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New Law Expands Adult Protective Services Eligibility

BY RACHEL VO AND JOHN DANCZAK
SENIOR SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISORS

Effective January 1, 2022, adults 60 and older living in California are defined as “elders” for Adult Protective Services (APS) under the Welfare and Institutions Code. This definition change came about with the passage of Assembly Bill 135, which lowered the eligible age of an elder from 65 to 60 to allow APS to investigate and provide services to more vulnerable adults who are suspected victims of abuse and/or neglect.

APS is a County of Orange Social Services Agency (SSA) program mandated by the State of California to accept, respond to and investigate allegations of elder and dependent adult abuse and neglect, including self-neglect. Dependent adults are those ages 18-59 who have physical or mental limitations that restrict their ability to carry out normal activities or to protect their rights, or whose physical or mental abilities have diminished with age. APS promotes the safety, independence and quality of life for the

vulnerable adults they serve. APS Senior Social Workers and Social Worker I/IIIs, often in collaboration with various community partners, conduct field visits throughout Orange County. They may also provide clients with connections to community services; including home delivered meals; transportation; and legal; mental health; fiduciary and caregiver support. Time-limited case management is also available to assist APS clients in addressing their unique needs. Although investigations of abuse are mandatory, APS clients have the right to refuse or terminate services at any time and APS social workers cannot share case information with their families or others without the clients’ consent. As adults, APS clients have the right to privacy and self-determination.

All SSA employees are considered mandated reporters. To file an APS report of suspected abuse or neglect, please contact the 24/7 APS hotline at 800-451-5155.

Operation Santa Claus Exceeds Giving Goal

BY MELISSA VEGA
STAFF SPECIALIST

For the second consecutive year, Operation Santa Claus (OSC) and Senior Santa & Friends (SSF) — the long-time Orange County Board of Supervisors-approved annual giving drive led by the County of Orange Social Services Agency (SSA) — exceeded its giving goal.

OSC is a collaborative effort between SSA, OC Health Care Agency (HCA), OC Probation, Orange County Child Support Services and OC Community Resources. Through the amazing generosity of SSA, County employees and the community, OSC exceeded its 2021 online giving goal of \$30,000 by raising \$41,000. OSC also exceeded its previous 2020 giving goal by \$11,100.

For nearly 60 years, OSC and SSF have brought the gift of hope to families SSA proudly serves — the children and youth in foster care, seniors, disabled adults and families receiving services from SSA and/or HCA.

A multitude of new gift items were donated for children and youth, including coloring books, backpacks, board games, sports equipment, art supplies, wallets, electronics and toiletries. For seniors and disabled adults, donations included essentials such

as coffee makers, blankets and toiletries.

This donation drive marked additional major milestones for OSC and SSF, including a new warehouse location at Centralized Operations with a larger footprint. SSA leaders also launched the SSF Blanket Project, which benefited local seniors receiving services from SSA. OSC brought the gift of hope through toys to Afghan refugee children settling

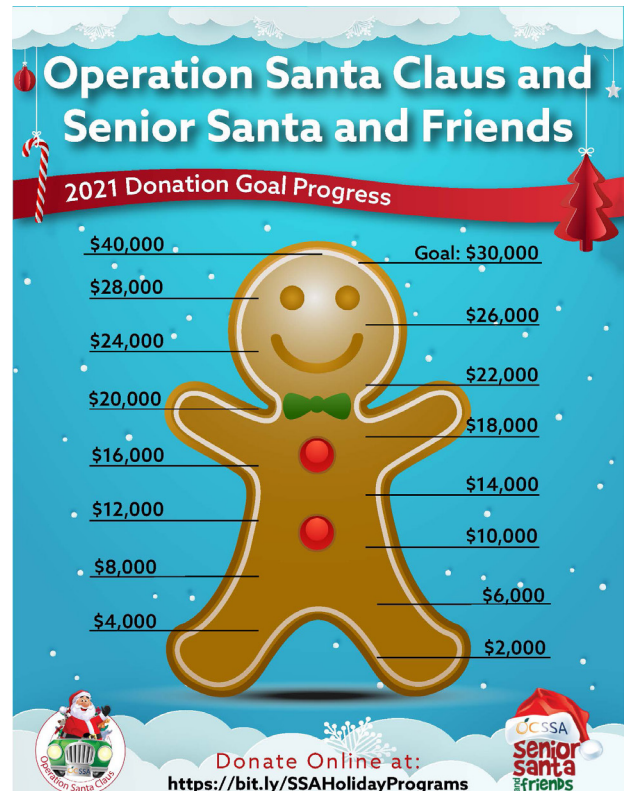
here through the County's resettlement initiative.

The local corporate community also rallied behind the annual giving program like never before, with more than 140 local corporations sending employees to donate time in the warehouse.

If you volunteered at the OSC/SSF warehouse, made an online donation or donated a new unwrapped toy in a holiday box at your work location, SSA leadership thanks you for making a

difference and for continuing this tradition of hope.

Look for an email this summer from the Orange County Board of Supervisors announcing the kick-off of an OSC/SSF online giving campaign for County employees. In the meantime, to learn more about OSC/SSF and how you can donate, volunteer or coordinate a gift drive, visit www.ssa.ocgov.com/operationsantaclaus/help or call (714) 679-2438 or email OperationSantaClaus@ssa.ocgov.com.



SSA Spotlight:

Onboarding Workgroup to Launch New Resources

BY COMMUNITY & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

While acclimating to a new job can be exciting, it can also be overwhelming. To help employees navigate their new work environment, employers like the County of Orange Social Services Agency (SSA) offer orientations as a way to become familiar with workplace operations. But what happens when new employees want to know about workplace culture? How can SSA make them feel welcome and how do we ensure they feel a sense of belonging?

Earlier last year, an SSA Onboarding Workgroup was established to address this challenge. Formed by the Leadership Development Team (LDT), 16 employees representing all SSA divisions met for five months to tackle the challenge of bringing a sense of belonging to incoming SSA employees. Their charge: to ensure new employees are provided consistent information, resources and knowledge to become fully engaged members of the workforce and more connected to SSA's culture. The Workgroup reviewed existing onboarding materials from SSA programs and other County departments and explored how to connect SSA employees to the mission, vision and core values of the Agency.

In a recent employee questionnaire sent out as part of the Agency's five-year strategic planning process, SSA employees also echoed the need for addressing and enhancing onboarding.

The Workgroup is on target to complete three key onboarding deliverables: a digital welcome guide that programs and worksites can tailor to their locations and needs, a new employee welcome video and the launch of an SSA onboarding buddy program. Selected as one of the winning entries from the 2020 Heart of SSA: Innovation Challenge, the new peer-mentor buddy program was developed



by workgroup Co-Chair John Parr, Administrative Manager I in Contract Services.

"The idea came from conversations with new SSA employees, or those I knew who had recently promoted," John said.

A common theme he observed were new employees anxious and confused about their new roles. "While some County agencies use a buddy system, only some SSA departments do. Where people eat, how people connect, dress and how we celebrate are all important aspects of culture," John continued.

With components of the new onboarding program being phased in over the coming months, the SSA Onboarding Workgroup is hoping their work will equip new staff with a valuable roadmap to navigate their journey at the Agency.

SSA Onboarding Workgroup Members

LDT Advisor Alyson Piguee, Deputy Director, Administrative Services
Co-Chair John Parr, Administrative Services
Co-Chair Community & Government Relations Staff, Administrative Services
Rosa Becerra, Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Deena Bower, Administrative Services
Birute Bruzas-Ranes, Children & Family Services
Tawny Crane, Administrative Services

Jacquelyne Garza, Administrative Services
Nancy Genovese, Children & Family Services
Alma Guerra-Colunga, Administrative Services
Hilda Juarez, Deputy Division Director, Administrative Services
Samina Khan, Administrative Services
Erika Ochoa, Administrative Services
Rosa Palacios, Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Maria Ruiz, Assistance Programs
Saul Viramontes, Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services

Soaring to New Heights with CalSAWS

BY NADIA MORADI
SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR II

Since 2019, California and counties across the state have been working to implement a single statewide system to administer public benefits. In compliance with state and federal regulations, this new system — known as CalSAWS — will streamline functions and provide users with a secure seamless experience when it is launched in Orange County in spring of 2023. Replacing the current CalWIN system, CalSAWS will support eligibility determinations, benefit calculation, benefit issuance, reporting and case management for programs such as CalWORKs/Welfare-to-Work, Refugee Cash Assistance, Foster Care, CalFresh, Medi-Cal and General Relief. One of the largest initiatives ever undertaken at the County of

Orange Social Services Agency (SSA), CalSAWS will include an improved imaging system, contact center software, enhanced task management, a new print vendor and more. According to CalWORKs North Case Manager, Norma Rojas, “CalSAWS will benefit both clients and workers.” SSA clients or residents, who move from one county to another, for example, can continue receiving benefits without disruption under the single statewide system.

CalWORKs Santa Ana Regional Center Manager, Pelayo Pelayo, encourages SSA staff to learn more about CalSAWS to be truly efficient in supporting clients, “Without understanding CalSAWS, it is impossible to effectively move forward.”

To foster this shared mindset among SSA staff, the Orange County CalSAWS team has launched

internal initiatives, including CalSAWS workgroups, expanding the CalSAWS sandbox environment, development of the Eureka playlist and the “Flying into CalSAWS” aviation-themed internal communications campaign. The goal of this strategy is a seamless migration from CalWIN to CalSAWS.

In September, CalSAWS reached a significant milestone when 39 California counties, previously on the C-IV benefits system, went live on CalSAWS. The remaining 18 CalWIN counties will migrate

to CalSAWS in six phases, concluding in 2023. To gain hands-on experience in a live production environment, SSA CalSAWS staff provided on-site support

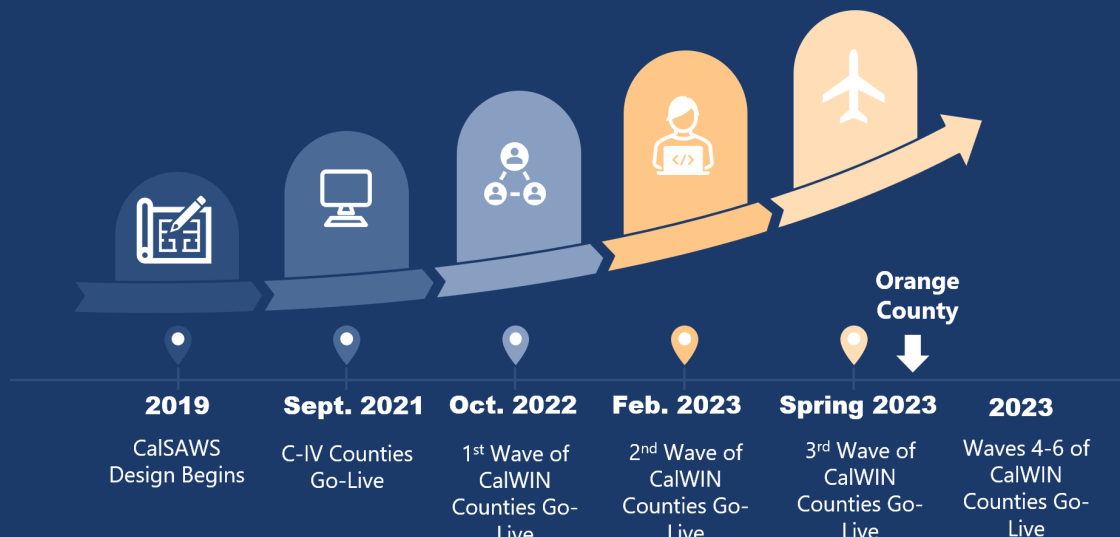
for two weeks to three counties — San Bernardino, Riverside and Imperial — during their deployment. SSA CalSAWS team members gained insight that they’ll be able to apply during SSA’s migration.

Through collaborative efforts across SSA divisions and with outside consultants, the SSA CalSAWS team is creating a strong foundation for this historic migration. “Developing and enhancing our CalSAWS skills before implementation will set the path for a successful migration,” said Social Services Supervisor I, Sherry De Hoog of the Foster Care Regional Center.

For updates on SSA’s progress, look for the “CalSAWS Flight Tracker” in the weekly employee e-newsletter, The Source. This is one flight you don’t want to miss!



CalSAWS Migration Schedule



SSA Spotlight:

Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services, Divisional Operations

BY DANIEL RODRIGUEZ, KATHY HANNON, LORI EVANS AND LUISA LUNA
CURRENT AND FORMER SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISORS II

Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services (FSS-AS), Divisional Operations team (DO) is a group of cross-functional team members who strive to provide support to our internal and external customers. DO serves as the backbone of coordination for many efforts led by SSA's Executive Team, FSS-AS Policy & Quality Assurance and SSA regional offices.

DO provides operational direction for CalWORKs, Welfare-to-Work, Foster Care, In-Home Supportive Services and Adult Protective Services programs by coordinating training and conducting maintenance on database applications such as the Client Engagement System and Web-Based Statistics to ensure employees are able to perform their jobs more efficiently.

DO also plays a vital supporting role to Human Resources, the Systems Support Team, Orange County Information Technology (OCIT) and other SSA contracted partners.

By conducting ongoing analyses of program staffing needs and ensuring FSS-AS hiring efforts are executed properly, DO helps support the division's roughly 850 staff members. The team also provides technology support by facilitating the deployment of equipment with OCIT. Moreover, DO also supports regional Computer Support Liaisons to ensure regional staff have the proper technological support to perform their jobs efficiently.

DO plays an important role in helping SSA serve the community in times of need. In December 2020, the team assisted the OC Health Care Agency with the Great Plates Program by coordinating outreach calls to seniors to offer resources and meal delivery. With DO's support, 3,675 seniors were able to receive meals during the holiday season.

DO is working with Assistance Programs (AP), consultant firm Change & Innovation Agency (C!A) and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) on business process improvement initiatives focused on the implementation of First



Rosa Becerra



Monalisa Tran



Kathy Hannon



Angel Lee



Luisa Luna



Prashant Kamboya



Arlene Miranda



Phillipe Moreno



Mary Naranjo-Cortez



Melissa Polanco



Mayra Chavarria



Sumit Sapra
Deputy Director



Diego Toscano



Jeannette Trevarthen



Yeni Villa



Hai-Yen Doan



Edith Morales

Contact Resolution (FCR) for SSA customers. The intent of the initiative is to resolve customer requests during their initial interaction; reducing the need for a second contact. While the scope of FCR is wide-reaching across both AP and FSS-AS, current areas of focus include, but is not limited to, facilitating Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) Medi-Cal determinations for CalWORKs denials, creating and updating tools to reinforce the FCR, and expanding services provided by FSS-AS at SSA's Call Center. With continued dedication and teamwork via this new initiative, we are striving to streamline and integrate processes, and improve our customer's experience with our public assistance programs.

DO is grateful for the collaborative efforts with the various programs it supports and looks forward to continuing to provide great teamwork and assistance in the future. We would also like to thank several former team members: Kathy Cortez (retired), Daniel Rodriguez (transferred to Cypress Regional Center), Lori Evans (promoted to Systems Support Team) and Chris Waterman (retired). We truly appreciate your contributions and hard work!

Human Trafficking Awareness Month

BY TRACI MULDOON
STAFF SPECIALIST

As National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention month, January is a time to educate ourselves and others about human trafficking. Human trafficking, also known as trafficking in persons, includes both forced labor and sex trafficking. An estimated 25 million people, including adults and children, are subjected to human trafficking around the world. As defined by U.S. law, sex trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing or soliciting of a person for a commercial sex act that's induced by force, fraud, coercion or if the person is under 18. Labor trafficking follows the same definition, except its purpose is subjected to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery.

Traffickers often take advantage of instability in victims' lives. While anyone can be a victim, according to the [White House](#), those most vulnerable to human trafficking in the U.S. include youth in the welfare or juvenile justice system, runaway and homeless youth, undocumented immigrants, people of color, those within the LGBTQ+ community, people with disabilities and individuals with substance use disorder. Children who have a history of abuse or neglect as well as children in the foster care system are particularly vulnerable and at greater risk of being commercially sexually exploited. Since 2014, 100% of the children recovered in Orange County by the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force (OCHTTF) had a history of abuse or neglect in their upbringing, while 90% of all youth suspected of

being commercially sexually exploited had a history of child abuse.

The County of Orange Social Services Agency's (SSA) Commercially Sexually Exploited Child program responds to calls from OCHTTF along with other organizations that report suspected commercial sexual exploitation to the Orange County Child Abuse Registry. Since 2015, SSA has trained child welfare social workers to work with this population and has identified over 30 employees throughout various programs within Children & Family Services to support commercially sexually exploited youth.

SSA and its partners continue to work on innovative ways to prevent and intervene with commercially sexually exploited youth and to lead the way in this important cause including collaborative efforts in the juvenile courtrooms for victims, appointing a liaison to work with high risk youth, ensuring there is dedicated staff from OC Health Care Agency and OC Probation available at all times and facilitating a drop-in center in the community for youth to have a place of refuge and safety.

Understanding and education are the first steps toward prevention. One way you can help prevent trafficking is to be vigilant of signs and indicators of human trafficking and be proactive in reporting any suspected activity. If you see a young person being prostituted, call local law enforcement at 9-1-1 or Orange County Child Protective Services at 800-207-4464, available 24 hours a day.

Understanding the realities of sex trafficking not only keeps you and your loved ones safe but can help you become an effective advocate for safety in your community. Here are some truths and myths to keep in mind when coming across suspected trafficking.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING.

KNOW THE MYTHS.

Myth:

Only women and girls can be victims and survivors of sex trafficking.

Myth:

People in active trafficking situations always want help getting out.

Myth:

Human trafficking almost always involves kidnapping or otherwise physically forcing someone into a situation.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING.

KNOW THE REALITIES.

Reality:

Men and boys are also victimized by sex traffickers. LGBTQ boys and young men are seen as particularly vulnerable to trafficking.

Reality:

Fear, isolation, guilt, shame, misplaced loyalty and manipulation are among the many factors that may keep a person from seeking help.

Reality:

Most human traffickers use psychological means such as defrauding, manipulating or threatening victims into providing commercial sex or exploitative labor.

Source: Polaris Project

SSA Outreach Efforts



2021 OUTREACH HIGHLIGHTS

33 DIRECT SERVICE EVENTS

SSA's Mobile Response Vehicles and staff were deployed to process nearly **990** public assistance applications and respond to inquiries for clients at multiple locations throughout Orange County.



HOMELESS ASSISTANCE

59

SSA provided onsite support at homeless shelters and BeWell OC to process over **570** applications and address inquiries from clients.

34 PRESENTATIONS

SSA conducted virtual and in-person presentations and trainings to educate over **2,070** community-based organization (CBO) professionals and clients about SSA's services and programs.



COMMUNITY REACH

1,871

SSA staff participated in community events to share general information about SSA programs, address questions and engage with community members and clients.

43 COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

SSA partnered with faith-based organizations, nonprofits, schools, colleges, homeless shelters, county departments and other community entities to serve a helping hand, making for a healthier Orange County.



SSA Community & Government Relations is thankful for all staff who made SSA outreach events possible throughout the last year. A special shout out to SSA program staff volunteers, members of our Accounting and Centralized Operations teams as well as Orange County Information Technology and SAIC Technology. We appreciate your assistance to help resource and support weekday and weekend events and we appreciate your flexibility, dedication and commitment to help serve and educate the community about SSA's safety net benefits and programs.

To access SSA's program flyers, please click [here](#).



Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month

BY BIANCA MENDOZA
SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR I

February is National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month, an annual campaign focused on advocacy and education to stop dating abuse and violence before it starts.

According to [Youth.gov](https://www.youth.gov), nearly one in 10 teens in the United States will experience either emotional, physical or sexual abuse in an intimate relationship. Individuals ages 12 to 19 years old also experience the highest rate of rape and sexual assault.

The theme for National Teen Dating Violence Month this year is “Talk About It,” a call to action for parents, teachers, mentors, relatives and others to support and engage in meaningful conversations with their teens about healthy relationships and make them aware of behaviors and actions that are unhealthy or abusive. This year’s theme shines a light on the importance of creating safe spaces where abuse of any form in a relationship is not tolerated. Make a difference by reaching out to youth in your circle and creating a safe environment. These active conversations can help encourage positive scenarios and highlight healthy relationships.

If you suspect abuse in a teenage relationship, contact law enforcement first. The National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline, a resource for teens who may be victims of dating abuse, is also available 24/7 by calling 866-331-9474 or by visiting youth.gov/federal-links/national-teen-dating-abuse-helpline.

Real talk

We asked youth from across the country what they would tell the adults in their lives about dating abuse if they could.

“Acknowledge that it’s a problem.” • NAVYA, AGE 16

“I would appreciate if adults would take concerns more seriously when I brought a question to them about a relationship. Sometimes adults in my life have discounted what is occurring in my relationship because of my age.” • KATE, AGE 19

“I wish adults in my life would stand up for me in preventing dating abuse.” • ALANA, AGE 17

“You cannot intimidate your child into leaving their abusive relationship with the same tactics the abusive partner is using.” • SOPHIE, AGE 20

“I wish adults would talk about events that arise in relationships, like sex.” • KIKI, AGE 18

“I wish adults would go through more of the warning signs of a toxic relationship because I feel we as teens choose to overlook or ignore red flags.” • JADA, AGE 16

“I wish the adults in my life would actually mean it when they say it’s okay to be single. I wish they allowed me greater self-determination and room to not have certain relationships.” • ALYSSEA, AGE 18

“To avoid coming off as invalidating the young person’s feelings, listen to their thoughts first. Try to understand their perspective before you try to change their behavior.” • LILLY, AGE 22

Talk About It • TDVAM Action Guide • 3

As a community we can try to prevent teen dating violence by empowering teens through family, friends and others to lead healthy lives and establish healthy relationships.
As we interact with teens in our work or personal lives, we can:

- Discuss the warning signs and types of abuse with our youth
- Create a positive connection to the issue — talk about the characteristics of what a healthy teen relationship looks like, not just abusive ones — and use statistics sparingly
- Explore how the media portrays healthy and unhealthy relationships

Other resources include <https://www.teendvmonth.org>, as well as SSA’s Domestic Abuse Services Unit in Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services.

For more information, contact Jennifer.McDonald@ssa.ocgov.com.

Beyond the Call: Exceptional Service in Action

Tu Duong

Eligibility Technician, Assistance Programs



Tu received appreciation on behalf of a client's family for his assistance with the client:

“Dear Mr. Duong,
Just a simple note to say thank you for your kindness and professional services. You have processed my mother's case in a speedy manner. You also answered all our questions about the Medi-Cal program. More importantly, you were knowledgeable and very patient with us. We appreciate your services.”

Irma Hernandez

Eligibility Technician, Assistance Programs

Irma received these words of gratitude from a client:

“I just want to say thank you to Irma Hernandez who assisted me during my visit here at the center. She made me feel comfortable and I felt my stress drop significantly. Irma's attitude and assistance gave me hope on what was a difficult day at work. Her professionalism and highest level of customer service goes above and beyond, and I just want her to be recognized for this effort. Thank you so much, Irma.”



Maritza Lara

Social Services Supervisor II, Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services



Maritza received the following words of recognition for her nomination as the "Core Value Champion" of her department:

“I want to thank Maritza Lara for having so much respect for her team. Her ability in leading is commendable, as she is transparent and is the glue that holds our team together. Thank you, Maritza, for all you do for our team.”

Beyond the Call: Exceptional Service in Action

Maria Manzo

Administrative Manager I, Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services

Maria received the following words of recognition for her nomination as the “Core Value Champion” of her department during her time as a Social Services Supervisor II:

“My time under Maria’s supervision was brief yet memorable. Maria demonstrated honesty and sincere willingness to help me grow in my assignment. She has consistently given feedback to team members out of her desire to see them succeed. I nominate Maria as the Core Value Champion because of her great example of how feedback, when given with respect and professionalism, can go a long way. Thank you, Maria for your leadership. I truly believe it is a sign of great respect that you listen and give your undivided attention to give constructive suggestions and provide solutions.”



Mary Nungaray

Social Services Supervisor I, Assistance Programs

Mary received the following words of recognition from a team member during her time as an Eligibility Supervisor:

“I have had the pleasure to work with Mary in her capacity as my supervisor. I asked for help and editorial guidance on a process document I was working on for my Regional Assignment. The care she showed in editing and providing guidance to me left me at a loss of words in the perceptive and diligent effort she undertook in spite of all she has on her plate. This is the only way I could think of to underscore my sense of appreciation for this and all her great support over the past number of months.”

MN

Veronica Orozco

Office Supervisor C, Children & Family Services

Veronica received the following words of recognition from a colleague after earning Children & Family Services Employee of the Month for November 2021 during her time as an Information Processing Technician:

“Veronica exemplifies the Teamwork SSA Value. Veronica is my unit clerk and she goes far and beyond in assisting me with not just her job duties, but with items that are not regularly her responsibility to complete. Her teamwork attitude simplifies my duties and allows me to make more time with my clients, which benefits them and my caseload. Veronica Orozco is an exceptional employee and I am blessed to be working with her.”



Beyond the Call: Exceptional Service in Action

Shirley Downie

Eligibility Technician, Assistance Programs

SD

An authorized representative expressed her most sincere gratitude for the outstanding customer service Shirley provided her brother while taking his application over the phone:

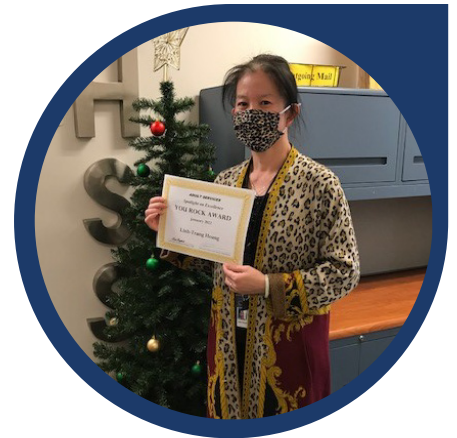
“After Shirley corrected an applicant’s date of birth in SSA’s eligibility system, the client recognized her for being attentive, helpful and cheerful along the way.”

Linh-Trang Hoang

Social Worker II, Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services

Linh-Trang was nominated by a colleague for her program’s recognition program:

“Linh is a dedicated Social Worker at In-Home Supportive Services who takes great pride in all the work she completes. She ensures that she is always applying the most up-to-date regulations. Many of her co-workers seek her advice and Linh gladly helps with a smile. Linh is reliable and consistent with all that she does at IHSS and we know that we can always count on her.”



Breeze Jeffries

Senior Social Worker, Children & Family Services

Breeze received the following words of recognition from a colleague after being recognized as Children & Family Services Employee of the Month for December 2021:

“I had a new social worker who needed assistance on a warrant/intake and was looking for another social worker to assist. Unbeknownst to me, Breeze was already working and going over the warrant with the new social worker. Breeze walked her through the entire process. She helped facilitate serving the warrant, including completing two home assessments to try to facilitate leaving the children who were detained with family. When one of the relative’s homes was not approved, Breeze responded back to the home with the social worker to assist. This is just one example of how Breeze goes above and beyond to support her coworkers and keep children safe. Her dedication and teamwork are made visible in her daily care for staff and clients.”



Beyond the Call: Exceptional Service in Action

Phillip McMeekin, David Morales and Attiq Lutfi

Store Clerks, Assistance Programs

Phillip, David and Attiq received the following words of recognition from a colleague:

“Thank you to Phillip, David and Attiq, who go above and beyond when assistance is needed by the Region and by Facilities. All three of you never hesitate to offer assistance where needed and are responsive to get the job done. Keep up the great work you do in supporting the regions. We are grateful for your continued customer service to your peers, management, partners and vendors. ”



Lizbeth Salinas

Eligibility Supervisor, Assistance Programs



Lizbeth received the following words of recognition from a fellow SSA employee:

“Lizbeth Salinas provides extraordinary service. She is always willing to help everyone and anyone even on her busiest days. She is always willing to go above and beyond to lend a helping hand. She deserves much thanks and is an example of what it means to be a true leader for this agency. ”

Paula Shin

Eligibility Technician, Assistance Programs

Paula received the following letter from a client:

“Ms. Shin was incredibly helpful and courteous in helping with Medi-Cal logistics for my mom when we visited the Santa Ana Regional Center in November. Despite the long wait, Ms. Shin remained committed to helping us in a timely manner and ensured our experience was as seamless as possible. Ms. Shin was very receptive to our needs and answered all of our questions thoroughly. She was one of the most personable individuals I have had wait on us. My mom and I strongly feel Ms. Shin is a valuable asset at the County of Orange Social Services Agency. ”



Beyond the Call: Exceptional Service in Action

Andrea Simon

Senior Social Worker, Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services



A community partner recently e-mailed Adult Protective Services Senior Social Worker Andrea Simon's supervisor with these words of praise:

“I want to let you know that Ms. Andrea Simon is amazing! She is a wealth of information and has been so supportive in helping me work through some of the toughest cases here. She has a knack for brainstorming with me and helping me construct a plan of action that helps resolve many of my shareholders' difficult and sensitive issues and situations. I very much appreciate her and I thank her for her service.”

Magdalena Torres

Eligibility Supervisor, Assistance Programs

Magdalena received the following words of praise from a customer at the Call Center:

“Magdalena provided life-saving assistance to a customer after the customer lost her job and suffered a heart attack. At the time of the call, the customer had no health insurance and needed guidance on how to access County services. Magdalena thoroughly reviewed the services and resources available to the customer and offered guidance on how to apply. The customer, who has interacted with Magdalena on two other occasions, shared that Magdalena has been extremely helpful.”



Do you know of an employee who recently went above and beyond in their job or witnessed them in action? Did you know that you can give them a shoutout to recognize them for their hard work?

Acknowledge their extraordinary service in the “Exceptional Service in Action” column of SSA Today! Download our “Kudos” form [here](#) and email your completed recognition to ssatoday@ssa.ocgov.com. Kudos may also be highlighted in a future Director's Corner email as well.

We look forward to highlighting your team member and their recent accomplishments, big or small, in future editions of SSA Today!

Cultural Recognition

BY RICHARD GOMEZ, OFFICE SUPERVISOR C,
THOMAS HARRIS, SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR II
AND MICHAEL KIM, STAFF SPECIALIST

The winter season marks several observances recognizing the cultural diversity of our nation and world, along with some special days for advocacy. Read below to learn more.

Human Rights Day

On December 10, **Human Rights Day** is celebrated globally to commemorate the anniversary of the United Nations' (U.N.) 1948 General Assembly adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The declaration sets out a broad range of fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed to all humans without distinction. The U.N. coordinates cultural events, performances, public meetings, seminars and other educational activities.



St. Lucia's Day

St. Lucia's Day, a festival celebrated in Sweden, Norway and Finland on December 13, honors one of the earliest Christian martyrs, St. Lucia. Towns host festivals opening with a procession by the selected St. Lucia representative. The celebrations are meant to bring hope during the darkest (in terms of the sky) time of year.

Buddhist Celebrations

Bodhi Day marks the enlightenment of Buddha, also known as Siddhartha Gautama. Parts of the world celebrate this day on December 8, though Bodhi Day is actually the eighth day of the 12th moon of the lunar year. Observances for the day include making decorations, prayers and sharing the message of enlightenment to help Buddhists remember vital lessons, deepen their spirituality and unite for the common good.



Nirvana Day, also known as "Parinirvana" Day, is an annual Buddhist festival observed on February 15. According to the Buddhist faith, the festival marks the end of the cycle of death and rebirth as it commemorates the passing of Buddha when he reached Nirvana. It is a time for contemplation of the Buddha's teachings.

Hindu Celebrations

Pancha Ganapati, from December 21-25, is a Hindu celebration honoring Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed lord of culture and new beginnings, also known as the Patron of Arts and Guardian of Culture. Throughout the observance, families work to mend past mistakes and bring blessings of joy and harmony in their life.



Makar Sankranti is a Hindu festival that occurred on January 14 this year and signifies the end of winter and the beginning of the new harvest season. Apart from preparing the popular til gudladoo dish, also known as traditional Indian sweet balls, the day is marked by harvest festivals, performances around bonfires and kite flying as a form of thanksgiving to the gods.

Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day, also known as St. Valentine's Day, is celebrated on February 14 throughout the U.S., Britain, Canada, Australia, Argentina, France, Mexico and South Korea. There are multiple origins of Valentine's Day, including ties to the Roman festival of Lupercalia and a Christian martyr named Valentine. Formal messages referred to as valentines became tradition in the U.S., paired with gifts including candy, flowers and red roses.



Black History Month



Adopted in 1976, **Black History Month** is dedicated to honoring the contributions, accomplishments and sacrifices of African Americans and the vital role many played in the nation's history. Black History Month is celebrated in February with events at universities, museums, public schools and various community organizations. The theme for 2022, according to the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, is "Black Health and Wellness," which explores the legacy of not only Black scholars and medical practitioners in Western medicine, but also alternative/holistic practitioners (e.g., birth workers, doulas, midwives, naturopaths, herbalists, etc.) from the 1500s to the 1800s.

World Hijab Day

World Hijab Day is observed on February 1 to recognize Muslim women who wear the hijab, a veil covering the head and chest to retain modesty. The annual event fosters religious understanding and tolerance by encouraging women from different backgrounds to support and even experience the hijab for a day. It is also an opportunity to support Muslim women by bringing cultural awareness as to why the hijab is worn and creating a culture accepting of one's wardrobe choices.



International Holocaust Remembrance Day



January 27 is designated by the General Assembly as **International Holocaust Remembrance Day**. Since 2005, the U.N. has held commemoration ceremonies to mark the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and to honor the 6 million Jewish victims and millions of other victims of Nazism. This day of healing is recognized by lighting candles at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and holding ceremonies at U.N. offices around the world.

Cultural New Year Celebrations

Korean New Year, also known as "Seollal," took place on February 1 this year and typically lasts three days. Throughout Seollal, families enjoy traditional Korean food, including "ddeokguk" (rice cake soup) while young adults and children pay their respects to the elders.



Lunar New Year also occurred on February 1 this year and celebrates the beginning of a new year on the traditional lunisolar Chinese calendar. The celebration includes food, parades and reunion dinners among family. The **Lantern Festival**, also called "Yuan Xiao" Festival, is observed on the 15th of the first month of the Chinese lunar calendar and marks the last day of celebrations for Lunar New Year.

Also known as "Great Vehicle," **Mahāyāna New Year** starts on the first full moon of January and is a time for meditation and self-reflection. The Mahāyāna New Year takes place on January 18 this year and aims to enlighten participants through service and helping others to achieve nirvana.



Imbolc



Imbolc, old Irish for "in the belly," is a Gaelic holiday celebrated in various regions of Ireland and Scotland from February 1 through sundown on February 2. Imbolc represents the beginning of spring when the first lambs are born. Modern Imbolc festivities include activities to celebrate the coming spring and engage energetically with the cycle of the year such as lighting fires, planting seeds, baking oatcakes and decorating one's altar with colors and symbols related to Imbolc.

Republic Day of India

On January 26, the **Republic Day of India** recognizes the founding of the Republic of India, one of the largest democracies in the world. Throughout the observance, public buildings are lit brightly at night as soldiers are honored and awarded for their service to their nation.



Employee Promotions

NAME	CLASSIFICATION	DIVISION
Agame, Priscilla	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Aguilar, Tomas	Eligibility Supervisor	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Alvarez, Adriana	Social Worker II	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Arredondo, Roberta	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Bailon-Garcia, Stephanie	Social Services Supervisor I	Assistance Programs
Barbosa Cruz, Angel	Social Services Supervisor I	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Barrios, Arturo	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Bonca, Andrea Esther	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Burkeman, Felicia Leviton	Social Services Supervisor I	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Castillo, Melina	Eligibility Technician	Assistance Programs
Ceja, Ana Luz	Sr. Office Supervisor (C/D)	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Celestine, Ivanoe M	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Cervantes, Melissa Ann	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Cervantes, Yvette A	Office Specialist	Children & Family Services
Chavarria, Gabriel P	Eligibility Technician	Assistance Programs
Chavez, Chantel Lynn	Social Services Supervisor II	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Contreras, Juan R	Social Servicel Supervisor II	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Cory, Patricia Anne	Social Services Supervisor I	Administrative Services
Cruz, Alejandra	Eligibility Technician	Assistance Programs
Cruz, Ivan Alejandro	Office Supervisor C	Assistance Programs
Cuevas Castrejon, Erendira	Eligibility Technician	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Davila Lopez, Verenice	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Delgado, Dawnelle Georgina	Group Counselor I	Children & Family Services
Diaz, Veronica	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Duma, Anthony Jason A	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
English, Loan Que	Administrative Manager III	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Espinoza, Wendy A	Social Services Supervisor II	Assistance Programs
Franco, Ruth	Social Services Supervisor I	Administrative Services

Employee Promotions

NAME	CLASSIFICATION	DIVISION
Fraser, Scott Michael	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Frias, Enrique	Social Services Supervisor II	Administrative Services
Gallegos, Maria De Jesus	Eligibility Technician	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Garcia, Emilia	Office Supervisor C	Assistance Programs
Garcia, Karina	Social Worker II	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Gastelum, Marsela	Administrative Manager III	Assistance Programs
Ghanimi, Sahar	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Gonzalez Garcia, Juan Emmanuel	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Gonzalez, Gabriel	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Gurrola, Louis Angel Roger	Office Supervisor C	Children & Family Services
Hay, Natalie Gina - Loretz	Sr. Social Services Supervisor	Children & Family Services
Hernandez, Rosaura Angelica	Social Worker I	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Hoang, David Duy D	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Hurtado, Maribel	Eligibility Technician	Assistance Programs
Johnson, Shamika Nannice	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Laghaee, Nikta	Staff Specialist	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Lavenant, Albert Ranulfo	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Le, Jimmycong Thanh	Staff Specialist	Administrative Services
Le, Michelle Mai	Social Worker II	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Le, Phillip Hong	Social Services Supervisor I	Assistance Programs
Leon, Marie Dolores	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Lopez, Rodrigo	Social Worker II	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Luevano, Mayra Alejandra	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Luu, Le Uyen	Social Worker I	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Ly, Ann Nguyen	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Lynch, Anthony Deshun	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Magana, Alyssa Janet	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Marchan, Lizbeth	Eligibility Technician	Assistance Programs

Employee Promotions

NAME	CLASSIFICATION	DIVISION
Martinez, Guadalupe	Office Supervisor C	Assistance Programs
Martinez, Ruben	Staff Assistant	Administrative Services
Matautia, Monique Aofia	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Maza, Mark Allen Kerr	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Medina, Roger	Social Services Supervisor II	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Melgar, Yvette	Sr. Social Worker	Children & Family Services
Mendez, Jose J	Sr. Social Services Supervisor	Children & Family Services
Mendoza, Angeles Maria	Eligibility Technician	Assistance Programs
Mendoza, Briana Janel	Social Worker II	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Mendoza, David	Staff Specialist	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Mendoza, Minerva	Eligibility Technician	Assistance Programs
Mizrahi, Debora	Office Supervisor C	Administrative Services
Mo, William L	Staff Specialist	Administrative Services
Nguyen, Kim Hau Phan	Administrative Manager I	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Nguyen, Tammy Tu	Eligibility Supervisor	Administrative Services
Noriega, Maria G	Social Worker II	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Ochoa, Bryan Jesse	Eligibility Technician	Assistance Programs
Orozco, Veronica Roxanne	Office Supervisor C	Children & Family Services
Oum, Nicole S	Administrative Manager II	Administrative Services
Paez, Daniel Anthony	Head Cook	Children & Family Services
Palacio, Marisela	Social Services Supervisor II	Assistance Programs
Palacios, Rosa	Social Services Supervisor II	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Panah, Banafsheh	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Park, Julia J	Office Supervisor C	Children & Family Services
Partida, Claudia Varela	Eligibility Technician	Assistance Programs
Pascual, Lawrence Asuncion	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Pastrana, Evelin	Office Supervisor C	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Pease, Marissa A	Social Services Supervisor I	Assistance Programs

Employee Promotions

NAME	CLASSIFICATION	DIVISION
Pelayo, Laura Loyo	Social Services Supervisor II	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Petersen, Jamie Joanne	Social Services Supervisor II	Assistance Programs
Pham, Alexander Anh	Staff Development Specialist	Administrative Services
Pham, Taylor Nguyen	Social Services Supervisor I	Administrative Services
Pham, Xuan Giang	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Phung, Helen Hien Thuy	Procurement Buyer	Administrative Services
Pinedo, Maria	Eligibility Technician	Assistance Programs
Quist, Alice Anne	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Ramos, Jorge	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Ramos, Liliana	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Raya, Martin N	Administrative Manager II	Children & Family Services
Renteria, Yesenia J	Social Worker II	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Reynoso, Elizabeth Christina	Eligibility Supervisor	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Robles, Edgar O	Office Technician	Assistance Programs
Rodriguez, Oscar Alberto	Social Services Supervisor I	Administrative Services
Romero, Marisol	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Ruiz, Maria	Social Services Supervisor II	Assistance Programs
Sadeq, Ahmad J	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Salas, Jose Luis	Social Services Supervisor I	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Salazar, Alma Liliana	Information Processing Technician	Children & Family Services
Samson, Kevin D	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Sanchez, Claudia Villa	Eligibility Technician	Assistance Programs
Serna, Armida Gloria	Group Counselor II	Children & Family Services
Strattman, Nicole Michelle	Administrative Manager I	Children & Family Services
Tapia, Jesse	Social Worker II	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Torres, Cesar Eduardo	Group Counselor II	Children & Family Services
Torres, Magdalena Mendoza	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Torres, Teresa	Eligibility Technician	Assistance Programs
Tran, Mikey M	Social Services Supervisor I	Assistance Programs

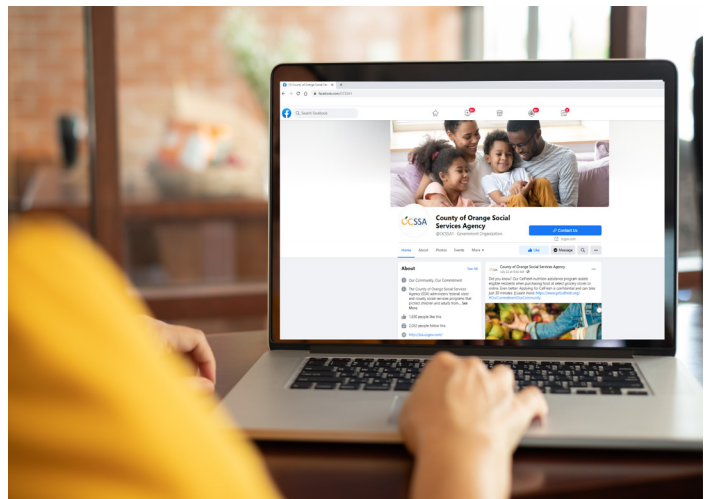
Employee Promotions

NAME	CLASSIFICATION	DIVISION
Valdez Gonzalez, Veronica	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Vargas, Valeria D	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Vega, Cesar	Social Services Supervisor II	Assistance Programs
Vo, Hieu Van	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Vu, Tom Phung Kim	Social Services Supervisor I	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Wong, Cathy M	Sr. Research Analyst	Administrative Services
Wujko, Phyllis Ann	Staff Assistant	Administrative Services
Zambrano, Jaime	Social Worker II	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Zanjanian, Farzaneh	Social Worker I	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services

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