



County of Ventura

Human Services Agency

2018-2019 Annual Report



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Key Outcomes Human Services Agency

The Human Services Agency strives to strengthen Ventura County by administering programs that have a positive impact on key community concerns including food insecurity, access to health care and insurance, child and elder abuse, unemployment and homelessness. The Human Services Agency serves as a foundation for improved career paths and family lives and as a safety net for individuals facing temporary setbacks due to loss of a job, illness or other challenges.

Over the last three years, the economy has begun to stabilize with the county unemployment rate falling from 5.4% in June 2016 to 3.6% in June 2019. During the same period in time, participation in key assistance programs has declined: CalWORKs by 19%, CalFresh by 13%, and Medi-Cal by 5%. Despite the progress made towards a sustainable economic recovery, 1 in 4 county residents still access safety net services.



CalWORKs Participants

2017	11,076
2018	10,277
2019	8,964

CalFresh Participants

2017	72,264
2018	67,772
2019	62,829

Medi-Cal Participants

2017	226,486
2018	220,911
2019	215,639

Human Services Agency

- Helped **215,639** individuals receive health care through Medi-Cal benefits
- Helped **62,829** individuals supplement their diets with CalFresh benefits
- Assisted **7,042** individuals who receive In-Home Supportive Services
- Responded to **4,701** allegations of adult abuse
- Investigated **4,097** reports of suspected child abuse or neglect
- Facilitated adoptions for **157** children



County of Ventura Board of Supervisors

- District 1 – *Steve Bennett*
- District 2 – *Linda Parks*
- District 3 – *Kelly Long*
- District 4 – *Bob Huber*
- District 5 – *John C. Zaragoza*

County Executive Officer

Michael Powers

Human Services Agency Director

Barry L. Zimmerman

Human Services Agency Revenue & Expenditures

2018-2019 Revenue

Federal & State Funds	\$246 million
County Funds	\$34.1 million
Total	\$280.1 million

2018-2019 Expenditures

Staff Salaries & Benefits	\$133.1 million
Direct Client Assistance.....	\$95.9 million
Services & Supplies.....	\$51.1 million
Total	\$280.1 million





PROTECTIVE *Programs*

Ensuring protection for vulnerable adults

Growth of Senior Population Reveals Elders at Risk

Over the next decade, California will be confronted with a demographic shift of epic proportions: Seniors are California’s fastest-growing population. Between now and 2026, the number of Californians 65 and older is expected to climb by 2.1 million, according to projections by the state Department of Finance. By contrast, the number of 25- to 64-year-olds is projected to grow by just more than half a million; the number of Californians younger than 25 will grow by a mere 2,500.*

In Ventura County, the number of seniors is projected to grow to 205,000 by 2020, and 264,000 by the year 2030, comprising a third of the County’s population. As the senior population swells, aging residents require more medical care and the demand for safety-net programs for the elderly — such as financial assistance for low-income seniors or payments to in-home caregivers — is on the rise.

Studies show that most seniors prefer to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. The In-Home Supportive Services program provides resources for low-income seniors and those with disabilities to hire workers, including family members, to provide support with personal care, household work, and errands. The spectrum of age-related needs also points to an increased demand for health care workers, from home health aides to nurses and doctors.

Over the past four years, the number of residents receiving In-Home Supportive Services has climbed by 31%. Given the increasing senior population, that trend is expected to continue. As In-Home Supportive Services caseloads increase, so too have programs that protect seniors.

IHSS Average Monthly Open Cases

2016	5,373
2017	6,178
2018	6,755
2019	7,042

Over the past four years, the number of Adult Protective Services cases has risen by 22%. Given that current policies only allow for short-term interventions, the Human Services Agency is exploring a pilot program for long-term case management for Adult Protective Services clients that could improve outcomes.

**Adult Protective Services
Average Monthly Open Cases**

2016	444
2017	505
2018	526
2019	542

*Source: "California's senior population is growing faster than any other age group. How the next governor responds is crucial." Los Angeles Times, October 2018

SAFETY*Net*

Helping community members struggling to meet basic needs

Expanding CalFresh to People Receiving SSI / SSP

For the first time ever in California, hundreds of thousands of seniors and people with disabilities who receive Supplemental Security Income / State Supplemental Payment (SSI / SSP) benefits are now able to apply for CalFresh food benefits. This historic change, which took effect on June 1, 2019, is intended to increase nutrition and health and reduce hunger and poverty among California's low-income seniors and people with disabilities.

The CalFresh food program is the State's number one defense against hunger and malnutrition. Nearly four million people a month – more than 60,000 in Ventura County – receive benefits on a debit card to purchase food at grocery stores and farmers' markets. Locally, the average CalFresh household receives \$228 in benefits monthly. With SSI/SSP recipients now eligible to apply for CalFresh, seniors and people with disabilities in our community have a new option available to help make ends meet.

Some who are part of households already receiving CalFresh food benefits may receive new state funded Supplemental Nutrition Benefits or Transitional Nutrition Benefits, with no change or reduction to their SSI/SSP benefits.

The Human Services Agency continues to conduct outreach to help ensure that information about this change in eligibility reaches low-income seniors and people with disabilities who too often find themselves choosing between paying rent, buying food, and paying for medication. Nearly 3,000 newly-eligible Ventura County residents are now receiving nutrition benefits, with several thousand more expected to enroll in the coming months.

California Statewide Automated Welfare System

Through the Statewide Automated Welfare System consortia, the state and counties provide public assistance benefits to over 13 million Californians with low incomes. Efforts are currently underway to consolidate the existing three consortia systems and functionality into one single system: California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS). During the past year, Human Services Agency Director Barry L. Zimmerman has advanced efforts to develop the single platform that will be utilized by all counties.

California, its counties, and stakeholders have a decades-long partnership and commitment to excellence in service delivery for health and human services programs. The CalSAWS development process will be improved through meaningful stakeholder, client, and advocate input on elements that impact service delivery. The new system is scheduled to launch in phases beginning in 2022.



COMMUNITYConnections

An opportunity for everyone in the community to have a positive impact

Parents as Teachers — Home Visiting Initiative

This past spring, the Human Services Agency partnered with the Ventura County Public Health Department to launch the “Parents as Teachers” program for first-time parenting or pregnant CalWORKs participants. The goals of the program are to prevent child abuse and neglect, increase parent knowledge of early childhood development, improve parenting practices, facilitate early detection of developmental delays and health issues, and increase children’s school readiness and success.

The program implements an evidence-based home visiting model based on a research-informed curriculum that delivers four components: personal visits, group connections, screenings and resource connections. Additionally, the program maximizes outcomes for families by increasing parental involvement, promoting parenting that fosters children’s early development, motivating a commitment to parental growth and behavior change, and improving parents’ abilities to discover their connection to their child’s behavior and family’s well-being. The Human Services Agency and Public Health collaborate with community partners like Safe Kids Ventura County to provide monthly group connections that include services and networking events offering opportunities to share parenting information and experiences.

The Human Services Agency launched Parents as Teachers in April of 2019 and to date there are 33 families enrolled. Even at this early stage, Public Health Nurses providing services to participants are reporting positive changes in parent-child interactions. With plans in place to extend the program to additional families in the coming year, more parents will receive services that can improve their parenting skills and community connections.

Veterans Phoenix Program

The Human Services Agency recently launched the Veterans Phoenix Program, a partnership between the Ventura County Veteran Services Office and the Public Defender’s Office. The program is designed to address the lack of mental health and substance abuse resources for veterans who are involved with Veteran’s Court but not eligible Veterans Affairs services.

The Veteran Phoenix Program seeks to assess and link veterans to appropriate treatment. By identifying addiction and mental health conditions, which often occur in tandem, staff can develop a case plan that treats both issues simultaneously. Currently, approximately 15 percent of court-involved veterans are eligible for the Phoenix Program.



SUCCESSStory

A family reunited through hope, courage and help

Reunifying Families

In 2012, Manny Arroyo’s drug and alcohol addiction contributed to several domestic violence incidents that ultimately led to his incarceration and the loss of his three young sons. During his incarceration, one of Manny’s cellmates told him about Genesis Sober Living’s program called “Dads and Kids,” which provides recovery services and allows supervised visitation with children who have been removed. Manny made the decision to get help and enrolled in the program.

With help of the Dads and Kids program and from his Child Welfare social worker, Manny began taking steps to rebuild his life and develop the structure that he needed to hold his life together. “I started working on myself, finding myself, loving myself, and then realizing what I had to do — take care of myself before I could take care of my kids.”

After making significant changes in his life, he and his sons were granted more time for visitations. In 2014, Manny was granted full custody of his three sons. Clean and sober since and with his sons back in his life, Manny largely credits Children & Family Services for getting him back on track, “and letting me know that I had hope, that I could reunify, that it’s not too late . . . just having that communication with someone that was non-judgmental was a big impact for me.”

Today, Manny works with other families and helps them navigate their own reunification journeys. His responsibilities include supporting families by accompanying them to court, offering resources, helping facilitate more effective communication with social workers and assisting families through the “Parents as Leaders” program. When not busy at work, Manny is coaching his sons in soccer, basketball and baseball.

Manny’s story is very common. While each family is different, many are dealing with addiction issues, domestic violence or mental health challenges that impact their ability to successfully parent their children. With someone like Manny who has gone through the reunification process, parents in the program have a credible role model who offers hope that families can be reunited.

Manny holds out hope for all parents facing the same challenges he has overcome, saying, “I hope that when they hit rock bottom and feel the misery, the loneliness, the sadness, the depression that I had to feel in order to find my inner strength, I hope they too can find the strength that allows them to humble themselves and ask for help.”*

*Source: VC Reporter, “So Happy Together” July 17, 2019



INNOVATIVE *Edge*

Implementing new systems and services to drive results

Aligning Career Services

Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act, CalWORKs, and CalFresh Employment & Training Services are operated within the Human Services Agency. These programs are designed to assist participants in obtaining work-related skills necessary to secure employment and/or increase earnings to living-wage levels, which can reduce reliance on public benefits. Efforts are currently underway to align and strengthen these services, so that all job seekers may benefit from state-of-the-art skills development and training. Aligning these services also creates savings through shared infrastructure and staff resources. Early results are encouraging: the majority of Ventura County CalWORKs clients — 64.7 percent — complete services with earnings.

Piloting California's First Electronic Child Welfare Case File System

Many of the older foster youth served by the county have often been in the child welfare system longer, resulting in extensive case files with hundreds of pages that are difficult to review for pertinent information, including the names of relatives and family friends who may be willing to take more prominent roles in supporting these youth. Additionally, team support of children and families across agencies requires multiple people to have ready access to key information, which can be difficult for cases with large case files.

The Human Services Agency is responding by piloting a new application designed to transform paper files into electronic files, automate displays of critical data needed for decision making, and enable searches for information that would otherwise be nearly inaccessible. This electronic case file solution for child welfare, the first of its kind to be piloted in the state of California also, facilitates the sharing of child welfare information across multiple locations and a variety of desktop and mobile devices. Use of this repository for all case documents, photos, audio and video, will be evaluated for its effectiveness and efficiency in improving service delivery to vulnerable youth.

Farmworker Resource Program Launches

On behalf of the Ventura County Board of Supervisors and County Executive Office, the Human Services Agency recently launched the Farmworker Resource Program, the first of its kind in California. The primary location is in Oxnard, with satellite offices in Santa Paula and Fillmore, and extended evening and weekend hours to make the program accessible. The program is designed to build trust and relationships among the agricultural community, and to assist in facilitating prompt resolutions to workplace concerns such as payroll issues and working conditions, navigating public agencies, and leveraging existing resources.

The program was developed by an eight-member advisory committee, facilitated by the County Executive Office, that included members appointed by the Ventura County Farm Bureau and the Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project. The committee held 14 organizing meetings with Spanish and Mixteco interpreters available to allow for public participation and comment in the development of the program. The advisory committee will monitor and evaluate the program as it evolves.

HOMELESS *Services*

Connecting individuals and families seeking help to a network of agencies

Year-Round Shelters For the Homeless

During the past year, the County Executive Office and the Human Services Agency worked with the cities of Ventura and Oxnard in a joint effort to design, develop and implement a Homeless Shelter System that is responsive to the growing demand for shelter and services for those experiencing homelessness. By working together, real progress towards the establishment of 24-hour facilities that provide a safe place to sleep and services has been made, including the following benchmarks:

- Ratification of a foul weather shelter system agreement
- Designation of a permanent shelter location for the City of Ventura's shelter within a portion of a County facility on Knoll Drive in Ventura, and completion of design specifications
- Launch of the Temporary West County Emergency Shelter Navigation Center that serves as a model for the permanent shelter in Oxnard
- Selection of a single non-profit organization—Mercy House—to operate the shelters in Oxnard and Ventura

The Temporary Emergency Shelter and Navigation Center, which opened on January 30, 2019, is a shared shelter with the City of Oxnard and the City of Ventura. The shelter serves 110 individuals experiencing homelessness, providing basic needs and social services in one location. The Human Services Agency coordinates trainings for partners on public assistance programs, Mental Health First Aid and the Homeless Management Information Services data system—a key tool that is used to help track and provide case management services for shelter clients.

With the Ventura shelter scheduled to open in Winter 2019-2020, Ventura County will have two locations where individuals can go to sleep at night and wake to find access to supportive social services.

Housing Program Makes a Difference

The Housing & Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP) was established several years ago to assist individuals with disabilities who are experiencing homelessness apply for disability benefit programs while also receiving housing assistance. HDAP requires utilization of a "Housing First" approach, which includes housing individuals without preconditions and helping clients secure permanent housing as soon as possible. Individuals who have disabilities and are experiencing homelessness are given highest priority.

Ventura County is one of 39 California counties participating in HDAP, with each county program tailored to its community. The Human Services Agency follows "whole person" and Trauma Informed approaches to services, and collaborates with established partners such as Veteran Services, Whole Person Care, the Ventura County Continuum of Care, and community-based organizations.

The program is already making a positive difference in people's lives. Of the 25 households served to date, 12 have secured permanent housing and 14 have begun receiving disability benefits. Several families remain in HDAP-funded interim housing and continue to receive supportive services while they pursue permanent housing solutions.





To honor the 12 victims of the Borderline shooting, an oak tree at the sight of the shooting has been made a landmark and permanently lit up in their memory.

DISASTER *Response*

Assisting with response, recovery, and community needs

Tragedy and Recovery

On the evening of November 7, 2018 around 11:30 p.m. a mass shooting claiming 12 lives, including a Ventura County Sheriff's Deputy, occurred at the Borderline Bar & Grill in Thousand Oaks. By the next day, first responders were also on the scene battling two major wildfires: the Hill Canyon Fire, which started in the Santa Rosa Valley, and the Woolsey Fire near Simi Valley.

The County Office of Emergency Services activated the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to respond to both the shooting and the fires. The Human Services Agency deployed Veteran Services and Employment Services staff to the County's Family Assistance Center to provide services to those affected by the mass shooting. Further, with oversight responsibility for Mass Care & Shelter Operations, Human Services Agency deployed staff to the EOC to coordinate services for evacuees with the Red Cross. At the same time, the Agency's Department Operations Center, staffed by key members of the disaster response team, convened to ensure that mission essential human services continued uninterrupted.

Additionally, the Human Services Agency managed the County's Local Assistance Center in Thousand Oaks where staff from Intake & Eligibility, Homeless Services, and Veteran Services provided services and information to over 300 residents. Further, over \$307,000 in CalFresh disaster related food benefits were issued to residents impacted by the fires.

To ensure that the County is ready to meet community needs during a disaster, the Human Services Agency is partnering with county agencies, cities, school districts and community partners to develop a regional Mass Care & Shelter Plan slated for final approval in 2019. Meetings are taking place with officials in each city to ensure that local feedback is taken into account during the planning process. Additionally, county partners are exploring development of a shelter case management system that would assist in delivering and tracking services for residents impacted by disasters.



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