



HIGHLIGHTS

Director's Report	1	June is Elder Abuse Awareness Month	4
Crisis Residential Treatment facility nearing completion	1	Joint Trainings bring together CWS and Tribal partners	6
Mental Health Awareness celebrated in May	3	DHHS Veterans Service Officer honored	7

Director's Report

by **Connie Beck**

► DHHS leadership has been working together to revise the department's Strategic Plan for more than a year.



Strategic planning is a process that helps an organization's leaders identify priorities and align efforts to achieve their goals in an organized and data-based method. You are likely familiar with DHHS's Mission, Vision and Operating Principles. These are components of our strategic plan and are what guide our work. Our current iteration of the strategic plan was developed in 2018. As part of continuous quality improvement, periodically revisiting the department's strategic plan and reviewing our priorities, overarching goals and the approaches we take to our work is important to the department's ongoing success.

In the fall, DHHS leadership across the department participated in a SWOT analysis, where we identified the department's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. This process helped assess the current "landscape" we are working in, identifying our strong points, areas in need of improvement, opportunities we can use to achieve our goals and challenges or barriers we encounter in our work.

Another element of revising our strategic plan is making our organizational goals measurable, so we can use program data and monitor program outcomes to better track and measure our success. Looking at big picture topics like meeting clients where they're at and branches working together to provide all applicable services, focusing on our work with community partners and continuing to support our workforce to promote retention across the department's ongoing success.

[continued on page 3](#)

HCTAYC Celebrates 'Sweet 16'

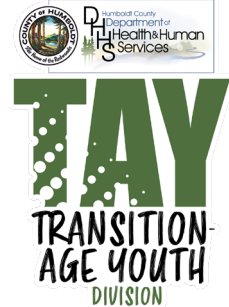
by **Kelsey Reedy, Sonya Levy-Boyd and Calla Peltier-Olson**

► The Humboldt County Transition-Age Youth Collaboration (HCTAYC) celebrated 16 years of serving the youth and young adults of Humboldt County at a "Sweet 16 Party" in mid-April. This event looked back at the program's far-reaching impacts and included an award ceremony with lots of gratitude.

HCTAYC is a youth leadership and advocacy program dedicated to empowering young people ages 16 to 26 with lived experience in foster care, juvenile justice, homelessness and behavioral health to transform the systems that have impacted their lives.

Through its advocacy, the young people and staff of HCTAYC have made tremendous progress and have been recognized with more than 10 awards. This progress includes developing seven rounds of local youth-driven policy recommendations supporting the creation of the TAY Center (an integrated division of the Department of Health & Human Services for transition-age youth), passing legislation that reduces the over-medication of foster youth, providing youth-led training locally and nationally, influencing the state's choice of assessment tools, advocating for the creation of peer-support positions

and behavioral health to transform the systems that have impacted their lives. Through its advocacy, the young people and staff of HCTAYC have made tremendous progress and have been recognized with more than 10 awards. This progress includes developing seven rounds of local youth-driven policy recommendations supporting the creation of the TAY Center (an integrated division of the Department of Health & Human Services for transition-age youth), passing legislation that reduces the over-medication of foster youth, providing youth-led training locally and nationally, influencing the state's choice of assessment tools, advocating for the creation of peer-support positions



Crisis facility scheduled to open this this summer

► California Senate President Pro Tempore Mike McGuire toured Hyperion Crisis Residential Treatment Facility during a recent visit to Eureka. The 10-bed home is designed to provide treatment and support to assist mental health clients who are stepping down from acute psychiatric hospitalization or those in jeopardy of needing higher levels of care to stabilize and receive ongoing support for their condition, optimize their functioning, and return to their home and community. Hyperion was made possible with the help of Sen. McGuire who secured facility start-up funding from the State of California. The facility is expected to open in late summer. ◀



From left, DHHS Legislative and Policy Manager Nancy Starck, Sen. Mike McGuire, Fourth District Humboldt County Supervisor Natalie Arroyo, Behavioral Health Director Emi Botzler-Rodgers, Willow Glen Project Manager David Gilbert and First District Humboldt County Supervisor Rex Bohn.

across the state and more.

The celebration reflected on the history of HCTAYC and its founding. It brought together passionate advocates, champions and staff, both past and present, who dedicated time and funding to improve the lives of young people in Humboldt County. Five individuals were recognized for their various accomplishments and contributions over the past 16 years.

Nancy Starck, the Legislative & Policy Manager for DHHS, received the "Phil Crandall Legacy Award" for her tireless work supporting youth voice and involvement at all levels, and for her dedication to developing innovative partnerships and strategies, expanding community resources and strengthening service integration, coordination and access for marginalized youth and families in Humboldt and across the state. Nancy carries former DHHS Director Crandall's vision and innovation forward by bringing future generations of Humboldt County youth to decision-making tables.



At a March meeting, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors recognized HCTAYC with a proclamation in honor of its 16th Anniversary.

Dr. Virgil Moorehead Jr., Executive Director of Two-Feathers Native American Family Services, received the "HCTAYC Visionary Leader Award" in recognition of his local and statewide work supporting the mental health of Indigenous youth.

Dahlia Cortes Garcia, current Social Work Student at Cal Poly Humboldt and former HCTAYC YAB leader, received the "Calla Peltier-Olson Youth Advocate Award" in recognition of the impact their powerful voice continues to have at many tables and spaces over the last seven years.

The Multicultural and Equity Center at College of the Redwoods, received the "HCTAYC Community Champions Award" in recognition of

its groundbreaking work to provide a holistic and affirming space for everyone on campus.

And to her surprise, Calla Peltier-Olson received the "Big Love Award." Calla joined HCTAYC in 2010, first attending an early meeting about what would later become the TAY Center, to being a youth advocacy board member,

then becoming a peer coach and now HCTAYC's Lead Youth Organizer.

At the presentation, Jaime Lee Evans, HCTAYC's founding director and current coaching consultant, said, "Calla gifts her community with her intentional love and the manner in which she shares, expands and magically sprinkles that love like gorgeous healing glitter. She brings the smart love, the compassionate love, the kind love and the big love to all of us at HCTAYC and beyond, and she is well deserving of this recognition."

We are excited to celebrate the past 16 years and look forward to serving Humboldt County's youth for the next 16 years and beyond. ◀



From left, DHHS Legislative and Policy Manager Nancy Starck receives the Phil Crandall Legacy Award from HCTAYC founding Youth Organizer Rochelle Trochtenberg and DHHS Social Worker III and HCTAYC Lead Youth Organizer Calla Peltier-Olson.



From left, DHHS Social Worker III Calla Peltier-Olson receives a standing ovation from Director Connie Beck and Sweet 16 party attendees.

Mental Health Awareness the focus of May



Mental Health Awareness Walk attendees gather for a group photo before embarking on a walk from the Hope Center to the county courthouse and back.



Participants in the Mental Health Awareness Walk leave from the Hope Center in Eureka.



From left, Elijah Martinez and Michael Martini barbecue hamburgers and hotdogs for Wellness and Connection Barbecue attendees.



Wellness and Connection Barbecue guests add watermelon and sides to their plates after being served a burger or hot dog.



From left, Michael Martini, Craig Garfield, Peer Coach III Betty Garfield, Peer Coach II Rhonda Oeth, Peer Coach I Tami Hamilton, Elijah Martinez and Peer Coach II Marianne Long held down the barbecue and food station.

Director, continued from page 1

ment.

Once DHHS’s departmentwide strategic plan revision is finalized, each branch will be developing or revising their own branch-specific strategic plans. These plans will align with the departmentwide plan, as well as giving branches the opportunity to develop measurable goals specific to their focus areas of work. Some branches have already begun working on their assessment.

Some of you may have heard about performance management system software ClearPoint. Public Health has been inputting program data into ClearPoint to track their program outcomes and engaging in continuous quality improvement by measuring

program success and health outcomes at both the community and individual level. In the coming months, ClearPoint will be rolling out across all programs in DHHS. This will help us visualize the alignment between the department strategic plan and branch strategic plans, and how program-specific performance measures relate to the plans as well.

Aligning efforts within the branches, and then with departmentwide goals, will help improve our delivery of services to the community and help us identify opportunities to streamline and align our processes for better efficiency and maximization of funding sources, while also monitoring and improving our program outcomes.

In addition to all the other work, we are faced with a serious budget situation that we’re working hard to tackle. We are looking at many cost-saving measures and thoughtful solutions to support our staff who provide the services. Through attrition and looking at each vacancy before we fill it, we will continue to avoid layoffs and offer services as best we can. The reality is that as things continue, we will need to do less with less. We are all a part of this community, and we want it to thrive. ◀

Social Services Report

by **Ryan Bishop**, Deputy Branch Director

► In recent months, the leadership at Social Services has been diligently crafting a comprehensive plan to bolster racial equity, diversity and inclusion (DEI) within our workplace. This concerted effort, led by a team of dedicated Social Services managers and supervisors, has culminated in the formulation of six strategic goals. This plan, slated for finalization in July, will be disseminated to all Social Services staff, marking a pivotal step toward fostering an inclusive and equitable environment.



The Six Strategic Goals

1. **Survey for Insight:** Our first goal involves conducting a wide-ranging survey across Social Services. By gauging the knowledge, comfort levels and needs of our staff regarding DEI topics, we aim to gain valuable insights that will inform our strategies and goals moving forward.
2. **Equity in Document Review:** To promote inclusivity, we are developing a comprehensive guide on reviewing formal documents through an equity lens. This resource will empower staff to identify and address potential biases, ensuring that our policies and practices align with our commitment to equity.
3. **DEI Resource Repository:** Supervisors will soon have access to a curated folder of DEI resources. This repository will house articles, videos, icebreakers and thought-provoking concepts — equipping our leaders with tools to foster meaningful conversations and learning opportunities. There will also be a defined process for staff to submit additional resources to this repository.
4. **Individual Debriefs:** After attending racial equity or DEI trainings, supervisors will engage in personalized debrief sessions with individual staff members. These conversations will bridge the gap between theory and practice, helping staff understand how racial equity and DEI principles directly relate to their roles.
5. **Scenario-Based Training:** Our next goal involves immersive training. Staff will participate in real-world scenario simulations, honing their skills in handling difficult situations with professionalism and sensitivity. This training will be laser-focused on racial equity

and DEI, equipping our team with practical strategies.

6. **Peer Mentorship and Coaching:** We recognize the power of peer support. To foster ongoing growth, we will create opportunities for staff to engage with one another in small groups to discuss DEI. By sharing experiences and insights, we can collectively advance our understanding of racial equity and DEI.

Social Services remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering optimal outcomes for our staff and community. To achieve this, we will collaborate with an external consultant throughout the plan implementation process. It is also important to mention that our strategic objectives seamlessly align with the existing DHHS “Racial Equity Strategic Plan,” with a particular focus on high-level goals 2, 3, 4 and 6. This alignment, along with the expert guidance, will help ensure we not only craft an intentional and focused plan, but will also help us navigate with a heightened level of perspective and impact. We eagerly await the opportunity to unveil our finalized plan to all our staff in July, and our aspiration is to continuously enhance and expand upon it based on valuable input and feedback from our staff. ◀

June is Elder Abuse Awareness Month

► At its June 4 meeting, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors declared June as Elder Abuse Awareness Month with a proclamation. Locally, an average of 129 reports of elder and vulnerable adult abuse and neglect are received each month. People of all ages and abilities can be advocates and a voice for older Californians. If you suspect elder or dependent adult abuse, call DHHS Adult Protective Services (APS) at 707-476-2100 or toll free at 866-527-8614. For more information, visit humboldt.gov.org/APS. ◀



From left, DHHS Behavioral Health Director Emi Botzler-Rodgers, Assistant Director Michele Stephens, APS Program Manager II Keri Schrock, Director Connie Beck and First District Supervisor Rex Bohn.



Public Health Director's Report

by Sofia Pereira

► In April, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors recognized National Public Health Week—a time to recognize the tireless efforts of public health professionals, advocates and community-based organizations in improving the well-being of people across the U.S. and in our own community. This year's theme, "Protecting, Connecting and Thriving: We Are All Public Health," is a reminder of how we all have a role in promoting the health of our community.

The Public Health Branch of the Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services includes the Public Health Laboratory, the divisions of Environmental Health, Nursing and Healthy Communities, the Women, Infants & Children program and many other key programs that work alongside community partners to promote health and well-being. While our Public Health team has distinct roles in promoting and protecting the health of all in our county, we are one piece of a complex puzzle.

In early 2023, we launched the coun-

ty's 2022-2027 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), a communitywide action plan that outlines how we are collectively addressing priority health issues over the next several years to reduce health disparities, promote health equity and improve overall population health in our county. Priorities include substance use and suicide prevention, housing insecurity and homelessness, and adverse childhood experiences and healthy beginnings. While the creation of the CHIP was launched and guided by DHHS Public Health, the plan is a product of the collaborative efforts of Live Well Humboldt (LWH). LWH is a collective impact initiative guided by the partnership, expertise and passion of individuals and organizations across multiple sectors in Humboldt County working to improve health and well-being in our community.

At the end of 2023, we launched the Humboldt County Community Health Dashboard, a free, one-stop digital resource to access community quality of life data, funding opportunities, promising practices and reports. The dashboard is also being used to track progress on the CHIP. Creating these tools strengthen how we use data to bring in more resources and work collaboratively across systems. You can find out more at livewellhumboldt.org.

On the Community Health Dashboard, you'll find information about the social determinants of health, non-medical factors that shape people's health. You may have heard before that your zip code can predict your potential life expectancy. That's a very bold statement to reflect on. How could that be? Living in a rural county, we see how geographic isolation and distance from resources can impact our health. Other factors like economic stability, education and access to nutritious food are also drivers of our health. When you consider all the ways our health can be impacted, and how health disparities can be exacerbated, it's easier to see how we all serve a role in improving our community's health.

In DHHS, we all work to improve the health of our community through a variety of programs and services. In your free time you may also be a part of neighborhood associations, chambers of commerce, school PTA's or some other organization that is about improving the well-being of our communities. That work you're doing is very likely tied to the actual health of our community.

While National Public Health Week has passed, we continue to come together to make Humboldt County a place where we can all thrive. ◀



CWS Report

by Pam Miller, Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Program Manager and Kelly Peterson, ICWA Program Analyst

► The need for the “Days of Joint Training” developed out of conversations with local Tribal partners as well as Humboldt Child Welfare Services (CWS) ICWA program staff, who each voiced the need to train together to help support a more common lens and language when assessing for the safety of children.

The value of training together with Tribal partners, hearing the information together and asking the hard questions together is immeasurable, both in improving practice and building relationships. It is imperative that Humboldt County CWS staff and local Tribal partners complete ongoing joint trainings together covering various instruction topics to learn and understand the material, build strong and open relationships and heal so we may be better together for the safety and well-being of Native American children and families.

The identified purpose of the “Days of Joint Training” is to improve outcomes for children and families by fostering collaboration and enhancing the capacity of Child Welfare staff and Tribal partners to work together in supporting the safety, well-being and permanency of Native American children. The training series has three



CWS ICWA Program Manager II Pam Miller facilitates discussion during a domestic violence panel held as a part of the “Days of Joint Training,” a series of trainings held in collaboration with Tribal partners, Evident Change and California Tribal Families Coalition.

identified outcome goals:

1. Enhance collaboration and communication
2. Increase knowledge and understanding
3. Improve safety and well-being outcomes for Native children and their families.

The first “Days of Joint Training” were held in December of 2022 with a focus on the Structured Decision Making tools, looking primarily at Safety Assessment and Safety Planning. The second session was held in October of 2023, continuing to look closely at Safety Assessment and

Safety Planning with a specific focus on Domestic Violence and the impact on children.

We are currently planning the third “Days of Joint Training” to be held in July where we will explore Cultural and Social Standards of community, continue to dive deep into the Safety Assessment tools and look closely at sexual abuse and sexual assault. These trainings highlight the value and importance of working together while underscoring the critical role of partnership in safeguarding vulnerable children and families in our community. ◀



DHHS HOME staff presents at internationally attended Housing First Conference

► Staff from DHHS’s HOME Program recently traveled to attend and present at the Housing First Partners Conference (HFPC) in Atlanta, GA. The HFPC gathered 1,300 people from across the U.S. and seven other countries who apply Housing First principles in their communities to address homelessness. ◀



Equity Update

by Neftali Miller-Rubio, Racial & Cultural Equity Manager

► Hello from DHHS’s Racial Equity program. With the change of seasons, the equity team is broadening its focus to support branches as they tackle equity within their spheres of influence, impacting both employee experience and service delivery. This newsletter article highlights accomplishments and/or current activities happening within our three branches — Behavioral Health, Public Health and Social Services.

The Behavioral Health Branch has taken steps to formalize an approach to equity both internally, with their staff and leaders, and with clients and the community. Some of these steps include policies on budgeting and written materials, and development of an Equity Action Plan. Behavioral Health’s Cultural Responsiveness Committee recently wrapped the “Welcoming Environments Survey” which asked staff and clients to assess various locations for availability of culturally responsive materials, such as brochures for non-English speakers and content that makes people feel represented,

accessibility of furniture and waiting rooms and how easy it was to engage with front desk staff. Branch leadership, managers and administrative staff also meet monthly, participating in training and coaching sessions to develop competencies and structures that advance racial equity. To learn more about equity efforts at Behavioral Health, you can email mhsacomment@co.humboldt.ca.us.

Health Equity has long been a core value at Public Health. In 2023, Public Health launched the “Health Equity Checklist” and accompanying Policy and Procedure. The checklist is a tool that prompts users to ensure health equity is considered and prioritized in decision-making and initiative development. The checklist asks users to reflect upon their application of equity in activities related to using public health data to target interventions, creating opportunities for authentic community decision making, ensuring communications and messaging are relevant and accessible and placing health equity at the center of public health partnerships. In 2024, the Public Health Equity Advisory Team (PHEAT) completed a multi-segment workshop series and received technical assistance from Human Impact Partners, supporting a strategy to embed equity and build capacity for equity initiatives throughout the branch. To learn

more about equity efforts at Public Health, you can email PHEAT@co.humboldt.ca.us.

The Social Services Branch — Employment and Eligibility is working to advance the organizational commitment of achieving racial equity and has established six goals for the upcoming fiscal year ranging from a staff survey, supportive coaching and training, policy review and resource development. The goals grew from a need to understand and broaden staffs’ knowledge, comfort and ability to participate in activities and discussions about racial equity among staff and clients. These goals also create stronger alignment between equity efforts within the branch and those at the department level. Many of the goals align with the DHHS “Racial Equity Strategic Plan” and are expected to be achieved by the close of fiscal year 2024-25. To learn more about equity efforts at the Social Services Branch, you can email ekanaga@co.humboldt.ca.us.

Open Coaching Sessions continue via Zoom for all staff in supervisory roles. Questions and comments should be directed to DHHSRacialEquity@co.humboldt.ca.us.

All staff are welcome to contact the Racial & Cultural Equity Manager and Steering Committee via email at DHHSRacialEquity@co.humboldt.ca.us. ◀

DHHS Veterans Service Officer honored as ‘Humboldt Hero’

► Surrounded by family and friends including her mother Carolyn and daughter Randi, DHHS’s Veterans Service Officer Rena Maveety was honored as a Humboldt Hero in February by local State Farm Insurance agent Scott Hammond. The award is given each month to a local veteran to recognize their contributions to the community.

Rena enlisted in the Coast Guard in 1987 and was honorably discharged two years later. Since moving to Humboldt County in 2004 and starting work at DHHS, Rena has helped more than 2,100 veterans through her work in the Veterans Service Office. ◀



Behavioral Health Director's Report

by Emi Botzler-Rodgers, LMFT

► I had the opportunity to participate recently in a panel discussion about mental health and “embracing humanity,” hosted by Mayor Kim Bergel and the City of Eureka. I was incredibly anxious to participate and felt compelled to say that at the beginning. It was important for me to say it, partly because if I am authentic with what I am experiencing, it helps me stay more present. It was also important for me to say as part of my ongoing efforts to address stigma. I don't tend to feel comfortable talking about my own vulnerabilities and this is an area I do believe many people struggle. Mental health and mental illness are



on a continuum just like physical health and physical illness. It is generally easier for someone to say I have a cold than it is for them to say I have anxiety. That is true for me. The inability to speak to anxiety, or depression or substance use challenges, doesn't serve us well, as individuals or as a community. The intent of the embracing humanity convening was to speak openly and normalize mental illness and the prevalence and importance of it as part of all of our human experiences.

The other part of this kick-off event for May is Mental Health Awareness Month, that I valued so immensely, was the willingness of the professionals on the panel to partner in our efforts to address mental illness in Humboldt County. There were a variety of individuals from different organizations, many of whom have competing needs, agendas, regulations and compliance issues related to serving our community, but every

single person expressed commitment to working together to care for those who are suffering. There were challenging and pointed questions about how we can do better in serving people with mental illness. All panel members were able and willing to acknowledge the challenges and then pivot to focusing on how to work with one another to do what was needed. I felt so much gratitude and appreciation for this.

The icing on the cake was the panel that followed ours on lived experience. This was a group of amazing individuals, who have struggled with, or on behalf of someone, with mental health or substance use challenges. They were “strategically brave” as one panel member put it, because that is what will help others and our community at large around healing, recovery and ending stigma. It was a beautiful representation of the strengths in our community! ◀

'5 FAQs' video series highlights DHHS jobs

► Do you know someone curious about employment with DHHS? If so, consider introducing them to our “5 FAQs” video series!

Each short episode aims to provide information and insight on open positions throughout the department. In our latest videos, Child Welfare Services Office Assistant Miranda Thiesen, Social Worker III Sara Spencer-Young and Behavioral Health Clinician Meghan Sheeran answer frequently asked questions among prospective applicants and newly hired employees. Click on the image to watch and learn more about each position. ◀



5 FAQs:

Office Assistant Child Welfare Services



5 FAQs:

Social Workers with In-Home Supportive Services



5 FAQs:

Behavioral Health Clinician Comprehensive Community Treatment (CCT) Program



Public Health staff celebrates Earth Month

► Staff from DHHS's Healthy Communities Division of Public Health gathered during National Walking Day and Earth Month in April to participate in a litter walk event. ◀



From left, members of the "Funness" (Fitness and Fun) Committee, Courtney Angelo, Kirsten Vasquez, Melissa Reed and Calvin Copeland.

Social Worker Appreciation Month

► At a meeting in early March, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors declared March as Social Worker Appreciation Month. Across the country, social workers serve a significant role in the system of services aimed at protecting children, elders and dependent adults from neglect, abuse and exploitation. Thank you, social workers! ◀



Humboldt County
Department of
Health & Human
Services

Help Wanted

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

