sufficiency, education and job training programs provide to our residents, communities and local businesses. I am both amazed and humbled to think we've been doing this work as a department for 100 years. Stabilizing families and individuals who are experiencing economic challenges, who need food, healthcare, job training and housing is as important today as it was a century ago and will be tomorrow. I am proud of the many ways our Self-Sufficiency Division has grown and innovated over the years to address the needs of thousands of customers who come through our doors each day.

Initiatives such as Linkages show us what is possible when we join our internal resources and teams together to stabilize families in crisis. The Home Visiting Program between CalWORKs and First Five Riverside County demonstrates what we can achieve together through the power of like-minded community partners. While we will always remain focused on excellence and quality customer service in our day-to-day business, we are also looking ahead with our public and private partners to create accessible services that promote individual well-being, and opportunities for healthier communities in Riverside County. None of this would be possible without the 2200-member workforce in the Self-Sufficiency Division. They are the heartbeat of our success and the outstanding customer service that defines our mission of supporting the health, safety, independence and well-being of individuals and families in Riverside County.

Happy 100th Birthday to the Department of Public Social Services and thank you to all of you who contribute to the success of Riverside County and its residents.



Allison Gonzalez

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*I am both amazed and humbled to think we've been doing this work as a department for 100 years.*

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### Self-Sufficiency Division Programs *by the Numbers* Fiscal Year 2023/24 Month over month

Month and Year	CalFresh Non Assistance Persons	CalWORKS Persons	General Assistance Persons	Medi-Cal Persons
June 2024	239,020	54,119	3,306	884,461
May 2024	237,713	53,945	3,430	887,812
April 2024	235,415	53,255	3,502	887,126
March 2024	234,967	53,378	3,395	888,853
February 2024	233,626	53,423	3,245	888,312
January 2024	232,188	53,001	3,138	887,166
December 2023	232,210	52,852	3,058	888,254
November 2023	235,652	53,093	3,109	868,118
October 2023	233,340	52,765	3,119	903,514
September 2023	246,574	52,120	3,077	911,784
August 2023	253,932	52,586	3,233	931,558
July 2023	253,884	51,818	3,007	930,768
<b>Average</b>	<b>239,043</b>	<b>53,030</b>	<b>3,218</b>	<b>896,477</b>

**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

## *The Great Depression*

The Great Depression began in 1929, but it wasn't until 1932 when mass unemployment hit Riverside County. By 1934, 31% of Riverside County's 81,000 residents were on relief. The average expenditure per case each month was \$8.00. During this period, the activities of the Welfare Department (now DPSS) were greatly expanded. About one in every three of Riverside County's 2.5 million residents access at least one DPSS program.



# Eligibility Technician of the Year



Angie Martinez

## *Support and Service to Her Peers and Customers*

**A**ngie Martinez, Eligibility Technician II in the Lake Elsinore/Temecula Self-Sufficiency Office, was named Eligibility Technician of the Year in Fiscal Year 23/24 for exceptional contributions and dedication to her peers and customers. “It’s rewarding to collaborate with my peers collectively, to have the opportunity to be facilitators of public policy and contribute to improvements that are essential to quality of life,” Martinez says.

Since starting in 2021 during the pandemic, Martinez adapted swiftly to a challenging work environment, becoming a vital support for both peers and supervisors. Martinez’s promotion to ET II in 2022 saw her embracing leadership qualities amidst significant programmatic changes, including the transition to remote services and updates to the homeless application process in CalWORKs. She consistently offers help, serves as a Linkages liaison, and trains new liaisons while collaborating with the Welfare-to-Work initiative. Martinez’s steady temperament, honest feedback, and advocacy for her peers highlight her standout leadership qualities as an invaluable asset to our customers and the Self-Sufficiency Division. “We earn our success in this field based on service to others,” Martinez says.

“

*It’s rewarding to collaborate with my peers collectively, to have the opportunity to be facilitators of public policy and contribute to improvements that are essential to quality of life.*

”



# Human Services Portfolio Award Recognizes

## *Carey Minjarez's Innovation and Collaboration*

**C**arey Minjarez received the 2023 Human Services Portfolio Award for her leadership in developing a countywide workload model and distribution tool. Her innovative approach significantly improved the department's performance in meeting State and Federal processing and quality standards and enhanced staff capacity.

Throughout the process, Minjarez emphasized teamwork, integrity, and respect. Minjarez also collaborated with County IT and vendors to pilot a system for real-time work tracking to improve customer service and staff efficiency. Her continued efforts represent one of the most impactful changes in the Self-Sufficiency Division's history.

Minjarez says one of the most rewarding aspects of her work is collaborating with highly talented and skilled people who share her commitment to serving the community. "We all bring a unique perspective from our different backgrounds and experiences," she explains. "I am fortunate to have the ability to learn from others as we work together to solve complex issues that impact employees and families."



*Carey Minjarez*

## *Kenneth Sandefur's Stellar Customer Service*



*Ken Sandefur*

**K**enneth (Ken) Sandefur earned the 2023 Human Services Portfolio for Stellar Customer Service for his vital role in driving positive employment and workforce outcomes across the County of Riverside.

He has been committed to helping customers establish work history and strengthen basic job skills while providing workforce development services to partner county departments and the business community. Sandefur collaborates with internal and external departments and agencies at the State, local and community levels. These collaborations have strengthened internal services and provided support to families throughout Riverside County. Sandefur's work has connected thousands of customers to employment over the years. For Sandefur, his work is about paying forward what he's learned along the way.

"I was very young when I started with DPSS. I was fortunate to have some great mentors who taught me so much. Through Workforce Connection, we see the transition so many of our customers can make with the services and support we offer them," says Sandefur, who recently celebrated 35 years of service with Riverside County. "Getting to do something that genuinely makes a difference in people's lives for all these years is something I wouldn't trade for anything. DPSS has been very rewarding for me."



*Supervisors of the Year were recognized at the Self-Sufficiency Division Annual Leadership Forum on October 4, 2023.*

# Annual Leadership Forum

## *Puts the Spotlight on Supervisors of the Year*

The Self-Sufficiency Division's Annual Leadership Forum was held October 4, 2023, at the Moreno Valley Conference Center. The conference focused on strategic planning, inspirational talks, and accomplishments of the division and its staff throughout the year.

received "Supervisor of the Year" awards. The award recognizes supervisors for their remarkable performance, ability to foster teamwork, and their significant contributions to driving success within their teams. Congratulations to all the awardees for their exemplary contributions!

A key highlight at the event was recognizing those who

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## Riverside County Leads State *in Accurate Processing of Cal-Fresh Applications*

**A** county's CalFresh error rate is an important performance measurement in the quality control process of the state's largest anti-hunger initiative. Our teams know a customer is at the end of each application, and maintaining a low error rate helps ensure we are delivering timely, quality services to our Riverside County residents. Our focus has made Riverside County a state performance leader, with an active case error rate under 10%. During Fiscal Year 23/24 the California Department of Social Services asked the Riverside County team to highlight their best practices with Expedited Services applications. Highlights included:

**AWARENESS & CONSTANT COMMUNICATION:** Consistently communicating errors via various meetings, dashboards, scorecards, and other means, helps staff retain quality control error information and understand their role in reducing errors.

**COLLABORATION:** Meeting with quality control,

policy, administrative partners, and county staff allows for a thorough examination of errors and encourages robust corrective action and error prevention planning.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** Holding staff accountable to quality control corrective action processes promotes accuracy and error rate reduction.

**QUALITY DATA:** Constantly analyzing the data gathered through the error review process, identifying common error trends, and ensuring staff have direct access to data that allows the county to identify progress made and identify quantifiable goals for improvement.

**CONSISTENCY:** Ensuring corrective action strategies are consistently followed and not losing momentum when error rates decrease, but rather, continuously identifying methods to further improve corrective action strategies and processes.



## California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Program (CalWORKs) *Takes A Multipronged Approach to Helping Families Find New Futures*

**C**alWORKs provides essential financial support and services to low-income families with children. Along with CalFresh and Medi-Cal, the CalWORKs program ensures clients have access to education, employment and training, subsidized childcare, transportation assistance, work experience, and counseling to help families achieve stability and self-sufficiency.

In Fiscal Year 23/24, CalWORKs and First 5 Riverside County enhanced their collaboration on the Home Visiting Program (HVP). The program offers parenting support to improve health and development outcomes. CalWORKs strengthened its Linkages initiative

through improved coordination with Welfare-to-Work and Children's Services. Self-service options such as interactive voice response and the online portal BenefitsCAL made it easier for families to access services.

Our holistic approach to supporting families is achieved through strong community partnerships. Collaborations with Community Action Partnership (CAP) on programs like Tech for Success, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP), along with Housing and Workforce Solutions (HWS), and Riverside University Health Systems (RUHS), promote better outcomes and ensure comprehensive support for thousands of Riverside County families and their children.

**A CENTURY OF SERVICE***CalWORKS*

Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) was established by the Social Security Act of 1935 as a grant program allowing states to provide cash welfare payments for needy children who were deprived of parental support or care because their father or mother was absent from the home, incapacitated, deceased, or unemployed. Today in California, AFDC is known as CalWORKS.

The program serves more than half a million Californians, approximately three quarters of them children.



*CalWorks*

# Welfare-to-Work

## *Creates Path to Self-Sufficiency for CalWORKs Families*

**WELFARE TO WORK (WTW)** is the employment pathway of CalWORKs. The program stabilizes families by connecting them to employment, housing, and educational opportunities. Through

programs such as Expanded Subsidized Employment (ESE), the Housing Support Program (HSP) and educational partnerships, families can work towards their goal of self-sufficiency.



# Family Safety and Well-Being



# Supported by Linkages of Child Welfare and CalWORKS Cases

*Through a collaborative initiative called “Linkages,” Riverside County families with Child Welfare cases and CalWORKs are receiving wraparound case management to build financial self-sufficiency while promoting child safety, permanency, and family well-being.*

While poverty does not cause child maltreatment, the Child and Family Institute reports children living in poverty experience more incidents of maltreatment. Providing income support to their families can improve outcomes. The initiative aims to address poverty and strengthen the child protective capacity of families.

Linkages client, Rosa, calls the program a “complete service” that changed her life. She was trapped in an abusive marriage, without a safe place to live with her children. As the abuse escalated and her older daughters witnessed their mom being “punched a bunch of times in the face,” Rosa says her confidence disappeared. One incident brought law enforcement to her door. A social worker with Child Protective Services came knocking soon afterward. The social worker told Rosa about Linkages, and she made the leap. Through cross-program collaboration in DPSS and Rosa’s commitment, she found the support she needed to gain independence. Today, she calls the home she shares with her children their “castle.”

Among 38 California counties attending the Second Annual Child and Family Institute Linkages Convening in April, Riverside County Linkages was recognized for its innovation and delivery of services. Self-Sufficiency Regional Managers Felix Minjarez and Joy Go, along with Children’s Services Deputy Director Michelle Wohl presented at the Convening in Sacramento. Wohl and Self-Sufficiency Deputy Director Sandra Bowlan also shared Riverside County’s successful approach

to Linkages with the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) in Washington DC that same month.

“This program has done wonders for our customers. It really makes me—and I am sure everybody else in the Linkages program—feel wonderful about what we do and how we help these families,” says Lisa Duran, an employment services counselor who works with families in the program. “Linkages is about keeping families together.”

“

*I had my own social worker. She made me feel like a human, like someone really cares for me. I felt like I could do this. She doesn’t know me, but she believes in me ... Me and my girls used to be homeless and now we have a house. I am a new person. It feels good. I am proud of the things I have done.*

— Rosa, Linkages client

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**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

## *War on Poverty*

The Federal Act of 1964 established the Food Stamp Program, which Riverside County put into effect in November 1969. Today, roughly 240,000 Riverside County households, including working families, elderly adults and college students, use CalFresh to keep healthy food on their tables. Nearly \$845 million in CalFresh benefits were distributed in Riverside County during Fiscal Year 23/24, generating about \$1.3 billion in local economic impacts.



## In Her Words: *Tina Perez, Finds Career and Passion Serving Others*

**J**ust four years ago, I was unemployed. My family was going through a rough time. Food was really expensive for me as a single mother of two.

I applied for the CalFresh program. The program helped me feed my family and allowed me to focus on getting a job. I became an office assistant through the Temporary Assistance Program in Riverside County, where I worked two years

in Clerical. I formed great relations with my co-workers and learned a lot about the county and its services for people like me. I discovered my passion to help others was here in Riverside County. I was hired permanently as an office assistant III and eventually became the unit lead. Recently, I am proud to have been offered the opportunity to lead the Pending Unit as Office Support Supervisor.



*Tina Perez, DPSS Office Support Supervisor* ►

## Financial Hardship *Led Ashley Salmeron to Write a New Chapter for Her Family*

**S**ome time ago my family and I found ourselves applying for CalWORKs because of a temporary financial hardship. We were nervous and uncertain when we attended the intake interview. But we were approved for CalWORKs benefits. I also enrolled in the Welfare-to-Work program, where I discovered several opportunities to prepare for and obtain gainful employment through DPSS. Shortly after, I started working for Riverside County's Temporary Assistance Program as an Office

Assistant III for Riverside University Health System. I remained eligible for the CalWORKs program after my TAP hire, which helped stabilize my family financially. The application we submitted to CalWORKs in our moment of uncertainty and hardship resulted in my family and I overcoming an initial hardship and stepping into a new and successful life. I now work fulltime for RUHS Public Health. Recently, we were able to move into our new townhome and start a fresh chapter in our lives!



*Ashley Salmeron, RUHS Public Health employee* ►



*Nestor Rivera relies on his experience to help families in crisis.*

## Customer's Involvement with Child Welfare Finds Nexus in Work Experience (WEX) Program

**A**s a DPSS CalWORKs customer, Nestor Rivera was hoping to find a new career. "I needed some type of experience under my belt to put on my resumé," Rivera says. He was assigned to the WEX (Work Experience) program at a DPSS office, where Rivera thought he'd volunteer for a month or two and move on. "I liked it so much I ended up coming in on days I wasn't even scheduled," he recalls. "Everybody was great! Six months volunteering opened a whole new world."

At the DPSS office, Rivera learned computer, clerical and other functions. But one skill turned out to be more important than the rest. "I learned how to talk to people. Not everybody is the same," Rivera says. "I have experienced certain things—having your kids taken away from you and then going through a whole case plan, doing everything the court is requiring of you in order to get them back into your life." Rivera was able to close his family's CalWORKs case and move toward

self-sufficiency. He also found his calling and career as a Parent Partner for a nonprofit agency that serves children and families in crisis. "I was fully able to understand that situation," he says. "I wanted to help people out."

“

*I have experienced certain things—having your kids taken away from you and then going through a whole case plan, doing everything the court is requiring of you in order to get them back into your life.*

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# Expanded Subsidized Employment Program Helps 240 Customers Enter the Workforce

## **THE EXPANDED SUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT (ESE) PROGRAM**

enhances employment opportunities for CalWORKs customers and provides financial incentives in the form of wage subsidies to local businesses and partner agencies. ESE has a significant impact on DPSS families by significantly increasing their household incomes and creating career pathways.

Although limited by state budget constraints in Fiscal Year 23/24, the program placed 240 DPSS customers into jobs. The financial incentives offered through ESE program stimulate economic growth in Riverside County and infuse the local economy with millions of dollars in State and Federal funding.





*Shaniese Dunn, far right, Pharmacy Technician graduate*

## Riverside County Office of Education Partnership Creates CalWORKs Customer Career Paths

A partnership between DPSS and the Riverside County Office of Education provides CalWORKs customers with comprehensive vocational training while enhancing their opportunities for success by knocking down barriers along the way.

“Students come to us from all different backgrounds and with a lot of different challenges such as childcare and transportation,” explains Trisha Jenkins Coordinator/Principal of the RCOE School of Career Education. The school awards professional certification in Pharmacy Technician, Patient Care Technician, Dental Assistant and Medical Assistant in programs that last from five to nine months.

Shaniese Dunn, who successfully completed the Pharmacy Technician program, got hugs from family members on graduation day. The support she received allowed her to finish without student loans or worrying about other day-to-day distractions. “They made it so that when we get out, we can focus on being pharmacy techs, really elevating, so we can (be self-sufficient).”

The principal, Jenkins, says the school presented \$1.6



*More than 60 students graduated with professional certificates and 20% had jobs lined up on graduation day.*

million in grants, scholarships and assistance to this year’s students. By graduation day, about one in five students had jobs lined up and she predicted more offers would be rolling in for the proud graduates. “Today is my best workday” Jenkins beamed, as the room filled up with graduates and their supporters. “I get to celebrate all the hard work of my students.”



## CalWORKs Housing Support Program *Offers Foundation of Stability for Hundreds of Families*

**T**he Housing Support Program (HSP) provides housing stability for Riverside County families in the CalWORKs program who are unhoused or at risk of homelessness. HSP offers financial assistance and housing-related wraparound supportive services, including but not limited to rental assistance, housing navigation, case management, security deposits, utility payments, moving costs, interim shelter assistance, legal services, and credit repair.

Through the program, more than 350 families were connected to permanent housing during Fiscal Year 23/24, receiving rental subsidies to help them stabilize with eligible families transitioning to other programs such as Section 8. The program also issued over \$105,000 in eviction prevention assistance, helping many Riverside County families maintain their current housing and stability.

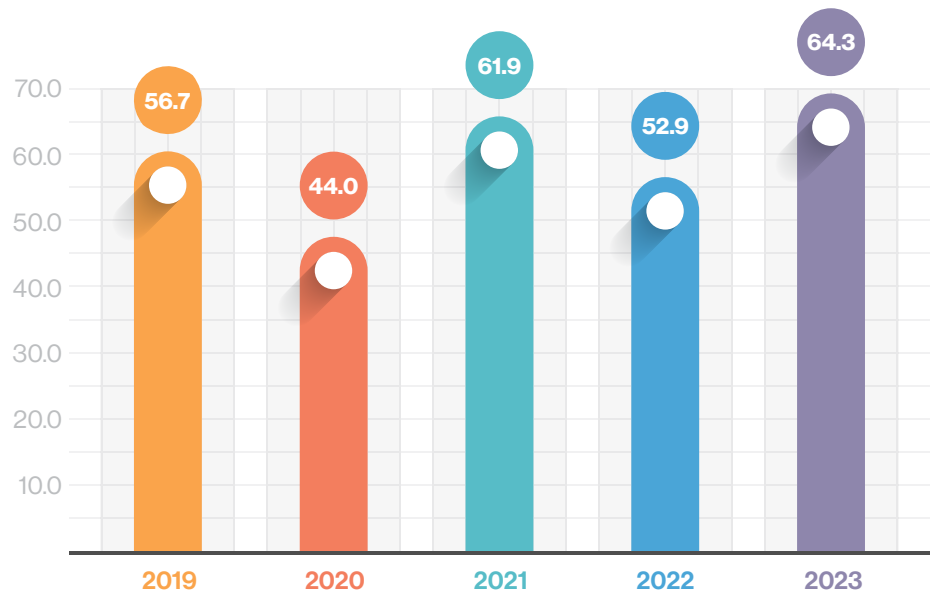
## Riverside County Exceeds Work Participation Rates *Required for CalWORKs Customers*

The Work Participation Rate (WPR) is a measurement of the extent to which “work-eligible” households receiving CalWORKs or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) assistance meet Federal standards for

Work Participation. In FFY 2023 the County of Riverside reviewed a total of 1,574 cases for Work Participation ending the FFY at 63.5% All-Families rate and a 56.0% Two-Parent rate.

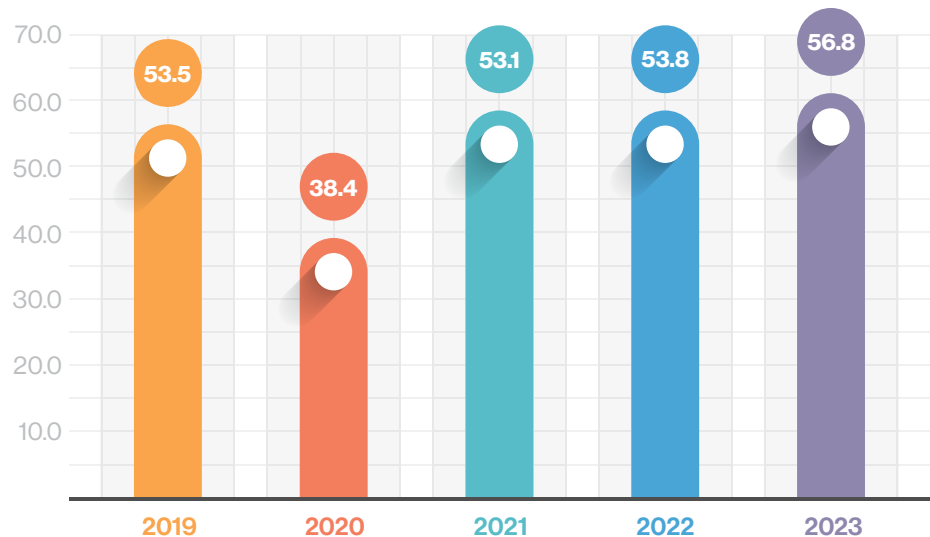
### Work Participation

All Families Rate ▶



### Work Participation

Two Parent Rate ▶



### *Community Outreach*



## 28th Annual Employment Expo

### *Attracts Record Number of Job Seekers*

**N**inety employers and more than a thousand job seekers turned out for the 28th Valley-Wide Employment Expo at the Indio Fantasy Springs Resort in September 2023. Employers showcased a variety of jobs from entry-level to managerial, in fields such as education, hospitality, food, public sector, law enforcement and others. Attendee turnout surpassed the prior year by hundreds, event organizers reported.





## Where the Community Goes, *the Community Outreach Branch (COB) Goes!*



The COB team attended 405 events and helped 539 families access food and health care during Fiscal Year 23/24. COB staff promoted two historic changes in Medi-Cal, the elimination of the asset requirement, and expansion of full scope Medi-Cal benefits to adults 50 and over, regardless of immigration status. As a result, 38 Medi-Cal applications were received within a four-hour presentation and outreach at the Training Occupational Development Educating Communities (TODEC) event.

In addition, COB's two mobile units, equipped with EBT printers and Internet access, served as a mobile broadband access center during power/internet outages to DPSS district offices to continue operations without impact to customers. COB issued a total of 215 EBT cards to seniors, parolees, and individuals without permanent housing, college students and families!



## End of Federal Health Emergency *Spurs Massive Communication and Outreach Effort*

With the ending of the Federal Public Health Emergency, approximately 37,000 Medi-Cal households were required to complete a yearly renewal beginning in June 2023. To assist DPSS offices and support existing customers' continued access to equitable, coordinated care, COB led a new initiative called, "Renewal Friday," which began in October 2023. COB teams visited all DPSS offices to engage, educate and raise awareness about the renewal requirements.

COB's Program Specialists also conducted educational presentations for community organizations and agency partners to help them assist their customers with the renewal process. In addition, COB partnered with Molina HealthCare, Catholic Charities and the Department of Health Services, Navigator's project to assist with Medi-Cal retention and renewal process for all MC customers. This collaborative effort underscores COB's commitment to community and the significant impact we are making together!

The DPSS Office of Communications created a "What's

new with Medi-Cal in 2024" to generate continuing outreach on social media. As Fiscal Year 23/24 ended, efforts to assist with Medi-Cal renewals and merge customers into self-service options continued.

**Medi-Cal Renewal FRIDAYS**

<b>FRIDAY NOV 3</b> Hemet Office 9am - 4pm 541 N San Jacinto St. Hemet, CA 92543	<b>FRIDAY DEC 1</b> Banning Office 9am - 4pm 63 South 4th St. Banning, CA 92220
<b>FRIDAY NOV 3</b> Perris Office 9am - 4pm 201 Redlands Ave. Perris, CA 92571	<b>FRIDAY DEC 8</b> Indio Office 9am - 4pm 44199 Monroe St., Suite D Indio, CA 92201
<b>FRIDAY NOV 17</b> Cathedral City Office 9am - 4pm 68615 Perez Rd., Suite 9A Cathedral City, CA 92243	<b>FRIDAY DEC 8</b> Temecula Office 9am - 4pm 43264 Business Park Drive Suite 102 Temecula, CA 92590

Look for the yellow envelope in the mail!

Look for the mobile van!

*Administrative Services Division*

## Assistant Director's Message

Carl Letamendi

The Administrative Services team takes great pride in delivering high-quality services that are responsive to the needs of our department and external partners. The 100-year anniversary of DPSS in July 2023 presented an opportunity to reflect on the enduring impacts our services and programs have had on our colleagues and communities.

As the engine of business operations and strategic planning for DPSS, the Administrative Services team responded to challenges and opportunities in Fiscal Year 2023/24 with tremendous agility and foresight. We embraced new initiatives in integrated services delivery by strengthening collaboration across county departments and DPSS divisions, equipping our 4800 employees for an environment of continuous quality improvement. We began providing key support to pilot projects that—for the first time ever—linked Self Sufficiency, and In-Home Supportive Services programs to external county agencies through a shared information-technology platform.

We are reaching across DPSS divisions and county agencies to enhance services and population health through the statewide CalAIM initiative. Traditional government silos are being replaced by seamless systems of providers who collaborate to keep individuals and families at the center of their services. We established the new Government Affairs Office in Fiscal Year 23/24 to enhance these efforts and communicate the needs of our department's nearly 1.2 million customers to policymakers in a rapidly changing environment.

Whether our 450-member Admin team is installing new computers, delivering furniture, responding to natural disasters, training a professional workforce or leading strategic planning, I am proud of the customer service and ingenuity each member brings to Administrative Services and our department. This is an exciting time to begin our next 100 years of service. Thank you for bringing a spirit of innovation and teamwork to our colleagues and customers inside and outside the department.

▲  
Carl Letamendi

“

*I am proud of the outstanding customer service and ingenuity each member brings to Administrative Services and our department.*

”

## Annual All-Staff Meeting Sets A Chart for the Future and Brings Staff Together

More than 325 Administrative Services Division employees took part in the annual All Staff Meeting at the scenic Crestmore Manor in Jurupa Valley on June 5. The meeting was conducted in two sessions during the day to accommodate the large number of staff attending.

Strengths-based games and ice breakers led by Coach Steven Beck, and Dr. Thomas Sy from UC Riverside set the stage for learning opportunities and engagement. Deputy directors and Assistant Director Carl Letamendi provided updates from the department's Strategic Plan and shared their vision for continuous quality improvement and an inclusive workplace environment.

Lots of laughs, smiles, and hugs were shared at the meetings, which became reunions for many staff members who had not seen their work friends and colleagues in-person since 2020, prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. An anonymous survey after the meeting allowed staff to offer feedback and input about what they hope to see at next year's meeting.



*Assistant Director Carl Letamendi*

"My hope is to hold next year's meeting in a venue large enough for all Admin Services staff to attend at once," said Carl Letamendi, Assistant Director of the Administrative Services Division.

"Online meetings have changed the way we do business, so it's extra meaningful and energizing when we can come together as a large team to re-connect to our mission and to one another."



### *Administrative Management and Support Branch*



## Customer Service and Innovation Drive Administrative Management and Support Branch

**T**he Administrative Management and Support Branch (AMSB) consists of three distinct units: Internal Services, Program Development and Grants Management, and Eligibility Administrative Services. Each unit supports the various DPSS divisions through contracts and bid solicitation, procurement of goods and services, vehicle, travel, vital records, quality control and integrity of benefit programs, and application for additional funding to expand existing programs or develop new programs. Our goal is to provide excellent customer service through innovation and continuous quality improvement. We serve those who serve others.

“

*Our goal is to provide excellent customer service through innovation and continuous quality improvement.*

*We serve those who serve others.*

”

# Internal Services Ensure Seamless Flow of Department Business Operations

Internal Services is the primary source of support for internal customers seeking contract and solicitation services, procurement of goods and services, travel needs, vehicle management, and requests for vital records. The unit consists of 32 staff on the following Teams: Contract Administration; DPSS Purchasing; Vehicle Management; Travel Desk and Vital Records.

## Internal Services *by the Numbers* | Fiscal Year 2023/24





# Program Development and Grants Management

## *Strengthen Supports for At-Risk Populations*

The Program Development & Grants Management (PDGM) unit assists with expanding DPSS’ funding sources by researching and identifying federal, state, and local funding and grant opportunities, and helping divisions submit competitive applications. PDGM is responsible for the administration of the Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP) and the Community Care Expansion (CCE) Preservation Program with a combined budget of over \$12 million.

### FUNDING SEARCHES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Number of grant funding identified .....	86
Number of potential funding recommendations .....	10

### HOUSING AND DISABILITY ADVOCACY PROGRAM (HDAP)

Number of program participants.....	80
Number of participants pending a disability benefit determination.....	48
Number of participants approved for disability benefits.....	24
Benefit approval success rate.....	75%

# Community Care Expansion Preservation

## *Program Reinforces Those at Risk*

The Community Care Expansion Preservation Program provides funding to preserve adult and senior care facilities that serve Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP) and Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI) applicants and recipients, including those who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness. CCE consists of Capital Projects and Operating Subsidy Payments.

PDGM represents DPSS on the County of Riverside Continuum of Care, Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Administration Council, and serves as vice chair of the Emergency Food and Shelter Program Local Board.



## EAS Unit Ensures Accuracy of Program Benefits and Eligibility

**T**he Eligibility Administrative Services team promotes public trust by reviewing and determining the accuracy and eligibility of program benefits provided to DPSS customers. By identifying error trends and

ensuring program eligibility, the EAS team assures Adults Services, Children Services, and Self Sufficiency programs are meeting State and Federal standards.

Number of Income Eligibility Verification Systems (IEVS) Cases Reviewed .....	50,053
Number Quality Control – Work Participation Rate Reviews .....	901
Number Quality Control – CalFresh Cases Reviewed .....	649
Number Administrative Hearings .....	7,511
<b>Total Cases Reviewed .....</b>	<b>60,115</b>

**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

## *Public Funds*

Changes in federal regulations in 1973 required social service agencies, including DPSS, to improve their capability of reaching a prompt determination of aid paid pending and other fair hearing issues. The changes were implemented to avoid “unnecessary expenditure of public funds to persons who might otherwise be ineligible to receive such aid.”



*Children's Services Administrative Support Branch*

## Children's Services Administrative Support Branch *Develops Framework for Kinship Culture*

**T**he Children's Services Administrative Support Branch develops policy and collaborates with county and community partners to promote key initiatives that improve the outcomes of children and families involved in the child welfare system. Riverside County is one of eight counties statewide participating in the Kinship Accelerator Program through the California Department of Social Services.

With support from multiple statewide partners including the Center for Excellence at UC Davis, Riverside County is developing a plan to focus on key indicators that support an enhanced Kin-First Culture. Increasing the number of children and youth who can be placed with kin – usually a family member or trusted friend – requires focus from all those involved in child welfare, says Ben Slagter, deputy director of the Children's Administrative Services Branch.

"We want to make sure we are prioritizing the preservation and permanency of the connections a child has to their family and community—their kin," Slagter says. "Research demonstrates children in kinship care have better outcomes with more positive behaviors and improved stability."

Children's Services participated in a Rapid Improvement Event in early 2024 to improve the process and approval time for kin placement. Policy and practice changes are being evaluated and made, with some early improvements being demonstrated, says Bridgette Hernandez, Assistant Director of Children's Services Division.

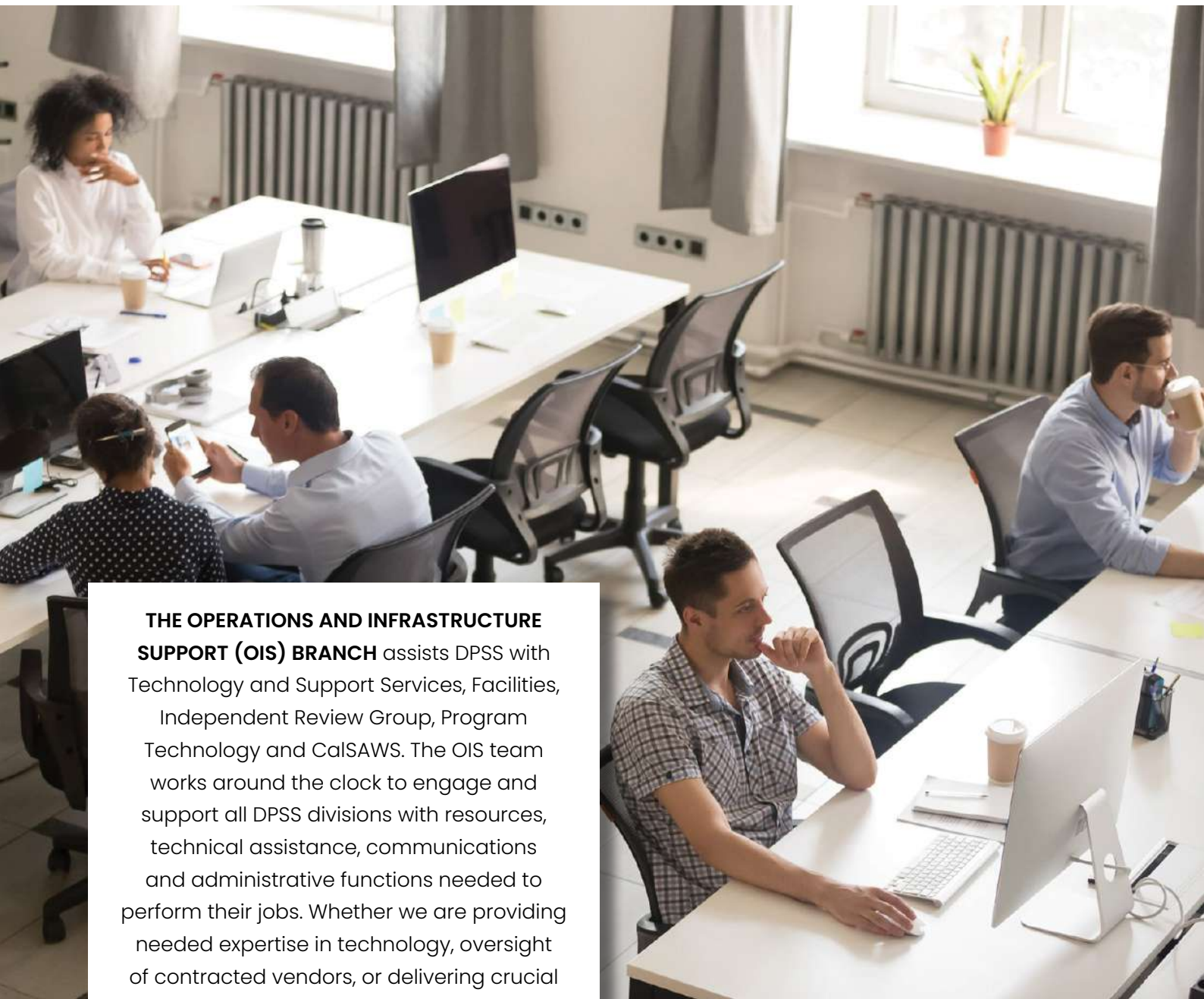
Focus groups have been conducted to explore the experiences and feedback of key stakeholders including relative caregivers, biological parents and former foster youth. The valuable input will guide the development of a new Kinship Advisory Council. The council, which is in development, will act as a conduit between kinship care providers and Children's Services Division, to engage the community and promote positive system change.

"My personal goal is to see 75% of our kiddos placed with kin," says Hernandez. "I think we can do that. We have room to grow, to brainstorm and identify placements we might not immediately be thinking about."



*Operations and Infrastructure Support Branch*

## Operational Excellence and Customer Service *Support the Success of Staff and Customers*



**THE OPERATIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT (OIS) BRANCH** assists DPSS with Technology and Support Services, Facilities, Independent Review Group, Program Technology and CalSAWS. The OIS team works around the clock to engage and support all DPSS divisions with resources, technical assistance, communications and administrative functions needed to perform their jobs. Whether we are providing needed expertise in technology, oversight of contracted vendors, or delivering crucial supplies, the OIS Branch puts our customers first and strives for operational excellence in everything we do.



# DPSS Facilities Maintains Broad Span of Services Across Riverside County

The DPSS Facilities team supports the department with a variety of critical functions, including building improvements, building maintenance, mail and supply delivery, records management, print services, building safety, and building security. During Fiscal Year 23/24, the DPSS Facilities team completed the initial setup for the Harmony Haven Children & Youth Center, which included deep cleaning, painting, furniture, and appliances for the four cottages that house children and youth.

DPSS Buildings Managed.....	33
Total Square Footage of DPSS Facilities Managed .....	1.1 million
Facilities Support Work Orders Resolved .....	4,861
Pieces of Mail Processed .....	733,855
Aged Case Files Purged.....	5,719
Long-term Case Files Stored.....	1.2 million
Completed Requests for Office Supplies.....	1,070
Planning Projects Completed.....	101
Geographic Information System Requests Completed.....	8,428

**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

## *Creature Comforts*

After enduring high temperatures and cold weather, department staff were authorized in the 1940s to purchase an air cooler for the Indio office and an oil heater for the Hemet office. Today, DPSS Facilities manages 1.1 million square feet of space and 33 buildings across Riverside County.





## Program Technology Unit *Supports Access to Vital Benefits and Programs*

**P**rogram Technology supports DPSS staff and customers by serving as system administrators and liaisons for various state-wide systems that allow staff to access programs such as CalSAWS, CalHEERS, and EBT Edge, among others. These platforms provide access to healthcare

coverage, food assistance and other resources to families and adults in need. The team also helps customers recover EBT benefits that are lost or stolen. During Fiscal Year 23/24, Program Technology built a taskforce to assist with the unprecedented rise in EBT theft.

### Program Technology Unit *by the Numbers* | Fiscal Year 2023/24

#### SECURITY ADMINISTRATION ACTIONS

8,520

#### EBT THEFT CLAIMS PROCESSED

12,455

#### SERVICE TICKETS PROCESSED

4,571

#### CALHEERS ADMINISTRATION ACTIONS

2,864



## Independent Review Group *Supports Accountability for DPSS Assets and Services*

**T**he Independent Review Group (IRG) performs detailed audits and completes a physical inventory of over 42,000 DPSS assets each year. IRG ensures DPSS' customers receive the requested services through

contract performance audits and other engagements required by state and federal regulations. During Fiscal Year 23/24, IRG's Assent Inventory Unit adopted a new cycle-count methodology, allowing it to effectively locate about 200 more assets than the prior year.

### Independent Review Group *by the Numbers* | Fiscal Year 2023/24

ASSETS VERIFIED

42,528

AUDITS COMPLETED

45

FOSTER HOME  
SAFETY VISITS

12

# Technology Support Services

## *Equips Staff and Customers with Needed Tools*

**T**echnology and Support Services provides staff with software, computers, cell phones, printers, scanners, and headsets. The TSS team warehouses and transports hardware to locations across the county to ensure staff

have the proper tools they need to perform their jobs. During Fiscal Year 23/24, the team successfully completed the deployment of larger self-service terminals for the Self-Sufficiency offices, providing county residents with better access to services.

### Technology Support Services *by the Numbers* | Fiscal Year 2023/24

Number of Computer Hardware Requests Processed .....	7,037
Number of Software Requests Processed .....	6,713
Number of Mobility Related Requests Processed .....	7,231
Number of Upgraded all out-of-date cell phones.....	2,352



**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

## *Technology*

One of the department's early significant moves to computer technology occurred in 1973 when it adopted a management reporting system to provide managers at every level with a daily report that allowed them to "plan for tomorrow." Today, transformations in technology are continuing in DPSS with emerging Artificial Intelligence at the forefront of new capabilities in social service delivery.



*Strategic Planning and Analytics Branch*

## Strategic Planning and Analytics Branch *Supports Continuous Improvement and Advocacy*

The Strategic Planning and Analytics Branch (SPAB) played a pivotal role in the Department's strategic planning and continuous quality improvement initiatives throughout Fiscal Year 23/24. The branch has grown to encompass the Research, Analysis, & Decision Support (RADS) unit, Office of Strategy & Project Management (OSPM), and Government Affairs.

SPAB enhances the department's strategic planning and decision-making capabilities by leading key initiatives, optimizing operational processes, and leveraging data analytics for informed decision making. Moreover, the branch plays a significant role in advancing legislative efforts and advocacy to local, regional, and national policymakers, representing program policies and the vulnerable populations served by DPSS.





## *Collaboration Drives* Office of Strategy and Project Management

**T**he Office of Strategy & Project Management (OSPM) coordinated and expanded strategic initiatives, promoted process improvements, and facilitated Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) initiatives to improve operations and processes across the department. By

emphasizing collaboration and seeking input from staff and customers, OSPM acts as a central hub for strategic planning, coordinating department-wide process improvement efforts, data-informed decision-making, and continuous learning.



## OSPM Rolls Out Lean Six Sigma Training *to Empower Staff and Improve Service Delivery*

**T**hroughout Fiscal Year 23/24, the Office of Strategy and Project Management (OSPM) led the development and implementation of the department's Lean Six Sigma (LSS) Training Program. OSPM continues to roll out training across the department, empowering staff with effective tools to improve processes in their unique work environments.

Classes launched in Fiscal Year 23/24 included a pilot for multi-division LSS Champions and Sponsors, and LSS Overview. This training, especially tailored for DPSS, received positive feedback for its relatability and

engagement. OSPM uses feedback to enhance future courses and ensure resources are allocated to improve service delivery and staff engagement.

Upcoming classes include LSS Belt Certifications, White Belt classes beginning in July 2024 and Green Belt classes starting in the fall. These trainings focus on enhancing efficiency and service quality through continuous improvement, process standardization, and strategic initiatives that align with organizational goals and support the department's 4,800-member workforce.

**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

## *Integration*

New service regulations in 1973 necessitated an effective method of dealing with operational and administrative challenges. Documents from that era indicate focused planning involved “integrated efforts of all individuals, groups and divisions of the organization, to achieve the organization’s goals.” Today, integrating and streamlining internal and external services is a top priority for DPSS and its many Riverside County and community partners.





## New Government Affairs Office *Informs and Advocates for Legislative Priorities*

**T**he Government Affairs Office was established in Fiscal Year 23/24 to expand relationships with legislators and stakeholders, and to communicate policy priorities on issues impacting the nearly 1.2 million lives DPSS serves each year.

Government Affairs Officer, Leah Sams, says the office is focused on coalescing the legislative platform across the department's various divisions and ensuring internal and external priorities align with the strategic goals of DPSS and Riverside County.

"We are increasing our collaboration with the County Executive Office, California counties, and many others to make sure DPSS remains a strong voice for the community's needs and priorities at local, state and federal levels," Sams says.

The Government Affairs Office will also play an important role in the department's continuous quality improvement initiatives by automating and streamlining legislative tracking and amplifying advocacy for customers' needs. "We want to make sure we have a seat at the table and that our legislative voice is established, and eventually represented in Sacramento," she says.



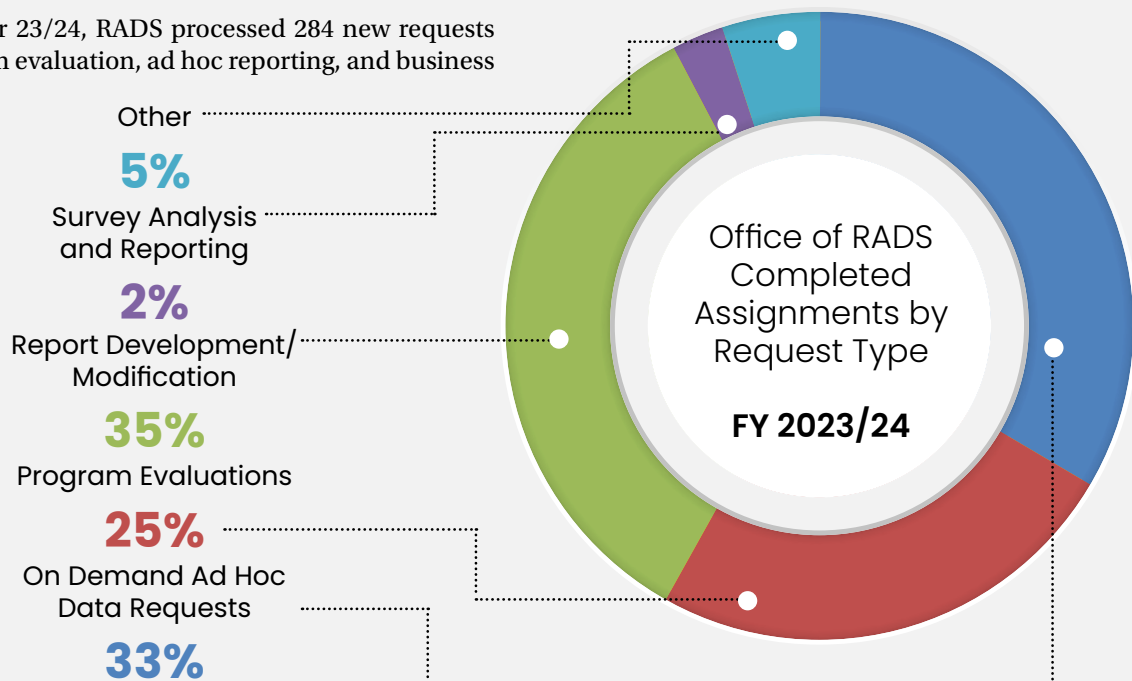
*Leah Sams, Government Affairs Officer*

## Office of Research, Analysis and Decision Support *Informs Decision Making*

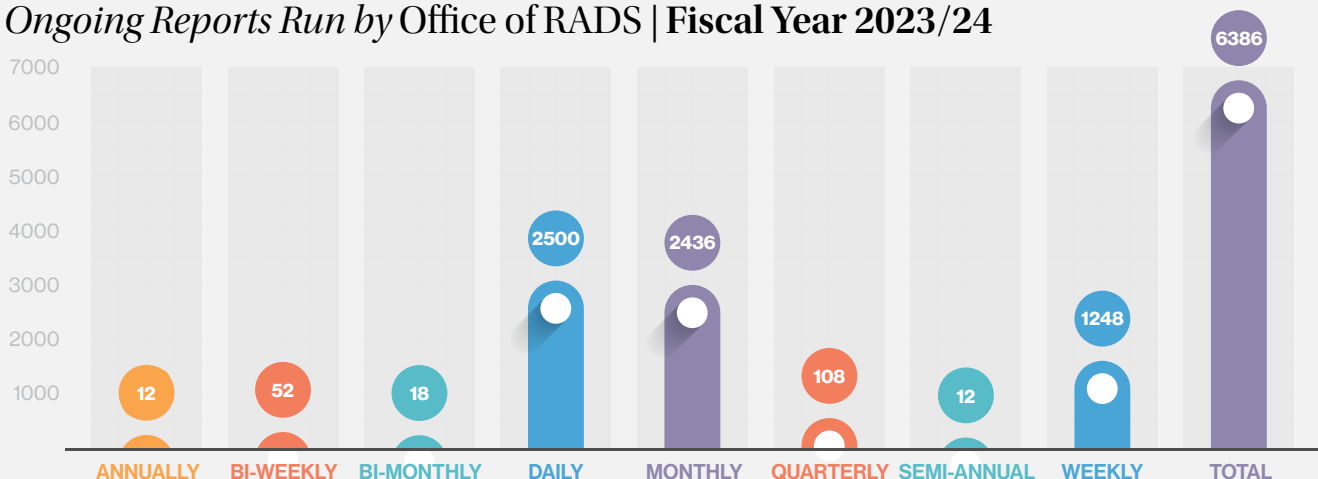
**D**ecision making informed by quality data is essential to the success of DPSS services, programs, and planning. Teams that comprise the Office of RADS include Data Analysis Unit; Children and Family Evaluation; Research, Analysis and Decision Support 1; Research, Analysis and Decision Support 2. The teams provide quality and timely data and evaluations to inform programs, leadership and policymakers about the challenges and needs of DPSS customers, and to identify areas of continued improvement and success.

intelligence dashboards); ran a total of 294 ongoing reports (e.g., on a daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly basis); evaluated services of 31 contracted providers to children and families in Child Protective Services; generated and shared data to support 27 school districts in direct certification for free or reduced price school lunches, and for CalWORKs and Medi-Cal service recipients, including agreements with the Inland Empire Health Plan, First 5 Riverside County, Molina Health Care, and the Riverside County Office of Education.

In Fiscal Year 23/24, RADS processed 284 new requests (e.g., program evaluation, ad hoc reporting, and business



### Ongoing Reports Run by Office of RADS | Fiscal Year 2023/24



*Workforce Development Branch*

# Workforce Development Branch

*Serving the People Who Serve*

**T**he Workforce Development Branch (WD) actively promotes DPSS as an employer of choice while supporting the professional journey of our department's 4,800-member professional workforce. The branch serves DPSS staff and Riverside County communities through three main units: Employee Success Center, Staff Development, and Mass Care.

The **DPSS Employee Success Center (DESC)** manages payroll, employee leave, organizational moves, policy and consults. We value the opportunity to serve you and hope you will allow us to engage and inspire you to continue your career within DPSS.

In **Staff Development**, experienced trainers and communicators ensure DPSS has an engaged and highly trained workforce to address the complex needs of our diverse clients and communities.

**Mass Care** works closely with multiple community and emergency response partners to provide shelter and safety to Riverside County residents who have been evacuated from their homes due to fires, floods and other natural or manmade disasters.



# DPSS Employee Success Center *Recruits and Supports Quality Social Services Workforce*

The DPSS Employee Success Center (DESC) in Fiscal Year 23/24 provided accurate, relevant, useful, and accessible information and services to employees at all levels. From recruitment, onboarding, recognition, evaluation, training, and development through retirement, our teams delivered superior services to our valued DPSS workforce. Specialized units in DESC include Employee Development, Compliance Services, Employee

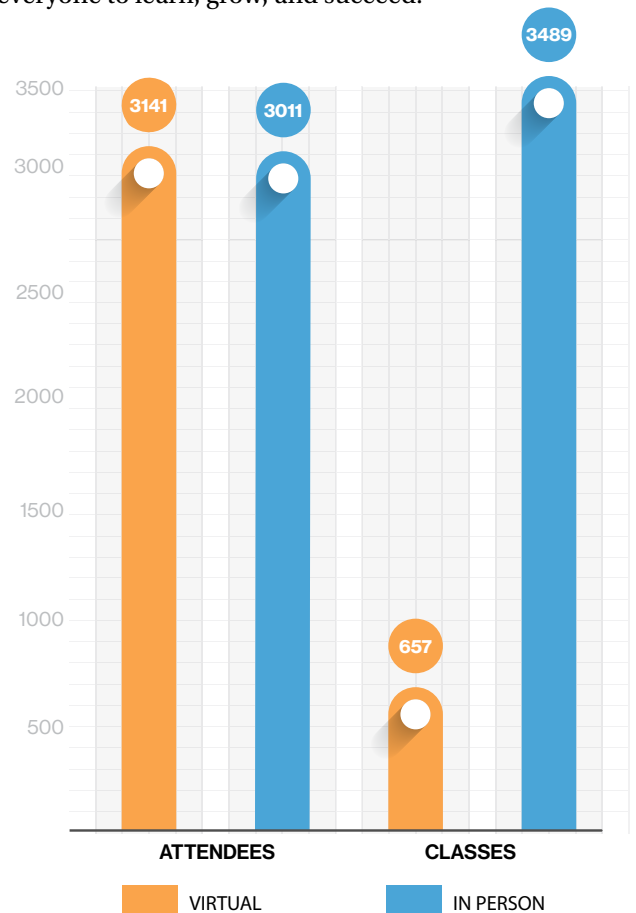
Services, the Policy team, and Workforce Services. DESC leveraged technology to implement a new electronic filing system for personnel files and a department-wide evaluation system in RIVCO Talent. DESC added many new resources for employees and supervisors to our SharePoint site, including the Supervisor Recognition Toolkit. Be sure to visit us on SharePoint to access our tools and to learn more!

Number of Department Policies Overseen.....	200+
Number of DPSS Employees Served.....	4,780+
Number of Promotions Processed.....	280
Number of Social Services Practitioners Recruited .....	183
Number of Eligibility Technicians Recruited .....	577



## Staff Development Team *Equips Workforce with Training and Tools for Success*

**S**taff Development empowers DPSS employees with the tools, resources, and competencies they need to support and improve the health, safety, and well-being of individuals and families. We deploy innovative training modalities to ensure the workforce has the knowledge, skills, and abilities to fulfill the department's mission. We serve as a resource through consultation and collaboration. The training teams in Staff Development create a learning environment that supports strong foundational skills, enhanced knowledge, and competency. The values of Staff Development are integrity, focus, commitment, trust, teamwork, accountability, unity, innovation, respect, credibility, and valued relationships. We want everyone to learn, grow, and succeed!



**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

## *Staff Development*

Fifty years ago, Staff Development announced a major investment in a 14-week training service for managers entitled "Commitment to Excellence." Training priorities at that time included Child Protective Services, and Adoptions for Older Children. "Employee development is viewed as an investment in human capital on which a return is expected in terms of reduced cost to the taxpayer and improved service to agency clientele," the department's 1973 annual report stated.



## Staff Development

### *Recognizing Excellence in Performance*

#### Trainer of the Year Passionate About Helping Others Reach Full Potential

**T**raining Officer, Jami Baker, was named Staff Development Trainer of the Year for 2023. Baker's supervisors and colleagues praise her effectiveness, relationship building skills, and willingness to go above and beyond as keys to her success.

In Fiscal Year 23/24, Baker led major training initiatives such as UPWARD (Unified Processing with Accurate Results and Determinations). UPWARD streamlines processes, establishes consistency in practices and empowers the Self-Sufficiency Division to establish the most effective solutions for families, says Baker, who joined Staff Development team in February 2022 and promoted to her role as Computer-Based Training Officer in March 2024.

"I'm passionate about my role," Baker says. "I have been able to empower, engage, educate, develop, and motivate others to reach their full potential as someone once did with me."



*Jami Baker, Training Officer*

#### Admin Professional of the Year Enjoys Opportunities to Learn New Skills



*Akilah Warren, Office Assistant III*

**A**kilah Warren looks forward to doing her best and delivering quality work to her colleagues and customers each day in Staff Development. Warren began as a temporary Office Assistant III in June 2022 and joined the Staff Development team fulltime the following October. She supports several key functions within Staff Development and says she's appreciated the opportunity to expand her skillsets.

Her supervisors and colleagues say Warren's dedication, exceptional performance, and unwavering commitment to excellence earned her the 2023 title of Administrative Professional of the Year in Staff Development, adding that her "hard work and professionalism are deeply valued and appreciated."

"Having amazing colleagues is a bonus," Warren says.



Mass Care Services *Brings Resources and Compassion to Residents During Disasters*

**F**ew things are more devastating than seeing a family home and cherished memories devoured by fire or other catastrophic events. Trained DPSS Mass Care workers responded to 18 disasters across Riverside County in Fiscal Year 23/24, and worked alongside partners, including Emergency Management, the Red Cross, and many others to deliver safe shelter, warm meals, basic health services and essential supplies to residents displaced by wildfires. Importantly, Mass Care workers offer compassion and understanding to victims impacted by catastrophic events in Riverside County.



Mass Care <i>by the Numbers</i>   Fiscal Year 2023/24	
Trained Mass Care Workers.....	403
New Shelter Managers Trained.....	15
Disaster Responses.....	18
Reception and Care Sites Opened .....	18

*Finance & Forecasting Division*

## Assistant Director's Message

Monica Bentley



**T**he Finance and Forecasting Division (FFD) provides budgeting, financial analysis, and accounting services to support colleagues working to improve and empower communities across Riverside County. Although our team works behind the scenes, we dedicate each day to delivering the highest level of customer service to our internal and external customers. Our team's guiding mission is to fulfill its fiduciary responsibility to the community we serve. Our slogan "counting what matters today, for tomorrow" highlights our focus to keep this guiding principle in mind when making decisions and taking actions that will benefit the community both now and in the future.

We are honored to mark the department's 100th year anniversary this fiscal year and to be part of the lasting impacts its programs and services continue to make in the lives of Riverside County's residents.



Monica Bentley



*We dedicate each day  
to delivering the highest  
level of customer service to  
our internal and external  
customers.*



**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

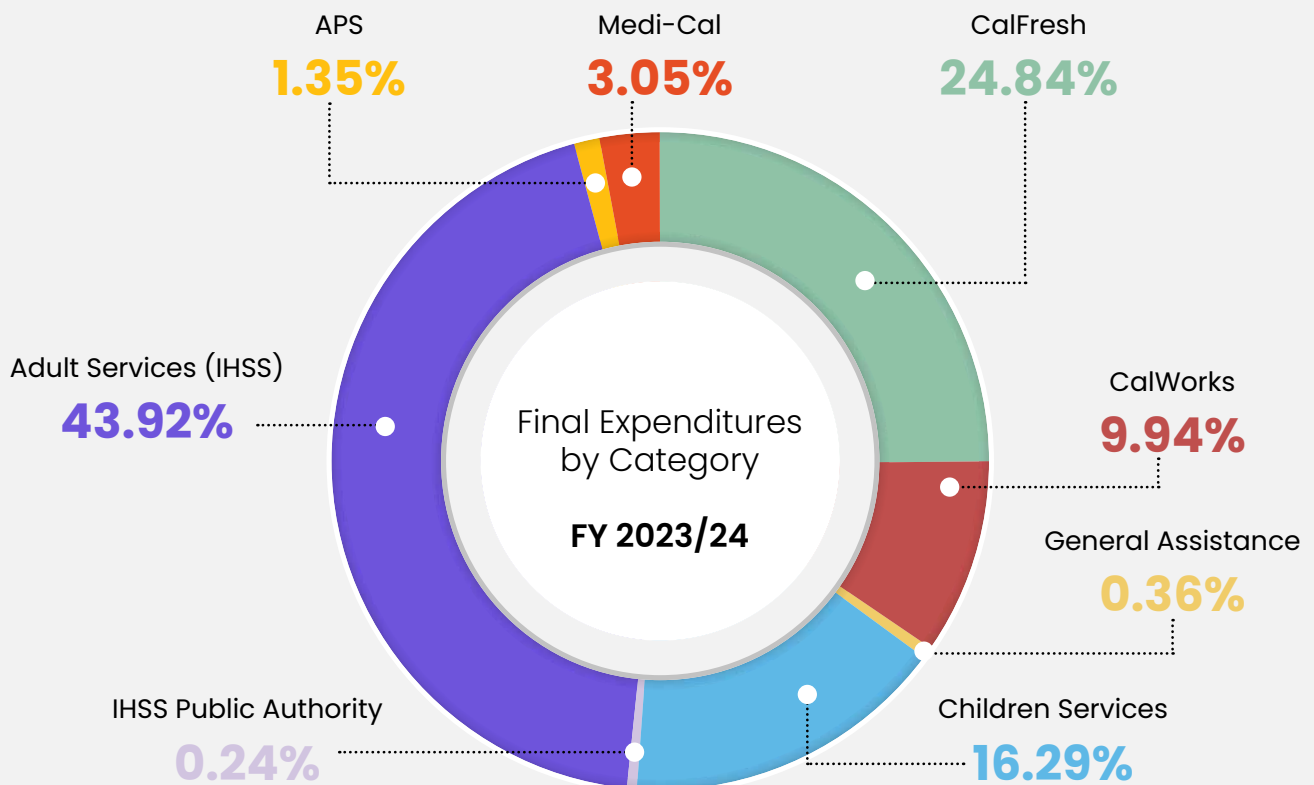
## *First Year Budget*

In its first year, the total budget for the Riverside Welfare Department was \$4,425.51 according to the County of Riverside Fiscal Year 1923/24 Annual Report. Today, 100 years later, the Department of Public Social Services Finance and Forecasting Division manages a budget of more than \$1.5 billion that supports programs serving nearly 1.2 million Riverside County residents annually.



## Fiscal Year 23/24 DPSS Budget and Program Expenditures

DPSS BUDGET AND PROGRAM EXPENDITURES	FY 23/24	FY 22/23	INCREASE/(DECREASE)
<b>The Total Budget Managed for the Department</b>	<b>\$1,518,204,465</b>	<b>\$1,226,428,624</b>	<b>\$291,775,841</b>
Expense claims processed	\$1,401,278,723	\$1,209,890,691	\$191,388,032
Money recovered through collection	\$9,092,724	\$7,201,102	\$1,891,622
Contract invoices processed	\$74,755,040	\$60,012,433	\$14,742,607
<b>Final Expenditures by Category</b> (benefits administered)			
1. CalFresh	\$845,895,764	\$744,056,723	\$101,839,041
2. CalWORKs	\$338,409,414	\$296,817,107	\$41,592,307
3. General Assistance	\$12,404,481	\$10,590,761	\$1,813,720
4. Children Services	\$554,925,793	\$481,007,994	\$73,917,799
5. IHSS Public Authority	\$8,192,762	\$7,205,435	\$987,327
6. Adult Services (IHSS)	\$1,495,694,326	\$1,115,483,100	\$380,211,226
7. APS	\$46,092,314	\$41,843,793	\$4,248,521
8. Medi-Cal	\$104,002,760	\$101,315,893	\$2,686,867





## Paperless Process for CalSAWS Payments *Speeds Up Client Services*

**T**he CalWORKs Payment Unit (CPU) and the Financial Accounting Section-Client Payments (FASCP) established a process for handling payment requests electronically in Fiscal Year 23/24. A paperless process provides greater efficiency, reduces processing time, and allows CPU to get payments out to the vendors who can serve our clients faster. The flexibility for remote or on-site workers to process requests allows CPU to ensure more timely processing of payment requests. In addition,

reducing manual processes allows for improved accuracy.

Additional benefits of the electronic process include:

- Eliminates the use of supplies and storage.
- Eliminates lost or misfiled information through improved tracking and monitoring of digital records.
- Enhances privacy and protects the integrity of information.



*Stacey Claflin and then co-worker Anita Calzaretta in 1977 at a fiscal office on Orange and University in Riverside.*

## From Typewriters to Computers: *Employee Stacey Claflin Dedicates 50 Years to Riverside County*

**A**dministrative Analyst Stacey Claflin has dedicated more than 50 years of service to Riverside County. Claflin started her journey with DPSS as a Clerk I on November 7, 1973. Claflin went to work for the Auditor Controller's Office in the early 1980s and returned "home" to DPSS just a few years later. Throughout her tenure, Claflin has witnessed the evolution of DPSS processes from manual to semi-automated to fully automated, being present as the department transitioned from typewriters to computers.

Claflin has dedicated more than 35 years of her career to the Finance and Forecasting Division. Her hard work, dedication, and extensive experience have been instrumental in creating vital processes that track, monitor, and process department revenue. Claflin's role is crucial in supporting DPSS programs and operations



by ensuring that revenue is processed in a timely and accurate manner. Claflin's commitment and knowledge contribute significantly to the success of the department's fiscal responsibilities.

**A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

## *Administered Benefits*

In 1973, the department reported a budget of \$58.5 million and administered nearly \$106 million in program benefits to Riverside County residents. About half a million people lived in Riverside County at the time, according to the US Census Bureau.



### *Investigations Unit*

## Investigations Unit Protects *Integrity of Benefits and Serves Department*

**M**embers of the Investigations Unit are vigilant in their efforts to combat fraud and protect the integrity of program benefits intended for the most economically vulnerable households in Riverside County. The unit is made up of the Special Investigations Unit (SIU), Fraud Early Detection (FRED), Investigations Criminal Records (ICR), Match unit and support staff. The units have a variety of functions specializing in investigating preventative fraud, criminal fraud, and administrative fraud. The Criminal Records Review Unit provides summarized background investigations to Children's Services for potential placement of minors throughout the county.

In Fiscal Year 23/24, SIU investigators focused on dozens of investigations involving allegations of theft and fraud. In one case, they uncovered a case of benefits theft totaling nearly \$135,000 and worked with the District Attorney to bring charges against eight individuals. Investigators collaborated with members of the Fraud Early Detection (FRED) team in Self Sufficiency, to identify nearly \$18,000 in fraudulent claims from another individual.

The Special Enforcement Team (SET) was formed in response to the increase in skimming thefts on CalFresh customers' electronic benefits transfer (EBT)



cards. A Supervising Welfare Fraud Investigator, four Welfare Fraud Investigators, a Supervising Investigative Technician, two Senior Investigation Technicians and two investigation technicians were drawn from existing teams to form the new unit. Since formation, the team has made several arrests and seized thousands of dollars along with fraudulently created access cards with stolen benefits. As a result, Riverside County's EBT fraud theft losses have seen a steep drop.

### Investigations Unit *by the Numbers* | Fiscal Year 2023/24

Welfare Fraud Investigations.....	962
Special Investigations Conducted .....	2,217
Match Investigations.....	10,413
Criminal Records Review Unit Investigations.....	4,276
Enforcement Tactics and Training Unit Training Hours .....	1,484
Hours Staffing Harmony Haven Children and Youth Center.....	548

## DPSS Executive Leadership Team



**CHARITY DOUGLAS**  
Director



**TODD BELLANCA**  
Managing Director



**CARL LETAMENDI**  
Assistant Director,  
Administrative Services



**BARRY DEWING**  
Assistant Director,  
Adult Services



**BRIDGETTE HERNANDEZ**  
Assistant Director,  
Children's Services



**MONICA L. BENTLEY**  
Assistant Director,  
Finance & Forecasting



**ALLISON GONZALEZ**  
Assistant Director,  
Self-Sufficiency

## Riverside County Leadership



**KEVIN JEFFRIES**  
First District Supervisor



**KAREN SPIEGEL**  
Second District Supervisor



**CHUCK WASHINGTON**  
Third District Supervisor



**V. MANUEL PEREZ**  
Fourth District Supervisor



**YXSTIAN GUTIERREZ**  
Fifth District Supervisor



**JEFF VAN WAGENEN**  
County Executive Officer



**JUAN PEREZ**  
Chief Operating Officer



**KIMBERLY BRITT**  
Assistant County Executive  
Officer







## RIVERSIDE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES



### RIVERSIDE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

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