



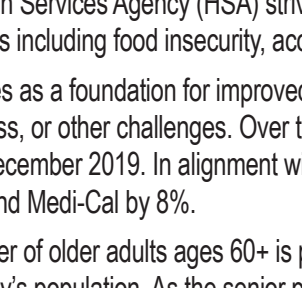
County of Ventura Human Services Agency

Mid-Year Report FY 2019-2020



vchsa.org

Who We Are...



County of Ventura Human Services Agency

Strengthening Our Community

The Human Services Agency (HSA) 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.

HSA 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 county unemployment rate has continued to fall from 4.9% in December 2016 to 3.4% in December 2019. In alignment with this trend, participation in most assistance programs has also declined: CalWORKs by 26%, CalFresh by 16%, and Medi-Cal by 8%.

The number of older adults ages 60+ is projected to grow to 243,000 by 2030, and 255,000 by the year 2040* comprising about one-third of Ventura County's population. As the senior population increases, the rise in In-Home Supportive Services participants is expected to continue.

In the past decade, the percentage of county residents receiving support services has grown significantly from 1 in 8 in 2008 to more than 1 in 4 in December 2019.

*California Department of Finance, Total Estimated and Projected Population for California Counties

209,499
Individuals received health care through Medi-Cal coverage
[Learn More](#)

63,904
Individuals supplemented their diets with CalFresh nutrition benefits
[Learn More](#)

8,913
Individuals received CalWORKs benefits
[Learn More](#)

7,273
Individuals received In-Home Supportive Services
[Learn More](#)

Veteran Services Office Helps Veterans Reclaim Their Lives

For Tom, joining the Navy at 18 brought him a deep sense of pride and community. For the first time he truly felt part of something, and even today still smiles when he recalls handling radio communications as part of a task force at sea. Just a few years into his military service, an injury unexpectedly side-lined him and he was released from duties with an honorable discharge.

Tom was not prepared for the culture shock of transitioning from military to civilian life, and in addition to facing long-term service-related medical issues, he grappled with depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. He also found it nearly impossible to function in civilian society and struggled finding work and housing.

When Tom came to the Veteran Services Office (VSO), he was very much in need of help. He was homeless and hungry, had no vehicle and no job, and was estranged from his family. He was still in pain from his time in the Navy, and he hadn't followed through with his claim for service-related injuries. Moreover, he had bed bugs and scabies, and "just wanted to feel clean and human." VSO staff spent time with Tom, listening to him and making suggestions. By his simple act of asking for help, it was like a dam had broken and Tom suddenly felt ready to take charge of his life.

VSO staff provided Tom with immediate assistance, and sat with him for hours reviewing documents and preparing a housing application. Tom was encouraged to participate in the Ventura County Homeless Stand Down where he received medical checks and dental care, a haircut, meals, clean clothes, and connection with service providers. Tom's VSO Claims Officer guided him through deeper engagement with some of these same service providers so that Tom could take meaningful steps to begin to improve his life.



Today, Tom receives disability compensation, and his pain and health needs are cared for through local Veterans Administration clinics. He is housed and is clean. Before he made the decision to change his life and get sober, he had felt "less than" and not a part of anything. Now, he is making great strides in reestablishing relationships with his family and is making friends with his neighbors. Most importantly, he once again feels like he is part of a community.

The Veteran Services Office is staffed by fully accredited Veteran Claims Officers who provide information, referrals, claims preparation and submission, and follow-up services, collaborating with other accredited organizations to ensure Veterans, their dependents, and survivors receive the benefits to which they are entitled. Claims services for Veterans include compensation for service-connected disabilities, pension for wartime veterans with non-service-connected disabilities, and assistance accessing medical care, educational benefits, and home loans, as well as claims services for widows and dependent children of Veterans.

Services can be accessed countywide through offices in Ventura, Camarillo, Moorpark, Thousand Oaks, Simi Valley, Santa Paula, and Oxnard. Veterans and their dependents can schedule an appointment by calling (805) 477-5155 or learn more by visiting www.vchsa.org/veterans.

New Requirements and Help for CalFresh Clients Who are Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents

Due to a federal rule change that will take effect on April 1, 2020, as many as 6,400 CalFresh clients in Ventura County (excluding those who claim valid exemptions) will be at risk of losing their food benefits if they are not able to comply with work requirements. HSA is preparing to help CalFresh clients understand this upcoming change, meet work requirements, retain their food benefits, and enhance their overall employability and employment prospects.

For the past several years, Ventura County, alongside many California counties, has received federal permission to waive work requirements for CalFresh participants who are categorized as "able-bodied adults without dependents" or ABAWDs. Effective April 1st, however, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service will grant waivers only to localities with high unemployment rates. The local unemployment rate is low, and Ventura County's waiver will not be extended.

Without a waiver in place, as many as 6,400 ABAWD CalFresh clients who do not meet work requirements will be restricted to receiving food benefits for a maximum of 90 days in any three-year period. The average CalFresh client receives approximately \$125 monthly in food benefits. Assistance for 6,400 clients represents some \$800,000 spent monthly at local grocery stores and neighborhood markets.

ABAWD CalFresh clients who work, volunteer, and/or participate in a work program (or claim a valid exemption) will continue to receive their benefits monthly so long as they meet all other program eligibility criteria. Clients must work or participate in a work program at least 80 hours per month to be eligible.

The America's Job Centers of America (AJCCs), located in Oxnard and Simi Valley, help adults and youth find employment by providing a direct link to local resources. The AJCCs house HSA and partner agency staff who provide support in accessing computers, job listings, and no- or low-cost training programs. Job seekers may also perform self-directed job searches using computer resource rooms at other HSA offices.

Additionally, HSA offers targeted employment services to clients who receive General Relief benefits, nearly all of whom also participate in CalFresh. Last year, HSA assisted 40 General Relief clients with employment.

Further, HSA recently implemented a specialized CalFresh Employment & Training (CFE&T) pilot program designed to help CalFresh clients develop the work-related skills necessary to secure employment and/or increase their wages. The CFE&T pilot administered by Goodwill provides case management, supervised job search, education and training, supportive services, and/or job retention services for clients. Plans are underway to evaluate and potentially expand the CFE&T program beyond this pilot.



VENTURA COUNTY CENSUS 2020

The Human Services Agency (HSA) is taking an active role in the 2020 Census to ensure a complete and accurate count, particularly among the large hard-to-count populations served by the agency. For the first time, the Census questionnaire will be available online in 13 languages, and can also be completed by phone or in person via a Census enumerator.

HSA will be hosting Census Questionnaire Action Kiosks (QAKs) at ten of our Community Service Centers and other service sites across the county where clients and the public can access and complete the 2020 Census questionnaire online.

HSA will also host four Questionnaire Assistance Centers (QACs) where bilingual staff will be available during office hours to assist clients and community members with using the kiosks, offer Census materials and answer questions and provide any language or other assistance that might be needed.

Staffed kiosks will be located at our Community Service Centers in Oxnard, Simi Valley, Santa Paula, and Ventura through the end of April. In addition, the HSA is collaborating with the County of Ventura, the Ventura County Complete Count Committee, and community partners to conduct outreach, raise awareness, and educate the community to increase confidence in the security and importance of the 2020 Census.

Community-Based Resources & Events

In an effort to promote even better customer service, HSA has launched a revamped Community-Based Resources and Events Web page that more effectively serves as a one-stop shop for information regarding community-based workshops, events, and programs for families and individuals. Items posted on this web page are primarily from nonprofit, educational or governmental sources, and are generally no cost or very low cost.

If your clients earned under \$56,000 in 2019, they are eligible for

Free Tax Prep & Filing

To schedule your appointment, Call 2-1-1 beginning 1/21/2020

They may qualify for the state* & federal Earned Income Tax Credit.

*Self-employed workers & families earning wages up to \$30,000 are now eligible for the CalEITC

Open February 1 – May 2, 2020

Human Services Agency Hosts Free Tax Preparation Assistance

HSA is partnering with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA) to offer free tax preparation assistance to individuals and families with earnings up to \$56,000 in 2019.

Staffed by a cadre of IRS-trained and certified volunteers, the program helps low and moderate-income households prepare and file their taxes and ensures that those who qualify also benefit from the state and federal earned income and child tax credits. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is considered the single most effective federal antipoverty program for working-age households, providing additional income and boosting employment for low-income workers. Self-employed workers and families with wages up to \$30,000 may also qualify for the California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC). In addition, this year CalEITC expanded eligibility to include 18- to 24-year-olds at the start of their careers, even if they do not have dependent children.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance services are available at locations across the county, including HSA offices in Simi Valley, Oxnard and Ventura. Appointments are required and can be made by calling 2-1-1. Scheduling early is encouraged as slots fill up quickly. For those who are comfortable with online processes, www.myfreetaxes.org is a user-friendly program offered through a partnership between the United Way and H&R Block, which allows taxpayers who earned up to \$66,000 to file their taxes online for free.

Children & Family Services - Family Preservation Program: Raymond's Story

Raymond entered the child welfare system at the age of 11 and spent the remainder of his childhood moving between placements, resulting in trauma and struggles with anger and attachment. He didn't imagine he would ever need the support from Children & Family Services (CFS) to keep his own child, Sean, safe at home.

In 2018, when Sean was just 1-year-old, his mother found herself unable to overcome her drug addiction. The young family was at high risk of having Sean removed. But because CFS strives to prevent or mitigate some of the long-term negative effects of separation, the staff got creative and considered a non-traditional approach in Raymond's situation. They worked with the family through a tailored, trauma-informed process and believed Raymond could provide everything that Sean needed to remain safely at home.

The Family Preservation (FP) program is a court alternative prepared option that tailors services to meet the needs of caregivers. Parents and children in the FP program receive intensive services that include weekly in-person contact with a CFS social worker and support from a CFS community services worker in addressing barriers to basic needs, such as transportation and linkage to a public health nurse. Families are also referred to substance abuse treatment, mental health care, parenting support, and medical care services as needed.

When Raymond was ready, he shared his previous case plans as a youth and his discomfort and aversion to therapy. FP focused on real-life parenting skills and worked on active play time between Raymond and his son. They also connected Raymond to community partners to assist him with child care and other resources so he could secure full-time employment.

Together, Raymond and Raymond embraced his ability to connect with and protect his son in a way that was comfortable to him. FP never tried to reshape him into someone else. Rather, he was supported in his parenting decisions and received ongoing encouragement from his FP social worker. CFS saw firsthand how loving and protective Raymond was of his son.

After five months, Raymond and Sean were successfully equipped to be a safe and stable family. Although they no longer need the Family Preservation program to stay together, Raymond still calls his former social worker with questions that stump him and just to say "Hello."

To date, the Family Preservation program has served 400 children and their families, 360 of whom have remained safely at home with their parents without a need to open a dependency court case.

*Names have changed to respect confidentiality.

New Public Charge Rule

The term "public charge" refers to a determination about whether someone may become dependent on government assistance as their main source of support. If the federal government determines someone is likely to become a public charge, admission to the U.S. and/or an application for lawful permanent residency can be denied. Effective February 24, 2020, the definition used to determine whether an individual is or is likely to become a public charge was expanded.

HSA has posted messaging on our website encouraging clients to consult reliable resources such as trained immigration attorneys and reputable nonprofit immigration service providers if they have questions about the impact on their immigration status of applying for or receiving public benefits. Among the resources available, the California Department of Social Services maintains a list of all CDSS-funded legal service providers as well as a list of providers who can provide legal consultation and/or education and outreach services specifically related to public charge. Locally, there are several organizations listed, including Central Coast Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE), El Concilio Family Services, Lideres Campesinas, and Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project.

Budget & Legislative Update

Governor Gavin Newsom's proposed FY 2020-21 budget forecasts higher revenues (\$5.8 billion) than last year due to continued economic growth, while building reserves to maintain fiscal health.

The budget includes significant investments and initiatives aimed at continuing to strengthen the most vulnerable Californians struggling to make ends meet. These investments and reforms include:

- Spending \$750 million to support development of new affordable housing units, engage with landlords to negotiate leases, and provide tenancy support for individuals receiving rent subsidies
- Expanding full-scope Medi-Cal coverage to low-income undocumented Californians aged 65 and older
- Boosting CalWORKs grants by 3.1% to help parents overcome barriers to employment and find jobs
- Earmarking \$3 million to support increased staffing resources for CalWORKs and CalFresh program improvements
- Allocating \$14.9 billion for In-Home Supportive Services
- Providing caregivers eight weeks of paid time off, effective July 1, 2020, and including language to "align paid family leave benefits with job protections"
- Expanding support for workforce development programs with an \$11 million investment
- Replacing the \$50 million in one-time General Fund support for General Child Care spaces with ongoing funding from the Cannabis Fund
- Increasing investment in state higher education systems and funding for K-12 education

Further, to mitigate the effects of climate change, including wildfires, flooding, and extreme heat and wind events, the Governor recommends spending \$1.73 billion in FY 2020-21. Below are a few critical investments under this priority:

- Allocating \$50 million in one-time General Fund to support a matching grant program to help local governments prepare for and respond to Public Safety Power Shutoffs
- Investing \$250 million directly in communities to bolster community resilience centers and support local preparedness, planning, and education around resilience
- Providing \$500 million to harden drinking water infrastructure, emergency shelters, and public medical facilities in low-income areas with high wildfire risk

*Source: California Budget Center First Look: Governor's Proposed 2020-2021 State Budget

County of Ventura Human Services Agency

855 Partridge Drive, Ventura, CA 93003
(866) 904-9362 Toll Free

We strengthen families, support self-sufficiency and promote safety, health & well-being.