



HIGHLIGHTS

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Director's Report

by **Connie Beck**

► As the year goes on, DHHS Administration's focus continues to be implementing and planning short- and- long-term departmentwide priorities.



Every few years, we update our DHHS Strategic Plan which gives us an opportunity to look closely at how things are going and determine how best to move forward. The process for our most recent update started in August with a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. This analysis gives us the opportunity to identify internal and external resources and challenges so we can revise our overarching priorities as a department. Once the department SWOT is complete, Public Health and Behavioral Health will begin updating their branch-specific plans starting

with their own SWOTs, and Social Services will begin creating its plan.

We have also been focusing on implementing a departmentwide performance management system. Public Health has been using the performance management system ClearPoint for some time. Admin, Public Health and our Quality Management Services (QMS) staff have been meeting with a ClearPoint representative to learn more.

Using ClearPoint agencywide will help us visualize and organize department and branch-specific Objectives, Measures, Targets and Actions (OMTAs). It will also help us monitor and track success related to strategic priorities and various related initiatives. The DHHS Racial Equity Strategic Plan, DHHS's Strategic Plan and the Workforce Development Plan will be uploaded into ClearPoint once OMTAs are finalized. QMS and select DHHS Admin staff will be supporting the onboarding of branches to ClearPoint as it is rolled out over the coming year(s).

Additionally, the DHHS Workforce Development (WFD) team, made up of staff across levels in the department, is working on finalizing the DHHS WFD plan for review by the DHHS Admin Team. Like our Strategic and Racial Equity plans, it will be in a Balanced Scoreboard framework with measurable objectives that can be entered and tracked using ClearPoint. We are also transitioning the department's WFD efforts to Employee Services in the next six months to a year. There are many areas in workforce for us to expand on, including recruitment and retention efforts, supporting BIPOC staff and becoming a more anti-racist organization.

We all work hard moving this department forward, and I am continuously in awe of all that is done to serve our clients and community and to make sure DHHS continues to be a strong agency. I hope you have all had a chance to enjoy a little relaxation time this summer. You certainly deserve it. ◀



Tips to stay safe near the water

by **Melody Mallick**, Senior Health Education Specialist

► Summer is in full swing and safety at the rivers, ocean and lagoons continues to be a top priority. Local waterways are very cold and have swift currents which can pose threats to children and adults, even if they are strong swimmers.

Next time you head to the water, take a life jacket with you, or call ahead to your destination to see

if they have a life jacket loan station. There are loan stations located throughout the county that have a variety of life jacket sizes available to borrow ranging from infant to adult.

Remember these tips for staying safe near water:

- Wear a life jacket. Unlike other floatation devices, life jackets are specifically designed to keep the head above water. Always use a life jacket that is approved by the U.S. Coast Guard.
- If going to the water with children, have a designated watcher to keep an eye on them at all times.
- Never leave a child unattended in or near water.

- If a child goes missing, check the water first.
- Water and alcohol don't mix. Up to 70% of all recreational drowning incidents involve alcohol, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.
- At the river, be aware of hazards below the surface of the water. Trees, rocks and sunken objects are likely and can move during high flows. A location that was safe could be dangerous during your next visit.
- At the ocean, choose flat beaches over those with steep slopes. Watch for sneaker waves and keep your distance from the water's edge.

Behavioral Health Director's Report

by Emi Botzler-Rodgers, LMFT

► At the end of June, we got the news that Humboldt County was awarded more than \$12 million for a Behavioral Health Crisis Triage Center. This project was submitted through a partnership locally between DHHS Behavioral Health, Mad River Community Hospital and Cal Poly Humboldt. It took an incredible amount of effort, resources, commitment, and passion with a shared goal of better serving our local community, especially those suffering from mental health and substance use challenges. This is amazing news and an incredible opportunity



for our community.

This award will require a heavy lift by everyone involved, and it comes behind some other substantial projects that Humboldt County has taken on including partnering with Dr. Evan Buxbaum on a local Crisis Residential Treatment facility for minors, Sorrel Leaf, and contracting with Willow Glen to bring on board an adult Crisis Residential Treatment facility. These facilities are hugely needed in our community and will support a more robust system of care.

Despite these efforts and amazing projects and opportunities, we continue to be faced with lacking resources in Humboldt County. We routinely have to send our community members out of county to get the services and supports they need. We continue to see individuals in our community suffering and feel the despair

and hopelessness of not being able to do more. So, what is the answer?

In my mind, we continue to work together. We come to the table, or Zoom meeting, and talk with each other about solutions. We leverage our relationships, partnerships and every resource we can find. We get creative, we stay solution-focused, and we ask for help. "It takes a village..." resonates here.

We all do our part, and we express gratitude for those who are on the journey with us. \$12 million plus for a Behavioral Health Crisis Triage Center is one outcome of this work together! I have immense confidence in and gratitude for the partners in our community who will be moving this project forward. It gives me hope for the health and wellbeing of our community and the wellness and recovery of those we serve! ◀

CWS Report

by CWS Administration

► Child Welfare Services (CWS) has two very important venues for the community to engage and partner with us on for System of Care and system-level continuous improvement.

The Humboldt County System of Care (SOC) Interagency Leadership Team (ILT) and Interagency Leadership Executive Advisory Committee (ILTEAC):

Assembly Bill 2083 (2018) built upon the current Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) implementation effort by, among other things, developing a coordinated, timely and trauma-informed system-of-care approach for children and youth in foster care who have experienced severe trauma. The bill requires each county to develop and implement a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that establishes roles and responsibilities of key SOC agencies serving children and youth in foster care. The MOU establishes ILTs led by the Directors of Behavioral Health, Probation, Education, the Regional Center and Child Welfare. Subsequent Assembly Bill 153 (2021) required ILTs to establish a process, through tribal consultation, with federally recognized Tribes

to engage and coordinate the ongoing implementation of the SOC MOU. The Interagency Leadership Executive Advisory Committee meets monthly. Interested community partner agencies should contact chairperson Jeremy Nilsen at jnilsen@co.humboldt.ca.us to learn more about how to get involved.

County Self-Assessment (CSA) and System Improvement Plan (SIP) Core Team:

The California-Child and Family Services Review is a state-mandated, five-year cyclical process that uses continuous quality improvement strategies to analyze CWS system outcomes, identify goals, implement strategies for improvement and analyze progress. The process starts with a comprehensive review of the Child Welfare and Probation systems known as a County Self-Assessment (CSA). From prevention and protection, through permanency and aftercare, this assessment is completed every five years and initiates the Child and Family Services Review cycle. The self-assessment utilizes:

- 1) Peer Quality Case Review that examines practice, policies and procedures and their impact on families
- 2) Community Feedback Sessions where community members are invited to provide input

3) Focus Groups that solicit feedback from various community partners and stakeholders.

Counties use the information gathered through these CSA processes to work with the California Department of Social Services and stakeholders to create a System Improvement Plan (SIP). SIPs identify areas for improvement within CWS and specific plans and measures for that work. The SIP process includes establishing a Core Team composed of various required and recommended stakeholders and community partners that analyze outcome data and identify goals and strategies for system improvement efforts for the next five years. This group meets frequently in the SIP development stage and assesses progress annually over the next five years. We are currently beginning the SIP development phase and are developing the Core Team. Interested community partner agencies and stakeholders should contact the SIP Program Manager Myranda Napoleon, mobrien@co.humboldt.ca.us, to learn more about how to get involved.

These two key processes are two great ways to support CWS and SOC system analysis and improvement. Please help get the word out! ◀



Equity Update

by Neftali Miller-Rubio, Racial & Cultural Equity Manager

► Hello and happy summer to DHHS staff and partners! The DHHS Racial Equity Steering Committee continues to meet monthly to advance our Racial Equity Strategic Plan. We are excited to share a bit about this phase of work, which includes two new trainings and the kickoff of office hours.

Though we know training is not effective to shift a culture on its own, it is an essential piece of the puzzle when attempting to establish a shared understanding of race, racism, privilege and equity. As DHHS strives to become an anti-racist organization, staff have been asked to partake in a series of trainings that offer a foundational, stepped approach to doing just that.

The first in the series, “Racial Equity Common Terms,” was developed in-house by the Racial Equity Steering Committee and released in 2021. This summer and early fall, we have two new research-based offerings designed by local diversity consultants, Stepping Stone. The first, “Implicit Bias,” is a 1-hour recorded training, going live mid-July. Next, “Foundations of Racial Equity,” dives deeper and covers topics of whiteness, the four-dimensions of racism and building anti-racist practices into the organization. This 4-hour training will be held live, via Zoom, by a team of local racial equity facilitators beginning in September. Each training builds on the previous, establishing a baseline understanding and growing staff awareness with each step.

The new trainings will be launched to supervisory-level staff first then to all staff. This provides



DHHS’s Racial Equity Steering Committee, from left, Monique Upshaw-Smith, Oliver Gonzalez, Amy Cone, Jamie Elkins, Rachel Patterson, Kelsey Reedy, Lara Zintsmaster, Marian Strong, Alison Phongsavath, Neftali Miller-Rubio and Laurel Johnson.

leaders an opportunity to see the material and receive support to better coach their teams and lead conversations on the material. A discussion guide was created to navigate these follow up conversations, centering the training content, supporting ongoing learning and providing an opportunity for practice and reflection.

All-new Racial Equity office hours are an additional layer of support. This time is reserved for all DHHS supervisory-level staff to ask questions about trainings, get coaching running up to or following team activities or to pop in for resources. Office hours are open via Zoom, Wednesdays from 10 to 11 a.m., beginning Aug. 2 (an access link will be shared internally). We are excited to see how this time is utilized in the coming months.

Last, from the Steering Committee: Each month, members take a turn leading a “Learning Together.” These activities aim to create necessary space to strengthen relationships, share ideas and apply the concepts and values we encourage across DHHS. In June,

we focused on a new study by Pew Research evaluating the potential for Artificial Intelligence (AI) to positively impact racial bias in the workplace, specifically on recruitment, hiring and evaluations. It was a thought provoking and dynamic discussion, particularly as innovation and controversy in AI has dominated public discussion in recent months.

To contact the Racial & Cultural Equity Manager and Steering Committee, you can reach out via email: DHHSRacialEquity@co.humboldt.ca.us. ◀

Water safety, continued from page 1

- Before heading to the beach, check local tide tables to learn when the high tides are occurring. Rising tides make steep beaches and sneaker waves even more dangerous.

For a list of participating life jacket loan stations, visit humboldt.gov.org/LifeJacketLoanProgram or call DHHS’s Healthy Communities Division of Public Health at 707-268-2132.

For more tips to stay safe near the water, visit humboldt.gov.org/WaterSafetyProgram. ◀

Social Services Report

by Ryan Bishop, Deputy Branch Director

► As staffing levels gradually increase within the Social Service Branch (SSB), our primary focus remains



on enhancing efficiency, addressing community needs and enhancing the overall customer experience.

During this quarter, the Humboldt County CalFresh program was honored with a Certificate of Excellence in Expedited Service Timeliness. This recognition was earned due to our consistent processing of over 90% of Expedite CalFresh applications within three days for 33 consecutive months.

Additionally, in May 2023, we successfully processed over 90% of regular CalFresh applications within 30 days. This achievement was particularly noteworthy as it came after facing challenges since late 2021, when staffing levels in eligibility programs began to decline.

Our ongoing efforts involve concerted training and recruitment initiatives for the Call Center, enabling us to improve Average Speed to Answer (ASA) times. ASA refers to the time customers spend on hold before

connecting with an Eligibility Specialist for programs such as CalFresh, Medi-Cal and CalWORKs. In January of this year, the ASA was 76 minutes, which decreased to 43 minutes in April and further reduced to 29 minutes by May.

While there is still room for improvement, increased staffing has undoubtedly contributed to reduced wait times and an enhanced customer experience.

To ensure the most efficient customer experience, we strongly encourage customers to utilize our self-service website, www.Benefits-Cal.com, for requesting and managing benefits such as CalFresh, CalWORKs and Medi-Cal. Familiarizing oneself with this website is the optimal way for customers to stay connected and informed about their benefits. This is particularly crucial now, as Medi-Cal households are once again required to complete an annual eligibility review to determine ongoing eligibility.

In June, SSB took the initiative to celebrate these accomplishments by requesting the Board of Supervisors proclaim June 11 through the 17, Eligibility Specialists Appreciation Week. This week was established to acknowledge and commend the tireless efforts of our Eligibility Specialists in meeting the needs of our community on a daily basis. ◀



Public Health Director's Report

by Sofia Pereira

► Over the years, we have seen the importance of building a Public Health workforce pipeline. Many positions in the public health field can be difficult to recruit for, from epidemiologists to environmental health specialists.

Fortunately, California is further investing in workforce development for public health, and we've been fortunate to access various funding sources and programs that can help a rural jurisdiction like ours strengthen our local workforce.

In fiscal year 2022-23, the state began a new investment of funding into public health called "Future of Public Health." These funds are intended to expand our workforce to address core public health functions. With these funds, we've maintained a more sustainable level of staffing in our Communicable Disease program to better respond to a variety of public health threats. We also expanded our Emergency Preparedness program and our Public Health Laboratory leadership. This ongoing funding will help us fund other key positions in our branch. We also received, in early 2023, the California Strengthening Public Health Infrastructure funding to support our new Health Equity staff and the implementation of our workforce development plan priorities.

However, even with funding, we know there are simply not enough people trained in very specialized fields to meet the demand. It is especially challenging for rural jurisdictions like ours to compete in the job market.

To help with these workforce shortages, the California Department of Public Health's Public Health Equity & Readiness Oppor-



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tunity (HERO) Initiative has various programs intended to grow our public health workforce across California. One of the HERO programs is the Public Health Microbiologist training program, working to expand the number of microbiologist trainees.

Microbiologist is a very specialized position that is difficult to recruit statewide. We typically “grow our own,” meaning someone who is working in our lab as a lab technician can go through this six-month training program, mostly training in the Bay Area. We currently have a member of our Public Health lab in this training.

The relationships we build with our higher education institutions are also paramount in building the local Public Health workforce pipeline. Our Nursing Division works closely with the nursing programs at College of the Redwoods and Cal Poly Humboldt. We have an active internship program that provides nursing students the opportunity to experience the work we do in Public Health.

There is much work ahead to support our existing staff in their professional development and to bring more folks into the field of Public Health. I’m excited to see what the workforce landscape looks like in 5 to 10 years. The groundwork is being laid now. ◀

New Behavioral Health Outpatient Location open in Old Town Eureka



From left, DHHS Behavioral Health Senior Medical Office Assistant Daniel Barrett and Office Services Supervisor Erin Bowman at the open house for the new outpatient treatment center in Old Town Eureka. Located at 134 D St., Suite 301, the new location houses Humboldt County Programs for Recovery, Adolescent Treatment, Dual Recovery and the Behavioral Health Counseling Clinic.



Behavioral Health Case Manager II Ian Mackenzie cooks up burgers during the late May open house for the new outpatient treatment center in Old Town.

At least 1 in 10 Americans aged 60 and older have experienced some form of elder abuse.

Elder abuse comes in different forms:

- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Abandonment
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Financial abuse
- Self-neglect.



If you are worried that you or someone you know is experiencing elder abuse,

call the Humboldt County Adult Protective Services 24/7 reporting hotline at 707-476-2100.



Elder Abuse Reporting Hotline available 24/7

▶ Following the Humboldt County Grand Jury’s recommendations to its report, “Silver Tsunami Warning: Safeguarding Our Seniors,” DHHS launched a marketing campaign to educate community residents about the signs of elder abuse and how to report it.

If you suspect that you or someone you know is the victim of elder abuse, call Humboldt County Adult Protective Services 24/7 reporting hotline at 707-476-2100. ◀

Take Action for Mental Health Walk

► More than 50 people including law enforcement officers, elected officials, DHHS staff and community members gathered at the Hope Center in Eureka in May for the annual Take Action for Mental Health Walk. ◀



Attendees of the Take Action for Mental Health Walk gather for a group photo at the Hope Center.



Left, Public Health Deputy Director Lara Weiss; right, DHHS Director Connie Beck Take Action for Mental Health.

From left, DHHS Behavioral Health Peer Coach III Betty Garfield, community member Adam Brackett and Peer Coach II Rhonda Oeth carrying a quilt made by participants at the Hope Center during this year's walk.



Eligibility Specialist Celebrated

► In early June, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors recognized June 11 through June 17, 2023, as Eligibility Specialist Appreciation Week. The proclamation honors Eligibility Specialists for all they do to enhance the well-being of individuals, families and communities within our county. ◀



Back row from left, David Taylor, Austin Grow, Jeff Sleuter, Sean Bockmann, Michael Pierrelli
Middle row, Dexter McNally, Julie Cute', Wesley Overholser, Cynthia Morgen, Jeff Gupton, Kili Saveliff.
Front row, Casey Cordero, Kade Nichols, Marti Kelly, Kate Inthapatha, Jessica Iguess and Raven Wik.

Longtime Social Worker retires

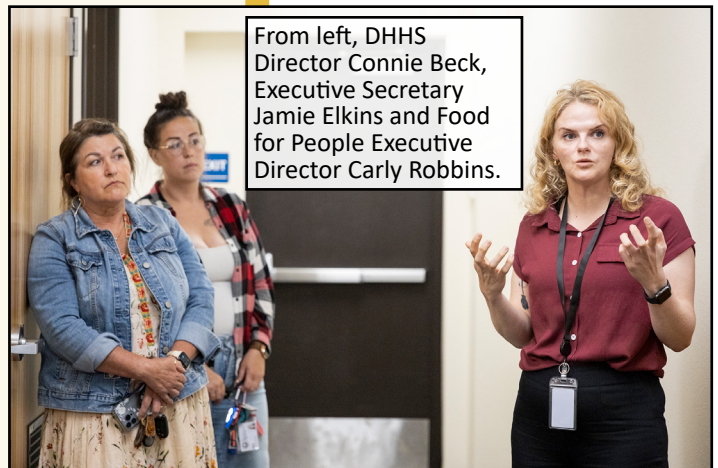
► The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors recently celebrated the retirement of Becky Boyle, Child Welfare Services (CWS) Social Worker Supervisor II, who worked for the county for nearly 30 years. ◀



From left, CWS Program Manager Kim Schneider, CWS Director Amanda Winstead, Becky, DHHS Director Connie Beck and Fifth District Supervisor Steve Madrone.

Food for People Tour shows off new facility

► In July, Food for People hosted staff from DHHS, giving them a tour of their new facility in Eureka. Food for People Executive Director Carly Robbins led the tour highlighting facility upgrades and additions. ◀



From left, DHHS Director Connie Beck, Executive Secretary Jamie Elkins and Food for People Executive Director Carly Robbins.



From left, Public Health Director Sofia Pereira, retired Food for People Executive Director Anne Holcomb and Robbins.



Crates of fruit stay cold inside the newly built walk-in refrigerator at Food for People.

DHHS Staff take part in Red Cross Shelter Training

► In late July, American Red Cross staff hosted DHHS staff at the Fortuna Fireman's Pavilion to provide a Shelter Training in preparation for future emergency activations. The training included educating staff on disaster shelter overview and responsibilities. ◀

Red Cross Disaster Program Manager Andrew Bogar instructs staff from DHHS on Disaster Service Worker responsibilities during an emergency activation.



Eligibility Supervisor Bryan Fleury unloads supplies from a Red Cross disaster shelter trailer.



DHHS staff work together to construct an emergency shelter cot.

Help Wanted

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



Humboldt County
Department of
Health & Human
Services

