

## HIGHLIGHTS

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## Director's Report

by Connie Beck

► As we head into fall, there is a big focus on the rollout of our Racial Equity Strategic Plan to staff. The plan focuses on six areas—establishing a permanent team focused on racial and cultural equity, training and professional development for staff and supervisors, increasing coaching across the department, improving hiring and retention practices, and improving our ability to listen to, understand and improve the experiences of BIPOC staff at DHHS.



In order to promote meaningful discussions about these topics, staff have been gathering in small groups to go over the plan and using Jamboard, a digital interactive whiteboard, which gives participants the opportunity to pose questions and make comments and suggestions anonymously so that everyone can feel comfortable participating.

The department's goal for the rollout of the Strategic Plan is that all staff complete the first meeting by Oct. 1.

While equity work is not new to the department, DHHS Administration and leadership moved racial equity to the top of our priority list after national discussions of racism in summer 2020 created a sense of urgency in addressing systemic racism and inequity. Since that time, we have focused on expanding work that has historically been focused on clients and service delivery, to include staff development and other efforts to dismantle systemic racism within the agency with the goal of becoming a truly anti-racist organization.

In August 2020, DHHS formed a Racial Equity Steering Committee. The team,

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## The Center at McKinleyville open for business



The Center at McKinleyville is located at 1615 Heartwood Drive.

► Since its doors opened in late May, offices at The Center at McKinleyville have started filling up with staff from the McKinleyville Family Resource Center (FRC), DHHS, Open Door Community Health Centers and Child Support Services.

DHHS Program Manager Eric Kanaga, who serves as the on-site manager for the department, said, "The co-location of services is really a win for everybody. It helps us connect as staff making it easier for us to walk clients through and be really integrated in our service delivery."

On a Friday morning in September, The Center is bustling with a playgroup for parents and children in the front part of the facility. Meanwhile, FRC staff are stocking the food pantry with newly arrived perishables, and the supply closet across the hall is being stocked with diapers, hygiene products and COVID tests.

A partnership between the FRC, DHHS, Open Door, Cal Poly Humboldt Social Work Department, North Coast Child Support Services and Trinidad Rancheria Tribal Social

Services, The Center has been in the works for years.

The Center is also a place for community members with conference rooms and a large community kitchen.

Kanaga said having so many agencies and programs under the same roof helps "break down barriers in the referral process and promotes warm handoffs."



The Center at McKinleyville reception staff. Back row from left: Rian Jones and Karla Ceballos. Front row from left: Linaya DiNoto and Nani Villa.

Currently, DHHS has clerical and Eligibility staff on-site fulltime. Staff from Behavioral Health, Child Welfare Services, In-Home Supportive Services, the Women, Infants and

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## Director's Report, continued from page 1

which includes representatives from across the department, meets regularly and has worked closely with Ron White from the Humboldt Area Foundation's Equity Alliance of the North Coast, and Melissa Meiris, from Stepping Stones Diversity Consulting, who have been providing professional, experienced and informed technical assistance. The Steering Committee representatives have also attended trainings focusing on racism and inequality, collected resources for staff and worked closely with DHHS leadership to complete the Strategic Plan. As part of the Committee's recommendations, DHHS hired its first Racial and Cultural Equity Manager earlier this year.

The countywide Diversity Framework was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in July. This includes introducing a mandatory training course for all staff and leadership ("Racial Equity Common Terms" – created and already widely adopted by DHHS staff), requirements for ongoing learning, a dedicated webpage and expanded professional development. The county's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team (DEI), which includes some DHHS staff, has just introduced staff-led Affinity Groups. All county staff are encouraged to participate.

At its Sept. 20 meeting, the BOS also directed staff to establish a code of conduct that will include DEI training and development opportunities for members of boards and commissions.

The creation of the Racial Equity Committee and Strategic Plan gives DHHS the opportunity to clearly align our values as an organization with the training and support we provide for staff and leadership. This benefits staff by setting clear expectations for all of us, as employees and in positions of leadership, and as an organization serving the community.

For our clients and community, this is an opportunity to understand the goals and plans the department is working towards.

While our work is just beginning, I am proud of how we are all embracing equity and inclusion. By supporting staff to better identify and address racial inequities internally, we aim to ultimately strengthen connections with the local community we serve. ◀

## The Center, continued from page 1

Children program and Public Health's SafeCare program are on-site part-time and available by appointment.



The kitchen is available for community events, cooking demonstrations and a hot cup of coffee.

There are also offices for staff who need to meet clients in the northern part of the county and docking stations for staff who are working in the field in the McKinleyville area and need a place to stop off and type out case notes.



Arts and crafts and other activities are available for children during a Friday morning playgroup.

DHHS Assistant Director Michele Stephens works out of The Center one

## Sign up for Humboldt Alert today

▶ Will you be notified in the case of an emergency? Sign up for the Everbridge Humboldt Alert system to receive notifications about imminent threats to health and safety. Humboldt Alert is used to provide residents with crucial information such as the need to evacuate due to potential disasters, dangerous weather, safety incidents and public health threats. Humboldt Alert makes real-time emergency notification to landlines, mobile phones

day a week and said it's a positive place for staff and the community. "There's something to be said about being a person seeking services and there being no wrong door when you do," she said. "The Center is a place where the person is at the center of how services can be provided in the most accessible way. When you walk into The Center and see the different programs and staff of those programs, community members getting a bag of food from the food pantry, attending a playgroup with their little one, having an appointment with a social services worker, clinician, social worker or WIC worker, it feels very much like a community space."



Volunteers Shanna and Kenneth Hodges take inventory of supplies available to clients at The Center.

McKinleyville FRC Executive Director Hillarie Beyer agrees. "Now that the building is open, our team can try out new ways of working together across agency to provide better services and support to community members in a way that makes sense and feels good," she said, adding, "I hope everyone in the community comes to The Center because it is beautiful." ◀

and computers by voice message, email and text. Sign up today at [humboldt.gov.org/alerts](http://humboldt.gov.org/alerts). ◀



# Behavioral Health Director's Report

by Emi Botzler-Rodgers, LMFT

► Leaning in when others are upset, hurting or angry is hard. I have been thinking about this because it comes up not infrequently and in lots of different ways. It comes up in relationships at work and in our personal lives. Sometimes the feelings aren't directed at us but are just being shared with us. That can be easier to manage. I have recently had experiences where there are different perspectives or opinions about how the work of Behavioral Health (BH) should happen. I think about the work we do to support people in our community.

We don't always make the difference that we want to even when we try our best and leverage all our resources. Sometimes it isn't enough to make the impact we think we should be making, or that others think we should be making. People may continue to suffer or struggle or cause problems in the community and those who engage with these individuals feel tremendously impacted. I believe that is because when we genuinely engage with someone, we can find ourselves caring deeply about them. That caring comes partly because we understand them better and maybe because we relate to the human in them, and we truly see them. That caring is why their experiences impact us. This can be when all those feelings arise. They can come up strong and intense, maybe because the person being impacted is feeling helpless or heartbroken. So, what do we do in those moments? I think we lean in. We lean into the person who is suffering. We lean into the person who is feeling helpless. We lean into the anger and the heartbreak, and we sit in those moments together.

Someone recently told me that their "bias" was that all humans have



a good core. How they got to behavior others may see as unacceptable isn't always known. I do choose to believe that we all have a core that is good. Maybe today is a day we can each make an effort to lean in even if it is hard and we don't easily understand where someone else is coming from. ◀

## AB 1276 aims to reduce waste of single-use foodware accessories and standard condiments

by Benjamin Dolf, Supervising Environmental Health Specialist

► As with the turn of every new year, several new laws hit the books in California in 2022—some with more pomp and circumstance than others. One in particular that seemed to receive little fanfare was AB 1276—Single Use Foodware Accessories and Standard Condiments. Gone are the days we can take for granted a half-pound of hot sauce in our Taco Bell order—this bill requires any single-use utensil or condiment be specifically requested by the customer instead of given out as a matter of practice.

AB 1276 is an expansion of California's single-use plastic straw ban that took effect in 2019. This law prohibits full-service restaurants from providing plastic straws unless requested by the customer. This was a good step towards reducing plastic entering the waste stream (although it took a little while to develop paper straws that could last through an entire meal...). This new law expands upon plastic straws and includes utensils, single-use condiment packets, stir-sticks, chop sticks and similar single-use foodware. In addition to expanding the scope of utensils, the new law also extends not only to full-service, sit-down restaurants,



but to all food service establishments including fast-food, coffee shops, bars, and even food delivery services. The law requires either the customer to specifically request the condiment/utensil or that they be available in self-serve containers—they cannot be given out without the customer's choosing. Even bundling a fork, knife and spoon with a napkin is now prohibited—each of those items must be available separately.

It will take some time for everyone to adjust, especially the food service industry, but the benefits are well worth it including a reduction in waste generated by the food industry and lower dependency on plastics. It will encourage re-useable foodware and help to promote a culture of sustainability. So, who will enforce this new law? The Division of Environmental (DEH) Health's Consumer Protection Program—the same champions of public health who routinely inspect our local food facilities. In accordance with the language of AB 1276, DEH prepared a resolution for the Board of Supervisors establishing DEH as the enforcement agency for the unincorporated areas of Humboldt; DEH will also offer to be the enforcement agency for our local municipalities where DEH currently performs food facility inspections. Violations of AB 1276 can result in fines of up to \$25 per day which is not a seriously punitive amount, but provides an incentive for compliance. DEH is also working with the regulated community to educate them on the requirements of AB 1276 and reminds our fellow DHHS staff to recycle, re-use and reduce. ◀

## Assisted Outpatient Treatment available in Humboldt County

by Jennifer Boyle, Administrative Analyst

► Humboldt County Behavioral Health has partnered with Environmental Alternatives (EA) to provide Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) to Humboldt County residents. AOT offers an

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# DHHS IS HIRING

## Eligibility Specialist Trainees/I/II

### Benefits include:

- Health, dental and vision insurance
- Life insurance
- Paid personal and family sick leave
- CalPERS retirement
- Paid vacation
- 15 paid holidays.

## APPLY TODAY

Visit [humboldt.gov/jobs](http://humboldt.gov/jobs) or call 1-707-441-5510.



To learn more about the position, visit [humboldt.gov/EligibilityJobs](http://humboldt.gov/EligibilityJobs).

# Apply now!



I started as an Eligibility Specialist in 2013 and promoted to Lead Worker. In 2018, I promoted to Staff Services Analyst/Operations Analyst. This has meant a lot to me because the people I've encountered and my work experiences have provided the support I need to lead me into a job I love!

**Jennifer Marks**  
Staff Services/Operations Analyst II

# Apply now!



I started at DHHS as an Eligibility Specialist in 2014 then promoted to Employment & Training Worker three years later. Working at DHHS is valuable to me because I get to help people in the community while earning a living as part of a team of supportive and friendly co-workers.

**Plato Clifford**  
Employment & Training Worker II

## Help Wanted

► DHHS is currently recruiting qualified applicants for a variety of positions. For a list of job opportunities, visit [humboldt.gov/jobs](http://humboldt.gov/jobs) and click Job Opportunities, or contact Employee Services at 1-707-441-5510. ◀



**Assisted Outpatient Treatment,  
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opportunity for individuals diagnosed with a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, who meet specific criteria, to receive mental health treatment through outreach and a civil court process.

Individuals can be referred to the AOT program by a qualified mental health professional, law enforcement, qualified community partners and/or adults living with the referred individual. The AOT program is designed to help support and stabilize individuals with a serious mental illness before they hurt themselves or others through a program that is less restrictive than a full conservatorship.

When a qualified individual is referred to the AOT program, EA staff conduct outreach to engage the individual. The referred individual is then offered services and support to help stabilize their mental health and personal life. This includes creating a treatment plan and addressing concerns, such as homelessness, the referred individual may be dealing with.

Individuals who refuse to participate in the AOT program may be directed by the courts to participate in the program. While there are no legal ramifications to an individual refusing to participate in AOT and/or the court process, involving the courts and a judge creates what is known as the “black robe effect,” and individuals are more likely to participate in a program when they are directed to do so by a judge.

Assisted Outpatient Treatment and programs like it have been created across the country with notable success. The hope is that the AOT program will provide some needed relief to those in the community who need it.

The AOT pilot program launched in Humboldt County July 1. As of August, seven referrals have been sent to Environmental Alternatives for outreach and support.

To learn more about AOT, visit [humboldt.gov/AOT](http://humboldt.gov/AOT). ◀

## Social Services Report

by **Ryan Bishop**,  
Deputy Branch Director

▶ As the new Deputy Branch Director of the Social Services Branch (SSB), I believe it's important for our community and partners to know that no matter the challenges our community faces, SSB will be here to assist in ensuring that you, your neighbors, family and friends have sufficient food, health care, cash assistance, employment opportunities, advocacy and hope. However, it is also important to know that SSB is facing historically low staffing levels and we've had to adjust our services and availability over the course of the last year to ensure we can serve as many people as possible, as efficiently as possible. Most notably this has impacted wait times with our Call Center because we have had to close our Call Center on Wednesdays. Although it was a difficult decision to close the Call Center, even for one day a week, it was one that had to be made to ensure our staff have time to process the work and approve benefits, so that members of our community would not have to call and ask when their benefits would be processed. SSB does not intend to keep the Call Center closed on Wednesdays forever, and we are doing many things to help re-open this service and improve access to services.

SSB has been working closely with Employee Services and the Communications Group on strategic recruitment efforts to broaden our reach, attract new talent and improve the overall process for applicants. Internally, SSB has streamlined training programs and allocated additional resources to develop training materials to quickly train new staff and ensure our programs have strong foundations that can withstand historically high turnover rates. We have also focused on improving employee retention rates by improving leadership skills, continuing our work on racial equity, and preparing,



planning and piloting a variety of other changes to promote a positive work-life balance for our staff. Some of these changes include, but are not limited to, additional telework options and more flexible schedule options.

As SSB continues to work hard to improve staffing levels, please know that we are also working hard on improving our regionalization efforts and implementing new technology to improve access to services. Thanks to those regionalization efforts we now have Social Service offices in Eureka, Hoopa, Redway, Fortuna and McKinleyville. SSB has also implemented the use of BenefitsCal.com which is a new self-service website to request and manage benefits such as CalFresh, CalWORKS and Medi-Cal.

As always SSB, its programs and staff remain steadfast and focused on ensuring we are here to provide basic human needs and services to the families and individuals of our community when they need them the most, so if you are experiencing long wait times with our Call Center you are encouraged to utilize BenefitsCal.com or come in to one of our many offices so we can assist you. ◀

## CWS staff grateful for Journey Bag donations

By **Camellia Wire**, Social Worker  
Supervisor II

▶ It all starts with a phone call from a social worker at Child Welfare Services (CWS) searching for a foster care placement. Often it is late at night, or a weekend, and few others are available to respond. Social workers are stretched thin, covering numerous critical tasks and often with no supplies to get a child through the night. When parents, guardians or caregivers are not available, teddy bears are left behind, blankets are forgotten, and items as simple as an everyday toothbrush, deodorant, underwear, even diapers and feminine hygiene products are forgotten in emergencies. What we have found is these simple comforts and reminders of home are often on children's minds in the time of crisis of being removed

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## Journey bag donations, continued from page 5

from their home and family.

As we all know, sometimes it's the littlest things that matter most, and after years of being foster parents, and seeing a number of children arriving at their homes with very little, Jill Maples, Sarah Everest and Jessica Villa were moved to do something about it.

After witnessing these trends firsthand and knowing how much social workers were already juggling, Jill, Sarah and Jessica wanted to help fill the gap, thus a local chapter of The Forgotten Initiative (TFI) was created. Jill, Sarah and Jessica are a few of the many volunteers with TFI and some of their first actions were to create "Journey Bags." These bags contain age-specific comfort items, diapering and hygiene essentials, socks, undergarments and pajamas that support children to get through the first 24 hours in foster care. The Journey Bags are delivered to CWS and stored so all CWS staff can access them at all times. Along with the Journey Bags, TFI also operates a Foster Care Resource Center. The center has new and used items donated by foster parents including everything from bedding to toys and furniture. During the launching of TFI's new Resource Center at 612 G St. in Eureka, CWS was generously gifted 100 Journey Bags. Additionally, the Foster Care Resource Center recently announced they are not only open to social workers and foster parents but to our parents and families in services with them in an effort to support reunification, transitions and relationships.

There are many different types of donations that come into CWS, but the Journey Bags are different, special and have evolved into a partnership over time. What started as an emergency bag for caregivers has become an essential tool for CWS Social Workers responding all hours of the day and night to crisis and emergency situations. However, even more important, these bags are a meaningful support to children and families going through significant loss and separation trauma. The trauma doesn't only affect our families and children, our staff at CWS

certainly feel it as well. TFI also noticed this and again humbled staff by regularly stocking the CWS break room with coffee, snacks and other self-care items throughout the years.

Child Welfare work is some of the most important and most difficult human service work there is and the work has been further complicated by COVID-related isolation, stress and hopelessness, making all of TFI's donation timely and that much more important and meaningful. Their generosity inspires all of us to do our best, regardless of the challenges we face and is an important reminder that aligns with CWS staff and agency values that, in the end, connections and relationships matter most.

Now more than ever we appreciate TFI volunteers for the work they do and the support they give children, families and the community. CWS is proud of this partnership. Their donations boost staff and client morale alike—it helps CWS continue to "do the impossible" and is something we are all excited to share! Thank you TFI. We couldn't do it without you. ◀

## Public Health Director's Report

by Sofia Pereira

▶ After nearly a decade of declining investment in Public Health at a state and federal level, we are grateful to see funding coming to support our branch's work of improving our community's health and wellness.

The legislature and governor approved for this fiscal year new ongoing funding for local health jurisdictions known as the "Future of Public Health (FoPH)." This will provide just under \$1 million in annual funding to our Public Health branch to help us fund key staff positions we haven't been able to support previously due to unfunded mandates.

For example, we plan to invest some of these funds in stabilizing

staffing for our Communicable Disease (CD) Program that we built up thanks to COVID-19 emergency funding. Building a bigger bench in our CD program means we can respond to multiple diseases, from tuberculosis to monkeypox (MPX). Currently, our CD program is working closely with our Public Health Clinic on administering the JYNNEOS smallpox vaccine individuals at high-risk of MPX. These partnerships across programs exist thanks to a brilliant, hard-working team, with more resources than ever to support them.

Along with this ongoing FoPH funding, last year our Public Health Lab was awarded about \$2.1 million to help us build a new laboratory. Our Public Health Lab provides testing services like bacteriological water analysis, clinical microbiology and tick testing. The lab supports health care providers, aiding in the diagnosis and control of communicable diseases and promoting a healthy community. With this grant we are in the process of acquiring a site and our lab team is working closely with DHHS Facilities and Public Works to move this project forward.

In our Healthy Communities Division we were also recently awarded \$1.5 million over three years to support our Hepatitis C (HCV) work under the CMSP's Local Indigent Care Needs (LICN) grant program. This grant will support staff launching a second mobile van with two new testers and care coordinators to provide HCV screenings and care coordination. The Public Health mobile clinic is the only mobile unit that provides HCV testing throughout Humboldt County and is often the only point of access to enabling services such as Medi-Cal/CMSP, medical and mental health care and substance use disorder treatment.

These examples do not capture all the incredible work that's being done on a daily basis! A big thank you to our Public Health team for all they're doing to advance Public Health's mission. ◀



# 'Employee Spotlight' sheds light on DHHS staff jobs and interests

► In April, DHHS set out to help our community learn more about what we do here and for staff to learn more about each other. As times allows, we have interviewed staff learning more about their jobs and their interests outside of work. Check out the videos below, and visit [humboldt.gov/jobs](http://humboldt.gov/jobs) if you're interested in joining our team.

Click on the top video to watch a few highlights or click on individual staff photos to watch each spotlight. ◀



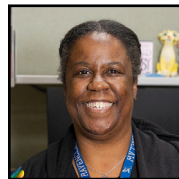
**Jimmy Gorospe**  
Vocational Counselor II



**Kelli Schwartz**  
Public Guardian -  
Conservator



**Appolonia Coan**  
Staff Services Analyst



**Dayna James**  
Staff Services Analyst II



**Michele Stephens**  
DHHS Assistant  
Director



**Alythia Noland**  
Senior Office Assistant



**Elaine Yslas**  
Integrated Case  
Worker



**Michelle Howard**  
Office Assistant



**Ben Dolf**  
Supervising  
Environmental Health  
Specialist



**Eric Hall**  
Community Health  
Outreach Worker I



**Nick Baer**  
Employment &  
Training Worker



**Carol Lang**  
Payroll/Personnel  
Specialist



**Frank Morales**  
Employment &  
Training Worker II



**Rebecca Dement**  
Office Assistant II



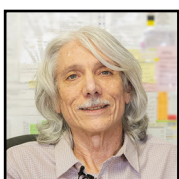
**Christina Chu**  
Social Services  
Eligibility Supervisor



**Jamie Keyes**  
Community Health  
Outreach Worker



**Ryan Bishop**  
Social Services Deputy  
Branch Director



**Daniel Barrett**  
Senior Medical Office  
Assistant



**Jammie Waters**  
Staff Services  
Specialist



**Sarah Nelson**  
Senior Health  
Education Specialist