

# OCSSA TODAY

Respect · Compassion · Fairness · Courtesy · Diversity · Creativity · Initiative · **Efficiency** · Integrity · Teamwork · Thoroughness

## ELIGIBILITY PROFESSIONALS MONTH

Earlier this month, the Orange County Board of Supervisors, in honor of Eligibility Professionals Month, recognized SSA, OC Health Care Agency (HCA) and Orange County Community Resources (OCCR) eligibility staff who provide a high level of service to applicants and recipients of many programs including: CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal, General Relief, Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants, Foster Care, Refugee Cash Assistance, Medical Safety Net, Adoptions, California Children's Services, Housing Assistance and Veterans Service Programs.



**Pictured:** Representatives from SSA, Health Care Agency and OC Community Resources stand alongside members from the Board of Supervisors in honor of Eligibility Professionals Month

Chairwoman Lisa Bartlett commented, "Our Eligibility Professionals demonstrate compassion, dedication and extensive experience in their collaborative efforts to create a strong, safe and supportive county and make a positive and lasting contribution to our community."

SSA Director Debra Baetz acknowledged that Eligibility Professionals make up over 40 percent of SSA's more than 4,000 employees who provide vital services to help enhance the well-being of our residents. She added, "The work you do matters so much – and we thank you for dedicating your career to serving the County of Orange." Joining Director Baetz, the following individuals were selected by the Executive Team to represent the Agency at the Board resolution presentation:



**Pictured:** Shara Nguyen, Debra Baetz, Daniel Edwards, Maria Noriega, Brigette McClellan

- Maria Noriega, Foster Care Eligibility
- Daniel Edwards, Assistance Programs
- Shara Nguyen, Program Integrity

When asked to share their reflections on the important work they perform, you may see a common theme - one of compassion:

*"The purpose of my assignment as an Eligibility Technician in Foster Care is to provide resources and support to caretakers that care for the well-being and safety of our vulnerable children. I help our caretakers navigate the complexities of our program with timely and compassionate communication. I strive to excel at my responsibilities as I know it is critical to the success of that child's life and future."*  
-Maria Noriega

*"It gives me a great deal of satisfaction in knowing the job I perform gets families through an unexpected emergency. Oftentimes our customers are embarrassed to come into the office which is why I believe the most important of the SSA core values is compassion."*  
-Daniel Edwards

Shara Nguyen also added, "Eligibility Professionals' Month has truly promoted the identity, integrity and professionalism of individuals in the eligibility field. I am proud that I am a part of this field that directly impacts so many individuals and families."

Congratulations to Maria, Daniel and Shara for being selected to represent SSA, and to all of our dedicated eligibility staff who treat our clients with dignity and respect.

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# SSA SPOTLIGHT: EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE

## CONTRACTS AND PROCUREMENT SERVICES

According to the World Trade Organization, government purchasing generally accounts for 10 to 15 percent of goods and services exchanged within a country. In the United States, this amounts to half a trillion dollars' worth of products and services procured at the federal and state level. Here in California, as reported by the state's Annual Spending Summary, expenditures are largely related to education as well as health and human services, which SSA provides to Orange County residents each day. Our Agency's involvement in this broader economic exchange often branches out from the fifth floor of SSA Headquarters, where Contracts and Procurement Services facilitates fair and open purchasing processes to promote healthy, stable and self-reliant individuals and families in OC. Whether purchasing commodities, renewing licenses and memberships, negotiating terms of a human service contract, or soliciting for goods and services, Contracts and Procurement offers their very best to provide quality service to support the entire Agency.



**Back Row:** Jordyn Lett, Crystal Franco, Betty Castellon, Isela Martinez, Teresa Trujillo, Evelyn Lomeli, Carolyn Doan, Karen Vu, Dianne Breault, John Parr, Arlene Miranda, Grace Verduzco, Evelyn Yambao, Randall Bradford, Miriam Rubino, Celia Echevarria-Lucero, Mallorie Lenn, Thalia Crystal Breedon, April Hwang, Desiree Mor, Brandon Provencal, Claudia Juarez  
**Front Row:** Pedro Aranda, Jessica Chlebowski, Greg Manning, Pam Young, Randy Balduck, John Bunnnett, Anthony Ceden, Donna Piantoni  
**Not Pictured:** Desiree Avila, Barry Wu, Frank Zuniga, Leanne Yuasa, Angie Villalpando, Helen Phung, Mayra Wheeler, Alin Buna, Juan Ayala, Mike Farole, Dene Andrea, Jessica Nguyen

Whether purchasing commodities, renewing licenses and memberships, negotiating terms of a human service contract, or soliciting for goods and services, Contracts and Procurement offers their very best to provide quality service to support the entire Agency.

Though once split into separate departments, Contracts and Procurement staff now work together as one unit within the Administrative Services Division to align similar responsibilities and allow frequent collaboration. Karen Vu leads the department as the current Contracts and Procurement Manager and is supported by five teams of staff responsible for administering SSA's contracts, three teams of staff providing support with the procurement of goods and services and an Auditing and Operational Support team. Day-to-day activities in Contracts and Procurement involve internal and external collaboration with County staff and community partners such as local businesses and community organizations. The department maintains legal files, processes contractor invoices, administers agreements, answers Public Record Act requests, processes requisitions and solicits local partners for goods and services. Additionally, Contracts and Procurement plays a vital role in the development, implementation and analysis of our many programs and services here at SSA. Here's a look at Contracts and Procurement's Fiscal Year 2018-19 accomplishments by the numbers:

- 546 agreements administered totaling more than \$170M
- Nearly \$14M worth of goods and services purchased
- 696 Cal-Card transactions (purchases made with a state-approved procurement card) processed
- 6,032 Cal-Card transactions reviewed
- 2,560 requisitions (requests for goods or services) processed
- 209 one-time purchase orders made
- 29 Agenda Staff Reports (for approval of various contracts and agreements) submitted to the Board of Supervisors
- 21 solicitations for services held for goods and services valued at \$40,000,369

Contracts and Procurement staff balance fulfilling immediate needs while maintaining a strategic focus on future opportunities that will benefit the Agency and its partners. This work ensures that program and client needs are consistently met and encourages the interconnectivity essential to our Agency's success. Through creativity, initiative, thoroughness and efficiency, Contracts and Procurement is a great example of our Core Values in Action.

**Thank you to Contracts and Procurement Services on your invaluable support to SSA and the community and congratulations on being highlighted as this month's SSA Spotlight!**

# STORIES FROM THE FIELD: A LETTER OF GRATITUDE

By Corey Lamb, former SSA client



**Pictured:** Corey Lamb

On July 25, 2019, staff at SSA's CalWORKs North office welcomed a special guest by the name of Corey Lamb, who came to share his impactful experience with SSA as a former client of the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program. Below is a heartfelt letter left by Mr. Lamb for his case manager, Social Worker II Kim-Hong Le:

*I wanted to express my deepest gratitude for the assistance that I have received from you, the County of Orange Social Services Agency and all of the workers who have worked with me over the last four years. Those names include: Hilda Chavez, Alisa De La Rosa, Kristy Barnett, Alma Cervantes, Beatrice Salgado and Jackie Brewer. I came to SSA in 2015 desperate for assistance. I applied to the family stabilization program because myself and my daughter were in the process of being evicted from our home. As a recovering addict with little education, my prospects were minimal and our chances were less than favorable, but you and other workers saw us through this difficult time.*

*As a participant in the program, I was referred to Mercy House who helped us obtain stable housing. Housing was a major first step to stabilization and my success, but more needed to be changed.*

*I had psychological problems from a young age that were never addressed. Now that I was sober, these emotional issues were surfacing and I needed help. My previous time with the Welfare-To-Work program connected me with a psychologist who was able to see me regularly and work on some of my problems. This was an important piece of the puzzle and I am grateful that I received the help I needed.*

*The next thing we worked on was addressing my employment problems. I knew that this time needed to be different, because I had been through the Welfare-to-Work program before and found a job but ended up needing assistance again. I knew that I needed at least a GED in order to find employment that could come close to supporting us, so you sent me to the Foster Assessment Center to assess my learning ability. I can say now with certainty that your decision to send me there was life changing.*

*I spent three days testing at Foster. It was hard and I thought I was losing my mind, but something amazing happened. At the end, the supervisor called me into his office and told me that I tested very high. He said "you cannot fake scores like these" and that he thought I would make a great college student. He told me about financial aid and about a nearby college called Fullerton College. You see, no one had ever talked to me about going to college, so this information was all new to me. Shortly after this experience, I enrolled in GED prep classes at North Orange County School of Continuing Education. I took the practice tests the first day and passed. They told me I didn't need to prepare, so I took the actual tests the next week. I passed those tests with a 90% average and enrolled at Fullerton College full-time the very next day. I thought I would be a C student at best, but that was not the case.*



**Pictured:** Mr. Lamb shares his experience with staff at CalWORKs North

*At Fullerton College, I earned straight As. Not for just a semester or two, but the entire time. I had the support of the CalWORKs program from the county and from the CalWORKs office at Fullerton College. CalWORKs helped me with transportation and even paid for my books and supplies. In addition, my status as a CalWORKs student also granted me the support of the Extended Opportunity Program & Services (EOPS) and Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE) programs at Fullerton College. These over and above programs gave me a safe place to ask for help along with workshops, tutoring and mentoring. Most importantly, it gave me a place to belong and people whom I could identify with. In total, I took 100 units at Fullerton College and this past May I graduated with five associate degrees and a 4.0 GPA. This alone would be amazing, but even more came from it.*

*Last fall, I applied to 11 transfer universities and one very prestigious scholarship known as the Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship. Most of these applications were long shots, (Continued on page 4)*



**Left to right:** Kristy Barnett, Alma Cervantes, Beatrice Salgado, Jackie Brewer  
**Not pictured:** Kim-Hong Le, Hilda Chavez, Alisa De La Rosa

but I applied anyway. Well, wouldn't you know it... I got into eight of those schools I applied to: UC Santa Barbara, UC Santa Cruz, UC Davis, UCLA, UC Berkeley, Claremont McKenna College, Pitzer College and, the school I will be attending this fall, Stanford University! In addition to these amazing admission letters, I was also notified that out of 1,500 applicants, I was chosen to be one of 61 recipients of the 2019 Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship. Now I will spend the next three years at Stanford and my daughter, Kasandra, will too. I have immense pride in the fact that my daughter will begin Kindergarten while living on the Stanford campus. She is witnessing this all first-hand and is now growing up in an academic environment. She will not have the struggles

of a first-generation college student. For Kasandra, education will be a family tradition to be continued, a graduate degree will be something normal to obtain and her children will see a life with less struggle.

I will be forever grateful for the assistance and life-changing direction I received from SSA. You, and others, have helped me to change not only my life and that of my daughter's, but also to change the course of our family forever. I am now coming up on five years completely sober from drugs and alcohol. The social stratifications of addiction and lack of education now stand to be shattered in our small family. Now we have a fighting chance and I look forward to the day when I can help others in the way you have helped us.

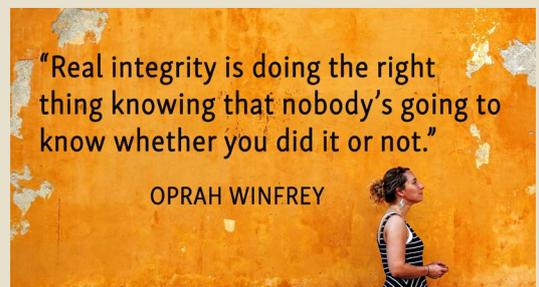
## SEPTEMBER'S CORE VALUE: INTEGRITY

By Erica Saldivar, Employment & Eligibility Specialist



*The Heart of SSA: Core Values in Action's designated core value for the month of September is Integrity.*

When reflecting on integrity, I think it's accurate to assume that most people have the same definition: "Doing the right thing even when nobody is watching." However, it's easier said than done. Can we really listen to our subconscious and do the right thing even though we won't be recognized for it?



Integrity is a value that is instilled upon us at a very young age. It's as equally important as the golden rule. It's part of the foundation that shapes us into righteous human beings. In a world where temptation is ever present, keeping our integrity intact can really be a challenge; however, like the superheroes we see in the movies, here at SSA, we too are superheroes and doing the right thing should always prevail.

Maintaining integrity is crucial in the line of work we perform at SSA and in how we serve our community. Like our favorite superheroes, we have people looking up to us because we provide services necessary to meet their most basic needs. We are called to help those most vulnerable. When we do a thorough job in explaining our services and programs, we maintain integrity with our clients. How else can we demonstrate integrity in the workplace?

1. Be ready to work.
2. Lead by example.
3. Respect other's opinions, even if you don't agree.
4. Be accountable for your mistakes.

The core value of integrity actually encompasses the rest of our core values. A person with integrity is thorough, compassionate, someone who shows initiative, courteous, a team player, respectful, one who values diversity, fair, creative and efficient. We can strive to live with integrity by remembering the following quote from Batman: "It's not who I am underneath, but what I do that defines me."

# SSA TURNS YELLOW & GOLD IN AUGUST FOR EFFICIENCY!



# SSA RECOGNIZES OC SHERIFF-CORONER'S OFFICE

Last month, SSA's Adult Protective Services (APS) Program Manager Stacey Lindberg and members of SSA's Training and Career Development (TCD) team recognized the Orange County Sheriff-Coroner Department for donating training space in support of APS simulation training. The strong collaboration between APS, TCD and the Sheriff-Coroner's office, and their joint commitment to ensuring the safety of our most vulnerable residents, has resulted in an award-winning, gold standard offering.

Orange County is the only county in the state that offers simulation training specifically designed for APS social workers. Our curriculum is recognized as a best practice APS training model in the state, has won a National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Award and was honored by American City and County Magazine with a Crown Communities Award.



**Left to right:** Isela Rodriguez, Jacquelyne Garza, Tiffany Miilohov (in front), Stacey Lindberg, Richard Rodriguez, Capt. Tracy Morris, Sr. Deputy Coroner Ernie Callazo, Cynthia Maciel, Andrew Byde (in back) & Supervising Deputy Coroner Kelly Keyes

## EDUCATIONAL & PROFESSIONAL REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

By Melba Paola Saunders, Office Specialist



Among many other benefits to County of Orange employees, the Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program (EPRP) is available to all full-time, part-time and probationary employees who are performing their jobs satisfactorily. Many SSA employees utilize the program in order to pursue their higher education goals. Whether it be an associate's, bachelor's, master's or a doctorate degree, all employees are currently eligible to be reimbursed up to \$3,000 per fiscal year for educational and professional expenses.

EPRP isn't just for pursuing a higher education; it also opens the doors for reimbursement on professional conferences, licensure (Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Marriage and Family Therapist, etc.) and memberships (National Association of Social Workers, National Adult Protective Services Association, Toastmasters, etc.). Many social workers also use EPRP for test preparation materials and continuing education units that are needed for their licenses.

Now you may be asking yourself, "What's the catch?" There isn't one! Simply follow the EPRP process. To submit your educational expenses for reimbursement, you will need to provide the following:

- An approved EPRP Request form
- An EPRP Claim form
- Breakdown of fees
- Proof of payment
- Receipts for parking (if applicable)
- Receipts and a syllabus for books/materials (a syllabus is needed only if you are claiming books and/or materials and they are required to complete the course), and
- Proof of passing grades (C or better for undergrad, B or better for graduate)

### DID YOU KNOW?

In addition to EPRP, the County also has many university partnerships that provide discounts to county employees. You can find more information about our university partners through the County's [IntraOC](#) website and searching for "University Partners."

Keep in mind that you have one year from the completion date to submit an EPRP claim for a class/event. For example, if you completed a class, renewed a license or paid for a membership on May 20, 2019, you would have until May 20, 2020 to submit a claim. Don't wait! Claim it!

During Fiscal Year 2018-19, 487 reimbursement claims were processed, with a total of \$423,505.83 reimbursed to SSA employees. Additionally, a total of 24 SSA staff graduated from higher education! (The names of these staff were highlighted in the [July 2019](#) issue of SSA Today!) Degrees spanned a wide range of areas including social work, psychology, public administration, management and business administration.

No matter what your goals may be, how long you think it may take, or if you're just curious about a subject matter that pertains to your current job or future job with the County, the Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program is available to help! To set up an EPRP appointment or for questions, please contact Melba P. Saunders at [eprrpinquiries@ssa.ocgov.com](mailto:eprrpinquiries@ssa.ocgov.com) or (714) 435-7337. You can also learn more about the EPRP process by accessing the newly available eLearn, "Educational & Professional Reimbursement Program," on Training Partner using course code "e5311" or visiting the [Training & Career Development \(TCD\) Resource Page](#).

# CALSAWS MILESTONE MOVEMENT



**Left to right:** Alin Buna, Mallorie Lenn, Celia Echevarria-Lucero, Isela Martinez, Debra Baetz, Carol Wiseman, Brian Clark, Alicia Olvera-Martinez, Jill Mills, Andrea Lewis & Craig Fowler

**Not pictured:** An Tran, Karen Vu, Karen Ramirez, Ankita Nelsen, Dorthe Lee, Alyson Piguee, Grady Howe & Edgar Hernandez

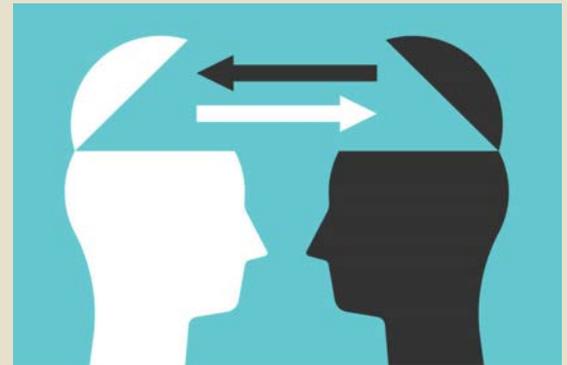
CalSAWS will be here before you know it! On April 23, 2019, Orange County took a big step forward in moving us towards CalSAWS. With approval from the Board of Supervisors, Orange County legally joined the statewide collaborative that makes the final decisions related to the automated systems we will use every day to serve clients. The CalSAWS project is the largest automated welfare system in the U.S. and possibly the largest of its kind ever attempted in the world! All of SSA's necessary contracts are in place and budget projections are complete. SSA's participation in the collaborative is a monumental and historical milestone. The entire state will benefit from improved automation, and the Agency will run more efficiently. CalSAWS will also create a more standardized client experience between counties and provide new options for electronic self-service. A successful CalSAWS implementation will require all of us to work together. We are truly excited for the opportunities ahead and cannot wait to add more SSA staff to the CalSAWS migration efforts! Hats off to everyone who were involved in SSA's milestone achievement!

## TAKE YOUR LEADERSHIP TO THE NEXT LEVEL

By Rosalie Gibbons, Senior Social Services Supervisor

At the end of May, SSA's 2018-2019 Mentorship Program celebrated the end of its year-long engagement. This dynamic program is one of the most highly valued avenues for leadership presence and development in our Agency. Twenty-nine mentor-protégé pairings completed their dedicated commitment to this crucial partnership in professional growth and intentional leadership.

The Mentorship Program not only focuses on protégés' career goals and aspirations, building on strengths, skills, competencies and interests, it provides an opportunity for them to strategically develop a professional plan with their mentor that will take them to their next level of leadership. For a participant, the Mentorship Program has the potential to enhance job performance, productivity, workplace satisfaction and expand possibility conversations. Participants also cultivate valuable, relevant and portable cross-divisional leadership skills and competencies. The program lays the groundwork for succession planning in alignment with the SSA's core values. It builds on the character, integrity and intentionality of its established leadership presence and develops and fortifies a rich Agency legacy for generations to come.



A core concept that underlies the Mentorship experience and is clearly evident in the responses from the end-of-year survey is contained in a quote by Karen West of Heidrick & Struggles, a globally renown executive-level leadership development firm: "Together, both parties in a mentoring relationship produce results neither could achieve on their own..." In other words, as the relationship develops and evolves, the experience is likely to exponentially stretch both the mentors' and protégés' leadership skills, elevate their conversational intelligence and further enhance their communication engagement, efficiency and effectiveness.

The 2019-2020 Mentorship Program is anticipated to launch on October 3, 2019 and is open to staff who are in job classifications for which the next promotional step would be that of an Administrative Manager. If you have not already seen the program flyers in your email, you still have time to apply as either a mentor or protégé by visiting the [SSA Mentorship Program webpage](#) on the SSA Intranet (Training & Career Development Resource Page). After reviewing the eligibility criteria, obtain supervisor and/or program manager approval, complete the application and email it to [Mentorship@ssa.ocgov.com](mailto:Mentorship@ssa.ocgov.com). On the site, there are several FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) to give you a clear picture of this dynamic program and the criteria for your participation. Though the FAQs and the application questions are likely to pique your interest, they cannot begin to anticipate or measure the powerful outcome of your committed participation!

As Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said so eloquently, "Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back... Concerning all acts of initiative and creation, there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too... Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it." See you in October!

# THE STORY OF BAXTER THE THERAPY DOG

By Laura Turtzer, SSA's Public Information Officer



**Pictured:** Baxter, accompanied by his handler, Cheryl Timmons, along with friends from SSA and KTLA Morning News

You may have read about him in articles, seen him featured in on-air news segments or had a chance meet him in a recent meeting. If by chance you are not aware of him, let me introduce you to Baxter, Orange County's first and only therapy dog dedicated to helping some of our most vulnerable residents: commercially sexually exploited children, also known as CSEC youth.

It's hard to believe that just six years ago, Baxter was found wandering the streets of San Bernardino. Fast forward to October 2018: Baxter, a strapping, 99-pound, sweet natured, 10-year-old German Shepherd, now works with CSEC youth in GRACE Court at the Lamoreaux Justice Center in Orange. GRACE Court (Generating Resources to Abolish Childhood Exploitation) is a specialized courtroom solely for victims of sexual trafficking in Orange County. The youth who attend GRACE Court have endured

some extremely traumatic experiences in their lives. Having Baxter in the courtroom brings them comfort, allowing them to open up more easily to Orange County Presiding Juvenile Court Judge Joanne Motoike. Our furry friend also brings a calming presence to the other collaborative members in attendance—social workers, therapists, law enforcement, District Attorney staff and other community partners—who hear victims' stories and provide services and supports to help them heal.

Baxter's handler, Cheryl Timmons, rescued Baxter when he was four years old from a German Shepherd rescue non-profit. She quickly realized that Baxter had a gift for providing comfort and felt compelled to share him where extra love was needed. Timmons took Baxter to children's hospitals and senior homes, but finally found the perfect fit for him in GRACE Court, where this dynamic duo volunteers every Wednesday.

SSA's CSEC Coordinator Nicole Strattman says, "We are so fortunate that Cheryl and Baxter give of their time and support to help our CSEC youth. Baxter provides unconditional love. He lets the youth hug and pet him. This helps them to let their guard down and have candid talks with the judge." Strattman continues, "Baxter and Cheryl have also been a tremendous asset to building public awareness about the sex trafficking of minors in Orange County as well as the programs and services SSA and our collaborative partners provide by participating in media interviews."

And the dog that has helped so many others now needs help himself. While Baxter is still a puppy at heart, he has arthritis in his lower back. Rehab and water therapy have helped him tremendously but the associated costs are high. A [GoFundMe page](#) called Baxter and Friends, for Baxter and other services dogs, is available for those who want to learn more or contribute.

Timmons says, "It is so gratifying to know this puppy found in the street has transformed the lives of so many. Baxter and I are happy to help. He represents how others can turn their lives around if given the opportunity to thrive."

SSA salutes Baxter, Cheryl Timmons and all of our collaborative partners who are dedicated to helping Orange County CSEC youth.

## IT HINTS & TIPS: WINDOWS 10

Did you know you can switch between your current window and desktop by pressing the Windows button  and letter "D" together on your keyboard? Keyboard shortcuts are an alternate, and often time-saving, way to accomplish a task on the computer that you would normally do with a mouse. In the spirit of our Agency's core value of Efficiency, here are some additional keyboard shortcuts that might come in handy for you as you are working away on the computer:

- Open and close the Start menu: 
- Maximize/minimize the active window:  + UP/DOWN Arrow
- Move active window to left/right monitor:  + SHIFT + LEFT/RIGHT Arrow
- Lock computer:  + L



For a list of additional Windows 10 shortcut keys, click [here](#).

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# CELEBRATING HOPE AND SUCCESS WITH DASU



**Back row:** Laura Chavez, Nelda Sanchez, Monica Arriaza, Elizabeth Napoles, Adrienne Flores, Carmen Valencia, Romy Barba, Carol Taylor, Pamela Pantiru, Sally Monsoor, Sara Tehranchi, Jennifer McDonald, Amy Whiteley  
**Front row:** Melyssa Lopez, Denise Ramirez  
**Not pictured:** Racquel Ruiz

The Domestic Abuse Services Unit (DASU) is part of the Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services Division. The DASU program was established 20 years ago to identify and help CalWORKs clients escaping from domestic violence. It is a unique program that draws heavily on the collaborative work of Senior Social Workers (SSWs), Case Managers (Social Worker IIs) and Continuing Employment and Eligibility Specialists, as well as contracted and community partners.

On August 15, 2019, the DASU team held its first Celebrating Hope and Success event to honor and celebrate four families that had successfully graduated the program. These families endured years of serious, often life-threatening abuse and had the courage to make life changes that support long-term safety and self-sufficiency. These

families took advantage of services offered, such as counseling for themselves and their children, the Personal Empowerment Classes and support from their DASU team. Some started the program hopeless and depressed, but with the help of the DASU staff and community partners, they thrived and overcame barriers to self-sufficiency.

The families were truly inspiring and there were lots of tears as they accepted their awards. Children clapped and cheered for their mothers, clearly proud of their achievements.

It was an honor to have the support and presence of SSA Director Debra Baetz and Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services Division Director Christine Snapper at the event. Debra and Christine both offered their congratulations to the families and provided heartfelt words of gratitude to everyone present. A special thanks goes to Ecel Navalta, Staff Specialist from Resource & Development Management; Patricia Wenskunas, Crime Survivors Founder; Carol Taylor, Administrative Manager II; Pam Pantiru, Senior Social Services Supervisor (SSSS); and Jennifer McDonald, SSSS.

Thank you to everyone who made this event possible, and especially to the DASU SSWs who worked so hard to honor their families in such a meaningful way!



**Pictured:** Tables were decorated and prepared for each of the four families being celebrated at this event



**Left to right:** Crime Survivors Founder Patricia Wenskunas and SSA Director Debra Baetz provide opening remarks for the celebrated families and DASU staff



**Left to right:** Laura Chavez, Romy Barba, Nelda Sanchez and Carmen Valencia prepare to serve food to incoming guests

## BEYOND THE CALL: EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE IN ACTION



### Ashley Perez, Social Worker I (SWI)/Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services

SWI Ashley Perez of the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) team recently received the following words of recognition from a client:

*"Ashley recently came to our home. She was so nice and kind. We appreciate her for her job. She was so patient with us. I was having a lot of pain that day and she made me feel better. I'm happy she came to visit. She is a wonderful lady and a very good social worker. I wanted to call you to let you know what a good person you have working for you."*

# BEYOND THE CALL: EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE IN ACTION

## Denise Ramirez, Senior Social Worker (SSW)/Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services

SSW Denise Ramirez of the Domestic Abuse Services Unit (DASU) recently received a letter from a client. Her supervisor, Pam Pantiru, shared the following shortened summary of the client's story\* and letter:



*"When a client was referred to DASU in 2018, she shared with her DASU SSW, Denise Ramirez, that her world had just completely turned upside down. Talking about her abusive husband, she disclosed, 'I lived in a bubble that he created and controlled.' The client spoke limited English, was never allowed to work, had no access to 'his' money, and the rent was overdue. She and her children were left severely traumatized and in fear of the unknown. Denise worked diligently, collaborating with her DASU/CalWORKs colleagues and with a variety of community partners. By the time Denise closed this case in December 2018, the client was safe, had a job and a furnished apartment. The client wrote a letter of thanks to Denise and commented that if she had known there was help available for victims of domestic abuse, she would have left her abusive husband years ago. Denise demonstrated all of this agency's core values in her work with this client and she consistently demonstrates this level of commitment and professionalism to all of her clients."*

\*The client's story was recently featured in "Stories From the Field" on the [March 2019](#) issue of SSA Today.



## Max Silivelio, Eligibility Technician (ET)/Assistance Programs and Ana Martinez, Employment & Eligibility Specialist (EES)/Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services

ET Max Silivelio (left) and Intake EES Ana Martinez (right) recently received the following words of recognition and gratitude from a client:

*"I would like to let you know I was very intimidated to come to a social services office because I had heard horror stories; however, I walked in and was greeted by Ana Martinez on July 16, 2019 with a smile and she was very helpful, directing me to Max Silivelio. Max was so helpful, professional and eased my distress as my father is very ill. He was gracious and kind. Both of these staff members are an asset to this office. Please commend them! Thank you!"*

## Foster Care Regional Center staff/Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services

Eligibility Technicians Renee Payne, Shirley Barksdale and Manuel Rios, and Data Entry Technicians Bianca Lamers (not pictured) and Eloisa Raymundo, of Foster Care Regional Center recently received the following words of gratitude from a representative at CalOptima:



**Back row:** Renee Payne, Shirley Barksdale  
**Front row:** Manuel Rios, Eloisa Raymundo

*"These five individuals are always available when I call. They've helped me navigate complicated issues pertaining to eligibility. They're so responsive to my telephone calls and emails. I'm always getting positive feedback from foster parents and social workers; however, I have to let them know that I could not do my job without the help of foster care eligibility. Thank you Shirley, Rene, Manuel, Bianca and Eloisa for EVERYTHING you do. You're the superheroes."*



**Left to right:** Naomi Chang, Angel Issaian, Ngan Phan

## In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Accounting staff/Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services

Office Specialists Naomi Chang and Angel Issaian, and Sr. Accounting Assistant Ngan Phan, recently received some words of recognition from an IHSS provider. Accounting Office Supervisor II Heather Calkin shared the following summary of the provider's message:

*"I have some calls from an IHSS provider who explained to me that in this difficult time of providing care for her grandmother's medical needs, Angel, Ngan and Naomi have provided exceptional customer service. She is grateful for your support and hard work and would like to recognize all of you for the services you provide in the IHSS Accounting Unit. Thank you all for the exceptional customer service you have provided. Keep up the great work."*

# BEYOND THE CALL: EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE IN ACTION



## Kim Schneider, Senior Social Worker (SSW)/Children & Family Services

Senior Social Services Supervisor Sabrina Blizzard of the Quality Support Team recently relayed some words of appreciation from a client to SSW Kim Schneider of the Collaborative Courts Program:

*"The youth attributed Kim's involvement in her life as the reason for putting her life back on track and getting her life together. The youth made the following statement regarding Kim: 'I love her so much. She is amazing...one of the only social workers I trusted from the start.' The youth was very emphatic about these statements and the impact Kim had on her life was obviously life changing."*

## Anna Hansen, Group Counselor Nights (GCN)/Children & Family Services

GCN Anna Hansen was recognized as CFS Employee of the Month for July 2019. The following words of recognition were shared about Eileen:

*"Anna is well respected by her peers for her leadership skills, professionalism, as well as her calm demeanor. For example, when she is training new staff she demonstrates the patience, extensive knowledge and the ability to communicate employee expectations clearly. She is an exemplary employee in that she practices those same principles she teaches."*

*Anna demonstrates her heart for working with children. She is dependable when it comes to being aware of each child's individual need at that moment. The work she does is not in any way routine because she actually acts with genuine care for the children in her cottage."*

*Anna has showed her ability to remain calm when dealing with crisis situations. She is able to think on her feet and spontaneously solve problems. Instead of deliberating over sometimes complicated issues, she has a knack for reacting to problematic situations with clarity and efficiency."*



## Beth Burnell, Senior Social Worker (SSW)/Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services

SSW Beth Burnell of the Adult Protective Services (APS) team was presented with Adult Services' "You Rock Award" for the month of August 2019. The following words of recognition were shared about Beth by Kim Nguyen, Senior Social Services Supervisor:

*"Beth gives her all to every client that is assigned to her and makes sure she has done everything she can to assist. We all know that APS is limited in our services and sometimes, all we can offer to clients is our empathic presence and listening. I have observed Beth spending hours listening to a woman repeating her history of trauma and abuse. Beth is familiar with this client and has heard her story many times before, yet, she still listens. This is a person who didn't trust the system or authority, but she trusts Beth with her life story, pain, struggle and guilt. After the visit concluded, the woman ran out of her apartment and chased after us to thank Beth for listening to her."*

## Andrew Byde, Senior Social Services Supervisor (SSSS)/Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services

SSSS Andrew Byde of the Adult Protective Services (APS) team recently received a voicemail message from a client. A fellow staff member shared the following summary of the client's message to Andrew:

*"The client complimented Drew for helping her grandmother. She said she was 'grateful for Drew' and felt blessed with his help. She said Drew 'was trustworthy and transparent' and a 'gift to this population.' She stated that Drew had taken the time to explain the different programs and how they operated and that she had not experienced this helpfulness when she had called other programs. She also stated that he was patient and communicated thoroughly to her and that if she had talked to him first, she could have saved herself some time. She concluded by saying 'I am glad he exists.'"*



# SSA PROMOTIONS

EMPLOYEE NAME	CLASSIFICATION	DIVISION
ALMAGUER, WENDY	ELIGIBILITY TECHNICIAN	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
ALVARADO, NOAH G	ELIGIBILITY SUPERVISOR	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
ANAYA SANABRIA, GREGORIO	SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR II	FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & ADULT SERVICES
ANCHETA, ROCIO MARISELA	EMPLOYMENT AND ELIGIBILITY SPECIALIST	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
CHENG, NANCY BUI	SOCIAL WORKER I	FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & ADULT SERVICES
DIAZ, GERARDO RODRIGO	SOCIAL WORKER I	FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & ADULT SERVICES
ECHAVARRIA, ISRAEL	ELIGIBILITY TECHNICIAN	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
GONZALEZ, KATHERINE JANNEL	GROUP COUNSELOR II	CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES
HALL, CORDERRO DEMARQUIZ	ELIGIBILITY TECHNICIAN	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
HERNANDEZ, PATRICIA	ELIGIBILITY SUPERVISOR	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
HUA, TIEN M	SOCIAL WORKER I	FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & ADULT SERVICES
LEE, YOON JUNG	SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER	CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES
LONGORIA, MARICELA	SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR I	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
LOPEZ, FABIAN L	ELIGIBILITY SUPERVISOR	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
MALANGA, ANGELA ROSE	ELIGIBILITY TECHNICIAN	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
MARTINEZ, ISELA EDITH	ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER I	AGENCY ADMINISTRATION
MEDINA, MARITZA NOEMI	SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR I	FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & ADULT SERVICES
MOREIRA, JESSICA ROBIN	SENIOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST	AGENCY ADMINISTRATION
MUNIZ, KATHERINE	ELIGIBILITY TECHNICIAN	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
NGUYEN, KENIX	ELIGIBILITY TECHNICIAN	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
PHUNG, ANNIE THIEN	SOCIAL WORKER II	FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & ADULT SERVICES
RAZO, WENDY OLIVARES	ELIGIBILITY TECHNICIAN	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
ROMERO, DIANA EVELIN	SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER	CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES
RUIZ, LIZZETTE	SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER	CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES
SILLAS, MARIBEL	SECRETARY II	CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES
THOMAS, MARIA	SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR II	FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & ADULT SERVICES
VALENZUELA, MONIQUE CHERIE	ELIGIBILITY TECHNICIAN	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
VEGA, CESAR	SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR I	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
WAHBY, WAFAA MAHER	ELIGIBILITY TECHNICIAN	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
WARRINER, RICHARD ALLYN	ELIGIBILITY SUPERVISOR	FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & ADULT SERVICES

## SSA TODAY QUIZ



Congratulations to **Tamara Ramirez**, who was selected as the winner of June's SSA Today Quiz on Orange County beaches and harbors! Tamara matched all six OC landmarks correctly and received some SSA/County souvenirs for her participation.

With the school season beginning for many this month, we have dedicated the SSA Today Quiz for August 2019 to the theme of Back to School! Test your knowledge on five questions related to this theme. To take the quiz, click [HERE](#).

# LOOKING TO PROMOTE?

Be sure to stay up-to-date on current job opportunities here at SSA and throughout the County! Here are the current recruitments at SSA:

Job Title	Deadline to Apply
Eligibility Technician	Continuous
Group Counselor Trainee I/Group Counselor Trainee II/Group Counselor I	Continuous
Information Technologist I	Continuous
Laundry Worker	Continuous
Senior Social Services Supervisor	Continuous
Senior Social Worker	Continuous
Social Worker I/II	Continuous
Sr. Information Technologist	Continuous

To learn more about these positions, sign up for job alerts and/or apply, click [here](#).

## JOIN THE MCAC!

### Multi-Cultural Advisory Committee



The mission of the Multi-Cultural Advisory Committee (MCAC) is to provide a means to address diversity and multi-cultural issues within SSA and to ensure the delivery of culturally sensitive and competent services to the community. The MCAC consists of a cross-section of management and non-management employees representative of the diversity of the Agency and community and serves as a forum for various cultural groups to address issues of diversity within the workforce of SSA, as well as acting as a resource to provide culturally sensitive services to our clientele. Presently, there are five subcommittees of the MCAC, welcoming all interested employees to join them and participate in their activities.

To learn more about the MCAC and its subcommittees, click [here](#). Feel free to contact any of the subcommittee members for more information on how to join and participate!

## CONNECT WITH US!



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<https://www.facebook.com/OCSSA1>

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