

# DPSS NEWS

DECEMBER 2021



Oscar Lozano became a dad when he adopted 19-month-old Ava in November, National Adoption Month. Learn more about his story and see other adoptive families, [starting on page 10.](#)



# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

**Dear DPSS Family,**

This holiday season gives me a deeper appreciation for your kindness, generosity, and steadfast professionalism. You bring hope and healing to everyone from the tiniest at-risk newborns to our most vulnerable elderly neighbors. I have seen you tirelessly bring your creativity and optimism to provide much needed resources that strengthen our communities.

The entire DPSS and County leadership teams are grateful to each of you for keeping safe the children, families, seniors, and individuals who need our assistance.

Despite our busy day-to-day, I hope that the holiday season brings you a moment to reflect and remember the many good deeds and selfless acts you have performed for our community. I also wish you find a moment to take time for yourself and use this as an important reminder to never put yourself last!

In partnership,

**SAYORI BALDWIN**

Assistant County Executive Officer—Human Services, DPSS Director



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# WHAT'S CURRENT

## DPSS LAUNCHES NEW CUSTOMER-FOCUSED WEBSITE



DPSS launched a new customer-centered website in the late fall thanks to strong collaboration between DPSS work groups, Riverside County IT and partner vendors. The URL was updated, too, to make the department's programs and resources more accessible to our customers online! The project involved hundreds if not thousands of collaborators in planning, content development and user feedback. We are doing our best at bringing our best to our communities!

Check out our new website at [RivCoDPSS.org](http://RivCoDPSS.org)

## BILLBOARDS PLACED TO INCREASE MEDI-CAL AWARENESS

To support the health and well-being of Riverside County residents, four billboards were strategically placed — one in Perris, two in Palm Springs and one in Riverside — to help increase Medi-Cal applications. Each billboard is estimated to generate over 115,000 weekly impressions which help to inform the public that Medi-Cal can provide health coverage at any age for those that qualify.



## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR 2022 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT



Have you heard? The Homeless Point in Time Count for 2022 is almost here! We need volunteers to help count the unsheltered youth and adults across Riverside County. The count, required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), ensures local governments receive resources that create housing solutions to meet the needs of those in their communities.

The count is being overseen by the Housing and Workforce Solutions department.

Unsheltered people identified during the count will be offered a bed at a shelter, and youth who struggle with housing will be offered resources and encouraged to attend one of the county's "Come and Be Connected" events.

### VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS:

- **Must be 18 or older** (16- and 17-year-olds can volunteer, but they must be accompanied by an adult)
- **Take required training** before the count
- **Have a smartphone** or tablet to conduct the survey
- **Be capable of walking** for up to two hours

We are working with the Riverside County Department of Public Health to ensure Covid-19 protocols are being met for the safety and well-being of our volunteers.

Sign up to at <http://bttr.im/exawo>

If you are a youth who is unable to attend any of the Come and Be Connected community events and would like to have someone follow up with you, please contact Monique Guerra, youth specialist 951-675-0433 or [Mguerra@Rivco.org](mailto:Mguerra@Rivco.org)



### Point-In-Time Count Dates

General Count: Weds Jan 26, 2022, from 5:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.  
Youth Count: Jan 26 - Jan 28, 2022, from 2 p.m. – 8 p.m.



**Youth Count:** [youthcount.morethanacount.org](http://youthcount.morethanacount.org)

**General Count:** [morethanacount.org](http://morethanacount.org)

**COMING SOON!**



*Attention Telecommuters!  
Work mobility options are coming soon...*

# Business Drop-in Centers



*Starting January 3rd 2022, telecommuters can drop-in to any of the selected sites for access to the DPSS network, printers, courier services, etc.*

## **FACILITIES ANNOUNCES A NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR DPSS TELECOMMUTERS**

Now available for telecommuters: Business Drop-in Centers (BDCs). A BDC is a group of seats that visiting telecommuters can use for a quick drop-in. You can use the closest BDC to your home instead of traveling to your primary work location. These spaces can be used when you're working from home but need to use office amenities such as printing, copying, scanning, faxing, courier services, etc.

The Business Drop-in Center spaces differ from hotel spaces that are dedicated to a program or unit; the BDC spaces are not dedicated to any specific program and can be used by any visiting telecommuter.

**BUSINESS DROP-IN CENTERS**  
**FREQUENTLY ASK QUESTIONS**  
 FACILITIES DATA & ANALYSIS



**Q 1. What is a Business Drop-In Center? (BDC)**

A BDC is a pod of cubicles primarily for full-time telecommuters that can drop-in to the closest BDC to their home instead of traveling to their Primary Work Location (PWL). BDCs will provide network and printing access.

**Q 2. What sites have Business Drop-In Centers?**

Region	Address	Phone Number
Metro Region	4060 County Circle Dr, Riverside	951-358-3226
	5961 Mission Blvd, Riverside	951-509-2480
Valley Region	12625 Heacock St, Moreno Valley	951-486-7978
	201 Redlands Blvd, Perris	951-940-6367
Southwest Region	1400 Minthorn St, Lake Elsinore TBD*	Pending
	27464 Commerce Center Dr, Temecula TBD*	951-600-6600
Mid-County Region	541 N. San Jacinto St, Hemet	951-791-3472
	901 E. Ramsey St, Banning	951-922-7550
Desert Region	68-625 Perez Rd, #4 & 5, Cathedral City	760-773-6701
	1283 6th St, Coachella	760-863-2677 or 760-863-2658

\* PENDING LAKE ELSINORE RECONSTRUCTION COMPLETION

**Q 3. What are the hours of operation?**

BDCs are open Monday through Friday from 8 AM to 5 PM, excluding holidays.

**Q 4. Can I make a reservation?**

As of right now BDCs are on a first-come, first-served basis. Further assessments & data collection will be needed to evaluate whether a reservation system is needed. It is recommended to call ahead for availability.

**Q 5. Where do I check-in/check-out?**

Staff are required to check-in and check-out with reception, show your badge and let them know you are a DPSS employee checking in to use the BDCs. Once checked-in reception will assign you BDC cubicle number.

**Q 6. How long can I use space at a BDC?**

BDCs can be used for the full length of your scheduled workday, if needed. BDCs are not meant to be used for consecutive days.

**Q 7. What equipment will be available?**

BDCs will be equipped with a single monitor, cable adapters and access to a printer.

**Q 8. How do I connect to a printer and what do I do if it won't connect?**

Instructions for printer connectivity are in the BDC SharePoint file (<https://rivcounty.sharepoint.com/sites/DPSS-BusinessDrop-inCenters>). If unable to connect to printer call the RCIT HelpDesk (951-955-9900) for assistance.

**Q 9. Will I have access to supplies?**

If you need office supplies, please obtain them from your primary work location.

# TOP INNOVATOR

WITH JENNIFER CLaar



## INNOVATIVE SPIRIT LEADS TO INCREASED EFFICIENCIES

JENNIFER CLaar'S TOP PICK FOR DECEMBER: ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES SUPERVISOR MONICA HERNANDEZ

Joining the department as an Administrative Services Supervisor during a pandemic did not slow Monica Hernandez' forward-thinking approach to business. Hernandez, who was recently promoted to administrative services officer, immediately identified opportunities to streamline processes by taking an innovative approach and maximizing technology to support her vision.

Hernandez eliminated laborious manual processes and the need for hard paper copies, transitioning paper forms to electronic format. The introduction of electronic forms benefited every unit under her supervision: DPSS Purchasing, Vital Records, Travel Desk, and Vehicles. The Travel Desk was able to eliminate printers and scanners and can now share documents electronically. Vital Records requests can now be submitted electronically versus via courier, reducing paper waste and overall carbon footprint.

When Hernandez identifies an opportunity for innovation, she works with internal and external stakeholders to implement new processes and systems," said

Rowena Concepcion, deputy director of Administrative Services, which includes Hernandez's branch.

Concepcion describes how Hernandez gained acceptance and support from Central Purchasing for the realignment of RivCoPRO workflows to gain efficiencies and enhanced accountability. She has also embarked on vehicle reservation automation efforts by working closely with Riverside County IT, Fleet Services, and Technology & Support Services (TSS) in support of the FASTER Motor Pool System launch.

As a technologically savvy and astute business leader, Hernandez utilized SharePoint to manage high-profile projects such as the Asylum Seeker support initiative which required continuous staff engagement and collaboration across county departments. She leveraged MS Teams to create tracking mechanisms that produced reportable productivity data.

Hernandez wants to be able to provide faster and more efficient services by leveraging technology, reducing waste, and developing each



Monica Hernandez actively seeks out ways to increase efficiencies and streamline processes in her role as an Administrative Services officer. Hernandez has her BA in Business Administration from CSUSB and her MBA from The University of La Verne.

of her team member's innovative skill sets.

She has been quoted saying: "Our continued efforts to streamline and build sustainable and creative efficiencies will enhance the customer experience and increase opportunities for the children and adults we serve."



For each publication, Jennifer Claar recommends a staff member or team to be spotlighted: an individual or group who demonstrates the spirit of innovation and learning. Claar has her MSW and PHD in Social Welfare from University of California, Los Angeles, and has led several innovative initiatives in her more than 20 years with the department. "A TOP culture is supported by a spirit of innovation and learning that should be recognized and celebrated," Claar says.



# TELECOMMUTER CONNECTION

WITH LORI



Lori Perry is a senior administrative analyst with Technology Support Services, regularly working in conjunction with the Independent Review Group-Assets Monitoring Services team. Look for her regular updates here in the Telecommuter Connection!



Hold on to your reindeer! If you have an older county-issued phone (iPhone 6 through iPhone 8), you may be fortunate enough to start the new year with a phone refresh, compliments of the DPSS Mobility Team.

Once you're scheduled to receive a phone refresh, you'll receive your appointment date and time with very specific instructions, outlined in a pictorial job aide. It is critical to follow instructions...otherwise, you could face a fate worse than getting run over by Santa's reindeer—you'll have to reschedule for another date and time.

If you are contacted for a phone refresh, here are some things you need to do before you meet with your mobility technician:

- Back up your phone (see instructions on this page)
- Bring your phone's User ID and password to the appointment. If you cannot remember your password or do not have it, we can reset it on site.

**Warning:** If you attempt to use an incorrect password too many times, you can get locked out of your cell phone for weeks.

### How to Back Up Your Phone

1. Plug your device into power before you begin backing up your phone to iCloud.
2. From the home screen, select Settings.

3. Select Wi-Fi, and if you are in your office, ensure you're connected to RIVCO\_Staff. If you are at home, connect to your home Wi-Fi.

4. Go back into Settings. Select your name and then select iCloud.

5. Find Messages in the menu and verify that the toggle button is green. If not, press it to turn it on. This allows for text message backup to iCloud.

6. In the same menu, verify that iCloud Backup is on. If it isn't, press iCloud Backup and switch the toggle button to green.

7. Select Backup Now.

### How to Confirm Backup is Complete:

1. Go to Settings.
2. Select your name.
3. Select iCloud, iCloud Backup. The date and time of the last backup is shown.

### Important!

If your phone is not backed up prior to your appointment, we will have to reschedule you as the backup has taken up to a couple of hours for some staff, which will delay other appointments.

If you need assistance with backing up to iCloud, reach out to the mobility team at [mobilityservicedesk@rivco.org](mailto:mobilityservicedesk@rivco.org) prior to your appointment date.

Submit ideas for future podcasts to [dpssinfo@rivco.org](mailto:dpssinfo@rivco.org) and keep your eyes (and ears) open for more information on theServiceStation.

# Listen Up!

theServiceStation | laEstaciónDeServicio



Oscar Lozano, 35, holds his adopted daughter Ava, 19 months, during Riverside County's Adoption Finalization Day on November 6 at the Riverside Historic Courthouse.

# “theServiceStation” SHARES MAN’S UNIQUE JOURNEY TO FATHERHOOD

In a recent episode of the DPSS podcast, “theServiceStation”, one Riverside man shares how his dream of having his own family came true.

Oscar Lozano, 35, officially became a dad for the first time in November when he adopted his second cousin, Ava, now 19 months. Lozano shares how he had been thinking about fostering or adopting for a while when a relative asked for his help in late December 2019.

“I got a call from one of my cousins who was pregnant and unfortunately suffers from the disease of addiction,” Lozano said during the episode of the bilingual podcast. “I was able to step up.”

He hopes that sharing his story on “theServiceStation” will help break down barriers that might prevent others from opening their hearts and homes.

“It was a really thorough process,” Lozano added. “I really do appreciate that because it shows the level of commitment the county has to make sure that individuals and families are equipped to adopt and take care of children that need families.”

In addition, this DPSS podcast episode features Ida Roath, Social Services Supervisor II, and Ana Campos, Social Services Practitioner (SSP) III, who spotlight Riverside County’s Heart Gallery, an exhibit created to find forever homes for children in foster care.

This episode of the “theServiceStation” is now available in English and Spanish on all major podcast platforms such as Apple, Google and Spotify. You can also listen to this episode and all previous episodes at [rivcodpss.org/dpss-news/podcast](http://rivcodpss.org/dpss-news/podcast).

## WAIT! WANT TO HEAR MORE?

In an upcoming episode of “theServiceStation,” you’ll hear from two voices that represent Faith in Motion, a DPSS program that collaborates with Children’s Services and local faith-based communities to recruit and retain hundreds of foster or resource families in Riverside County.

Irene Capen, Riverside County’s Faith in Motion program manager, and Noemi Amezcua, foster care liaison, will discuss what this program is about and the ongoing need for quality resource homes in our region. They will also explain how Faith in Motion supports Children’s Services initiatives all year long while supporting local families in both English and Spanish. Don’t miss it!

Faith in Motion’s Program Manager Irene Capen (left) and Foster Care Liaison Noemi Amezcua (right) are two guests who will be on an upcoming episode of “the Service Station.”



# NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH



Honorable Kristi Hester, Katie and Christopher Bayer celebrate their adoption of their son Levi, 15 months, at the Larson Justice Center in Indio on November 6.

## FAMILIES BECOME OFFICIAL FOR NEARLY 60 FOSTER CHILDREN ON ADOPTION FINALIZATION DAY

Katie and Christopher Bayer drove their son Levi, their two other adopted children, and extended family members from their home nestled in the San Jacinto mountains to the courthouse down in the Coachella Valley for Adoption Finalization Day on November 6.

“We’ve had our son since birth, and now he is 15 months old,” said Katie, outside the Indio courthouse, holding the little one who was about to become her third adopted child. “We planned to be a forever home from the beginning so when we received a child, they could stay as long as they needed to.”

Inside the courtroom, the Bayer family signed documents and listened to the judge formally declare their 15-month-old as their son. Applause and cheers broke out during the joyful moment.

The adoption ceremony was one of dozens conducted at the Larson Justice Center in Indio and at the Riverside Historic Courthouse on November 6 when nearly 60 children became official members of their families. At both events, local dignitaries and others offered words of encouragement.

“I consider it a privilege and honor to preside over adoption day,” says Judge Kristi Hester of the Superior Court of Riverside. “As a family law judge, I frequently see families at their worst. On Adoption Day, I get to be a part of the most amazing moments in the lives of these families. It’s hard not to get caught up in the excitement and emotion.”

# NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

Volunteers from Faith in Motion prepared and gave the families baskets filled with gifts from local churches. Riverside County's Heart Gallery displayed photos and stories of children waiting to be adopted.

"We are always thrilled to see how much awareness and enthusiasm this event generates," said Sophia

Williams, Adoption Regional Manager in DPSS' Children's Services Division, who oversees the Adoption Finalization Day Committee. "We are grateful to the many dedicated community advocates, and we look forward to continuing to celebrate adoptions throughout Riverside County for years to come."

Organized by DPSS Children's Services and the Riverside Superior Court, the annual Adoption Finalization Day celebrates families that have committed to offer healing and hope for children in foster care who are not able to safely reunify with their birth parents.



Serena and Ricky Lewis with their seven adopted children.

## COACHELLA VALLEY FAMILY OF NINE RECOGNIZED ON NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY

Ricky and Serena Lewis always wanted to have a large family; however, they married later in life and discovered they couldn't have children of their own. Today, they feel fortunate to have seven children thanks to the process of adoption through Riverside County.

"It seemed like the call came every two years," said Ricky Lewis, during a recent interview with NBC Palm Springs. "We would go to the beach in the summer, come back, and then

we'd get the call."

The Lewis family was recognized by NBC Palm Springs on November 20 for National Adoption Day. Celebrated the Saturday before Thanksgiving, this special day is a collective initiative to raise awareness about more than 120,000 foster children waiting to be adopted nationwide, according to the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, a nonprofit charity focused on foster care adoption in North America.

The Lewises said they kept saying yes to adoption until they ran out of space in their home. Six out of their seven adopted children are a sibling set, and one is the couple's nephew.

"We did not ever think we would adopt seven, but now our family feels complete," said Ricky. "The best part in adopting is knowing that the kids are yours forever."

# NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH



Brian and Heather Ambrose of Riverside County, who have always wanted a big family, say their family is complete after having adopted a pair of siblings.

## RIVERSIDE COUNTY FAMILY SHARES ADOPTION JOURNEY ON CBS SPECIAL “A HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS”

A southwest Riverside County family went on primetime television to share how their lives have been transformed through adoption during the CBS special “A Home for the Holidays” on December 5.

Brian and Heather Ambrose, along with their five children, were among several families selected on this primetime show that also included musical performances by Justin Bieber, Kane Brown, Alessia Cara and Darren Criss.

Now it its 23rd year, “A Home for the Holidays” has championed the stories of thousands of children in foster care and has inspired adoptions across the country. In Riverside County, there are more than 4,000 foster children on any given day, with roughly 100 waiting for adoption.

The couple decided to foster with a desire to adopt when health concerns developed during their third pregnancy. After receiving a baby boy named Carter into their home, they decided to adopt him and his biological sister, Linden.

“For anyone who is thinking about adopting, that feeling is put there for a reason,” said Heather Ambrose. “You should definitely pursue it.”

“Now we are a complete family and can’t imagine things any differently,” said Brian Ambrose.



**WATCH:** See the Ambrose Family interview in the CBS Special, “A Home for the Holidays.” (Tune in at the 7-minute mark for their interview.)

[https://www.cbs.com/shows/holiday\\_central/video/Z18osz\\_O37x\\_u0p0tko02\\_TyCjpXGmNF/the-23rd-annual-a-home-for-the-holidays-at-the-grove/](https://www.cbs.com/shows/holiday_central/video/Z18osz_O37x_u0p0tko02_TyCjpXGmNF/the-23rd-annual-a-home-for-the-holidays-at-the-grove/)

## NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH



Riverside Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson (back row, second from left), District 2 Supervisor Karen Spiegel (front row, second from left), Irene Capen (at center), and volunteers with prepared gift baskets, ready to hand out to families.

## FAITH IN MOTION GIFTS 60 BASKETS TO CELEBRATE ADOPTIONS

Nearly 60 adoptions were finalized on November 6 at Riverside County's Adoption Finalization Day celebrations in Riverside and Indio. Community partner Faith in Motion worked with 22 churches to put together 60 gift baskets to hand out to the families.

The baskets were loaded with toys, board games, treats, movies and other items. "It's very heartwarming to see families open their hearts and homes to children," said Irene Capen, manager of Riverside County's Faith in Motion program. "The baskets encourage family bonding and create long-lasting happy memories."

Capen said that she is very grateful for members of local faith communities who donated the gifts.

Faith in Motion, a collaboration of faith communities across Riverside County, brings resources and support to children and families in foster care. Putting together the baskets is just one way they support families. In the past, they have also facilitated donations of beds for foster kids and do ongoing work to spread awareness of adoption and fostering. Their goal is to see adopted children thrive in a happy and stable home.

# Recent Happenings



Left: At the IHSS Public Authority drive-through resource fair in Moreno Valley, DPSS staff and community partners filled the trunks of IHSS caregivers with non-perishable food, gift cards, personal protective equipment and informative caregiving brochures. Right: Senior Community Program Specialist Tiffany Nelson with the IHSS Public Authority talks with an IHSS caregiver at the drive-through fair.

## STAFF & COMMUNITY PARTNERS CELEBRATE IN-HOME CAREGIVERS

Gloria Gilbert grinned ear-to-ear as DPSS staff and community partners showered her and hundreds of In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) caregivers with gifts and resources in November — thanking them for their year-round support of vulnerable seniors and dependent individuals.

Gilbert and other IHSS caregivers visited two separate drive-through resource fairs in Indio and at the IHSS Public Authority office in Moreno Valley. Employees and volunteers filled vehicle trunks with non-perishable food, gift cards, personal protective equipment, and informative caregiving brochures.

“You leave with a sense of ‘I have value’ and can do what I love with supplies and resources. And you just love what you do more,” said Gilbert, who cares for her disabled grandson in Perris.

Countywide, 34,000 IHSS caregivers help 40,000 older

and at-risk community members countywide live safely at home. The drive-through events served as one way to recognize in-home workers during November, which is National Family Caregivers Month.

“Most of our IHSS workers care for a family member or close friend and other caregivers become like family to our IHSS clients,” said Senior Community Program Specialist Tiffany Nelson with the IHSS Public Authority. “I’ve been looking forward to this event — a chance to show our IHSS caregivers how much we appreciate the support they provide to their clients.”

Volunteers encouraged event visitors to spread the word about the need for more IHSS workers as the county faces an ongoing caregiver shortage, particularly in desert and rural communities. Late this year, the IHSS Public Authority launched a new way for interested applicants to self-register for caregiving positions at [RiversideIHSS.org](https://RiversideIHSS.org).





Children's Services Regional Manager Lisa Walcker (left) and Satti Brown (right) from KB Home Inland Empire Division oversee preparation of warm holiday meals that KB Home generously provided to social workers and children in foster care.

## KB HOME DELIVERS HOLIDAY MEALS, CHEER TO YOUTH AND SOCIAL WORKERS

KB Home continued its mission of building and strengthening communities over the holidays by donating delicious Thanksgiving meals to Riverside County social workers and youth in foster care. The meals were prepared by a chef at a local country club.

Our wish is for every social worker and every child to be safely home for the holidays," said John Fenn, President of KB Home's Inland Empire division. "KB Home is grateful to Riverside County social workers for putting children first, and we are honored to bring holiday cheer to local youth in need."

As a business that is driven by the importance of providing a safe and secure place to call home, KB Home and its philanthropic program, KB Cares, are committed to helping those in challenging circumstances.

The home builder has been a longtime supporter of programs that serve families and children. Over the past

decade, an annual golf tournament sponsored by the Inland builder has raised more than \$2.2 million for the Riverside University Health System (RUHS) Foundation. The foundation supports the Moreno Valley-based RUHS medical center, which is home to the Riverside County Child Assessment Team (RCCAT). The RCCAT provides forensic exams and interviews to children who have experienced abuse and neglect.

Charity Douglas, assistant director of Children's Services called support from community partners like KB Home essential to developing the best outcomes for children and families.

"We are so appreciative to KB Home for their generosity and long-standing service to Inland Empire families," Douglas said. "It truly takes a village, and we are very grateful that KB Home is part of our village."



Katherine Daughtrey, 19, and her 12-month-old son Ezequiel pose for a photo with Santa at December's Young Adult Holiday Celebration at Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside.

# YOUNG ADULTS CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS WITH CHILDREN'S SERVICES & COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Cuddling her 12-month-old son Ezequiel, Katherene Daughtrey enjoyed a moment to remember at December's Young Adult Holiday Celebration.

"I've actually never had a picture with Santa until now," she said. "This is great. I really feel the sense of community here."

Surrounded by foster parents, friends, social workers and a Christmas tree like something from New York City's Rockefeller Center, Daughtrey joined 150 young adults and guests at Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside.

With support from a dozen faith-based and community partners, Children's Services hosted the 10th annual celebration. The event included dinner, gifts, holiday-themed activities and free haircuts to young adults ages 18–21 who are transitioning from Extended Foster Care to independent living. About 365 young adults in Riverside County are in the Extended Foster Care program.

"These young adults are brave and resilient," said DPSS Director Sayori Baldwin who spoke at the event beneath a starry winter sky. "We appreciate our staff and community partners who work together to create joyous holiday memories for everyone."



Gifts for young adults in Extended Foster Care surround a large Christmas tree in the courtyard at Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside

Daughtrey, 19, who was able to reconnect with other foster youth at the event, entered foster care as a teenager but now lives on her own. She credits social workers and the Extended Foster Care program for helping her afford to attend College of the Desert, where she's studying culinary arts and business.

Social workers delivered holiday gifts to young adults last year, and Daughtrey was glad to see that the Young Adult Holiday Celebration was back to an in-person event this year.

"It really lets you know people care," she said.

# COMMUNITY PARTNERS FORUM FOCUSED ON ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN OF COLOR

Collaboration to improve the outcomes for all children in the child welfare system — with special focus on Black children — was the emphasis of November’s annual Community Partners Forum. This year’s event was held online due to the pandemic, after a hiatus last year.

“We cannot do this work alone,” said Sayori Baldwin, Assistant County Executive Officer of Human Services and DPSS Director. Baldwin was one of many leaders in public and community child services at the forum who emphasized the importance of strong trusted partnerships to improve early interventions that effectively stabilize and strengthen at-risk families.

## Forum highlights:

- Keynote speaker, Wendy Wiegmann, PhD, with the California Child Welfare Indicators Project at UC Berkeley, focused on Racial Disparity and Disproportionality (RDD). She challenged attendees to examine and understand why some families will engage with certain services or agencies but not others. She encouraged community partners to create a welcoming environment that recognizes the diverse needs of diverse families.
- Stephanie Bryant, the Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Branch Chief for the Riverside County Black Infant Health program addressed efforts to improve perinatal health disparities for African American infants and mothers, addressing social determinates of health.

Bryant said it is imperative that communities celebrate and incorporate the cultural experiences of African American women and families, recognize their challenges and foster positive experiences during engagement. To learn more visit <https://www.rivcophn.org/Programs/Black-Infant-Health>

More than 100 attendees offered their insights and experiences to inform planning as Riverside County develops an integrated services model where partners interact seamlessly to improve the equity and well-being of children and families.



Wendy Wiegmann, PhD, with the California Child Welfare Indicators Project at UC Berkeley, was the keynote speaker at November’s annual Community Partners Forum.

## EVENT SPONSORS

- DPSS Children’s Services
- Riverside County Probation
- HOPE Collaborative for Child Abuse Prevention

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# CALSAWS CORNER:

## A JOURNEY TO ONE

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## ONLINE GUIDES & LIVE CHAT HELP EMPLOYEES NAVIGATE NEW STATEWIDE WELFARE SYSTEM

Riverside County made a historic change in late September when it joined a new statewide online welfare system.

At the time, DPSS pulled the plug on the old C-IV system and switched to the new California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS). Employees were prepared for the transition to a more seamless system for everyone. Customers also switched from managing their public benefits on the C4Yourself website to the more user-centered BenefitsCal site.

Eligibility Supervisor Keith Wade is among more than 60 “Change Network Champions” (CNCs) who trained employees for the big switch.

“Overall, I think the launch was successful,” said Wade who works in the Banning Self-Sufficiency office. He said staff initially experienced challenges with imaging and a slow system response. “I reminded my co-workers that the new system is in its infancy and to be patient as we support each other through these changes.”

“We appreciate the tremendous amount of unity and cooperation DPSS employees have shown to make this transition,” said Dan Kohn, a manager with DPSS’ Program Technology department. “So many people worked together to make this successful.”

Wade and others credit Program Technology with doing a great job by sharing helpful resources in a central spot online.

The CalSAWS Help Center includes program-specific guides to help staff troubleshoot any issues they may have with CalSAWS. Employees can also report issues and attend topical training sessions. Staff will find more information on the Help Center by visiting the Program Technology SharePoint site.

CNCs and Program Technology representatives were also



Eligibility Supervisor Keith Wade has worked for DPSS for nearly 10 years and supports staff at the Self-Sufficiency office in Banning.

part of a temporary live group chat following the CalSAWS launch where they worked together to help answer employees’ questions quickly.

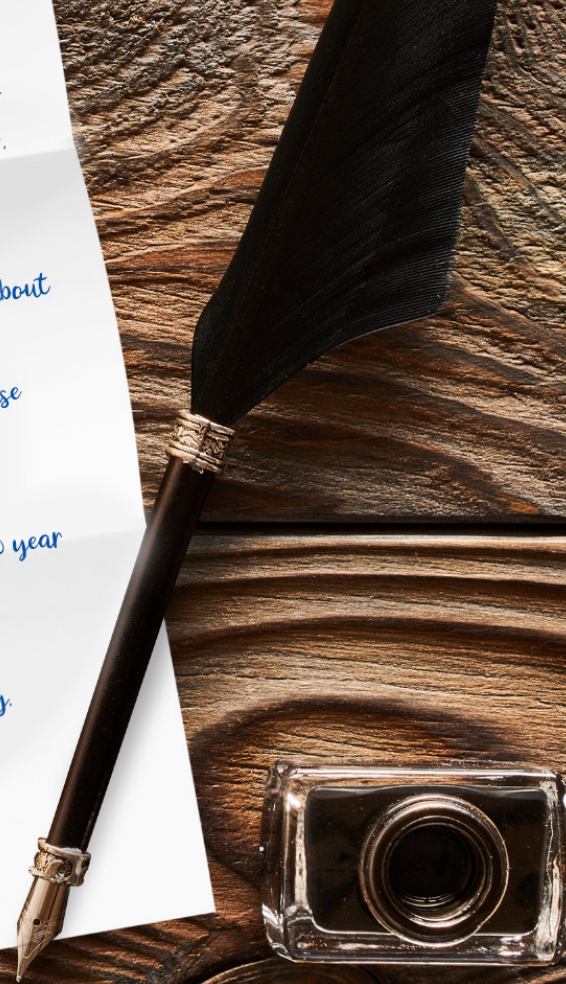
“It allowed us to share information at a higher level than normal and share what we’re seeing firsthand — all in real time,” Wade said. “We were able to find solutions for the staff faster.”

Happy holidays to our colleagues and friends!

Thank you for letting us be part of your journey and for allowing us to share some of your stories of service and triumph. In the new year, we will be overhauling the newsletter to bring you more consistent, timely and accessible information in a format that fits your busy schedules. We want our communities and colleagues to know all about your good work and the lives you positively impact each day. We invite you to follow us on DPSS social media platforms, and please send your ideas, stories, and feedback to [DPSSinfo@rivco.org](mailto:DPSSinfo@rivco.org)

We wish you a safe, healthy, happy holiday and wonderful new year in 2022!

Kimberly Trone, Gene Kennedy, Angela Naso, Chelsea Godfrey,  
Tina Bellanger, Leslee Abrego



## MISSION

Riverside County Department of Public Social Services is dedicated to supporting and improving the health, safety, independence and well-being of individuals and families.

## VISION

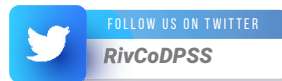
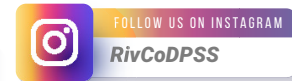
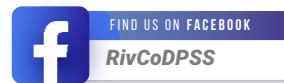
An innovative organization where caring professionals collaborate to provide the most effective solutions to customers.

## VALUES

Accountability, Collaboration, Respect, Diversity, Integrity, Customer Focus

## CONNECT WITH US!

Stay up to date on all things DPSS by following us on your favorite social media platform.



**RIVERSIDE COUNTY**  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

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4060 County Circle Dr, Riverside, CA 92503, United States | Phone: 951 358 3000