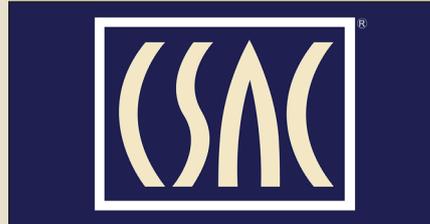


OCSSA TODAY

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

SSA SELECTED FOR CALIFORNIA COUNTIES INNOVATION AWARD

SSA's In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program — which serves aged, blind and/or disabled Orange County residents — recently earned the California Counties Innovation Award from the California State Association of Counties (CSAC).



David Liebler, Director of Public Affairs & Member Services for CSAC, announced in a letter to the Orange County Board of Supervisors, *"I am honored to inform you that two of your county's outstanding programs are being honored in the 2020 CSAC Challenge Awards. In fact, one of your programs was judged to be one of the top three in the state and is receiving the California Counties Innovation Award."*

SSA's award was based on the department's response amid the COVID-19-related closure of offices and waiver of in-person redetermination visits with elderly and disabled IHSS clients. SSA Director Debra Baetz had tasked IHSS staff with an important challenge: to implement activities during the pandemic that would help maintain connections with 35,000 Orange County IHSS clients, ensure their overall health and well-being, and identify and address their unmet, immediate needs. SSA's response included the outreach efforts of IHSS program staff and over 150 staff volunteers from throughout the Agency as well as partnerships with community and faith organizations throughout Orange County.

The CSAC independent judging panel received a historical 363 entries this year. Of these, honors were presented to 49 programs from 25 counties. The Orange County Health Care Agency (HCA) was also recognized with a Merit Award for the department's COVID-19 testing and disaster/emergency response and management efforts.

To see all the award-winning programs, please visit: <https://www.counties.org/post/2020-challenge-award-recipient>

SSA is proud of this achievement. We applaud all of our staff who contributed to the success of the Agency's outreach efforts during COVID-19 and who continue with this important charge today. We also offer our heartiest congratulations to HCA for their tireless and ongoing response to the crisis.

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SSA SPOTLIGHT: EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE

EMPLOYMENT PREPARATION PROGRAM AT CYPRESS REGIONAL CENTER

Beginning July 2014, SSA's Family Self-Sufficiency and Adult Services (FSS & AS) division implemented an engagement program to increase employment opportunities for Welfare-to-Work (WTW) participants in the CalWORKs (CW) Program. This program, known as the Employment Preparation Program (EPP), is administered through a contracted partnership between SSA and the Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance (OCAPICA) organization. OCAPICA places EPP participants in a paid subsidized employment and training program within their field of interest.

The goal of the EPP is to help participants become job ready, while enhancing their work and job retention skills to facilitate their transition to unsubsidized employment and gain self-sufficiency. Employers are reimbursed for 100% of the wages paid to the WTW participant as an incentive to provide the participant with work experience for up to one year.

As the following story illustrates, ongoing communication, collaboration and support between the participant, WTW Case Manager (CM), Employment and Eligibility Specialist (EES), Job Developer and Job Site Supervisor have proven to be keys to the success of the program. Our story begins with a CM providing assistance to a participant. After overcoming several barriers and being assessed, the CM and participant mutually agreed that the next step was for her to obtain work experience. Once the WTW plan was developed, the CM initiated a supportive services referral to the EES as well as the EPP referral to OCAPICA.

At the time of her enrollment, the participant had not been part of the workforce for the last decade. The Job Developer worked with the participant on updating her resume and providing one-on-one counseling sessions on the current job market and what worksites would be most suitable with her current skill sets. The Job Developer subsequently set up an interview for the participant with SSA's Cypress Regional Center (CRC).

In November 2019, the participant was assigned to CRC as an entry-level Office Technician. Despite initially facing challenges with childcare and lack of transportation, she faithfully reported to work on time with a smile on her face, with a readiness to learn and a willingness to assist with any assignment or task. During her time in the EPP, the participant's Job Supervisor was responsible for maintaining a safe worksite environment, providing hands-on training and direct supervision to the participant, in addition to conducting performance evaluations and submitting the jobsite accomplishments to the Job Developer. Her peers, the clerical team, also provided her with support and guidance while she learned her new role.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the participant unexpectedly



Top row: CRC reception team (Brandon Anglin, Olga Cruz, Juanita Portillo, Kevin Jaime, Beatriz Segura, Stephanie Nguyen, Dien Tran, Maria (Jessica) Garcia), OCAPICA team (Jatziry Cortez, Josue Rodriguez, Joseph Kavuma, Sylvia Park, Vanessa Sanchez, Shakita Butler, Mariam Pushian, Richard Chov)
Bottom row: Sandra Lopez (WTW CM), James Boyd (Mutual Client WTW CM), Dalia Barbosa (EES), NG (EPP participant), Rachel Cavillo (Mutual Client EES)

found herself in a situation where she was unable to continue her work program at CRC due to the closure of her children's day care center. Despite the setback, she was able to resolve her childcare dilemma and return to her work assignment. This chapter in the story of the participant's success is only the beginning. As her end date was drawing near, the participant felt comfortable enough to start applying for jobs. In collaboration with the Job Developer's efforts, the EES and CM continued to provide resources and encouragement. In July 2020, the participant reported that she gained full-time employment with the Orange County Fire Authority! The participant wrote a thank you note to her former Office Supervisor and clerical teammates at CRC for providing her with the hands-on job training and support she needed to succeed. She is now off aid and on her way to self-sufficiency.

Although this is a challenging time, with the hard work, commitment and collaborative efforts between our regional staff and partners, the EPP continues to support SSA's mission and vision by providing a supportive environment that promotes stability and self-reliance. We hope this article inspires you to consider serving as an EPP work site and become an invaluable part of future participant success stories along their journey towards self-sufficiency!

For more information about the EPP, please contact Teresa Pantoja at (714) 245-6234.

Thank you to the Employment Preparation Program at Cypress Regional Center for serving as an example of success with the clients we serve. Congratulations on being selected as the SSA Spotlight for November 2020!

NATIONAL ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH



November is National Adoption Awareness Month, a time where we recognize our amazing resource families who open their homes to care for children of all backgrounds. During this month, and throughout the year, we also honor adoptive parents who open their hearts and families to Orange County children who need loving, stable and permanent homes. The need is great in Orange County; from July 2019 to June 2020, 270 adoptions were finalized, uniting children with their forever families.

As SSA joins in the national celebration of adoption and working to build public awareness around the demand for more adoptive families, a new program was formed early this year to provide increased focus to this effort. On January 31, 2020, SSA's Children and

Family Services division launched the Adoptions team to help children and youth, along with their resource families, navigate the journey through adoption. According to Marlene Telegadas, Administrative Manager II who provides oversight of the Adoptions team, *"The work of Adoptions is challenging and rewarding. I am deeply moved by the amazing commitment and love that defines and sustains the adoptive families we serve."*

SSA is pleased to recognize resource parents Claudine and Paul Calabretta, who have fostered-to-adopt six children through SSA as well as the Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services. The Calabrettas lovingly raise their six children — some with significant medical needs — and are committed to their well-being and upbringing, striving to bring normalcy and stability to their lives. Claudine and Paul always considered adoption as a way to expand and grow their family and felt a calling to provide a permanent home for children in need of love, nurturing and a secure home environment.

We deeply appreciate Claudine and Paul Calabretta — and all adoptive families — for their commitment to help Orange County youth, by loving and protecting their foster and adopted children. We also salute the Adoptions team's efforts to smooth the pathway for OC children and families going through the adoption process. Together, these dedicated families and workers help to ensure a brighter future for all children.

DID YOU KNOW?

Several social workers and support staff are involved in facilitating permanency for children and youth in out-of-home care through adoption. As we recognize National Adoption Awareness Month in November, let's get to know the staff and the roles they play in the adoption process. For more adoption information, visit the [OC4KIDS website!](#)

 PRIMARY ADOPTION WORKER A case-carrying social worker specializing in collaborating with children, youth and caregivers involved in the adoption process through the Juvenile Court. Provides direct case management services for dependent children and youth and ensures all adoptive legal requirements are met. Legal requirements for adoption finalization include completion of the "Legal File/ Birth Family Record", the Child Assessment and Adoption Placement paperwork signing. Knowledge of the dynamics of adoption, attachment, the adoption triad, and adoption suitability are essential in this position.	 LEGAL SOCIAL WORKER Responsible for obtaining critical background information and ensuring all legal actions in regards to freeing a child for adoption have been completed and properly documented prior to the adoption. This includes identifying issues of paternity, gathering information regarding the child's biological family history and gathering all related vital records. Legal workers are assigned to a case when the primary social worker completes a Permanency Planning Assessment and the recommendation is adoption of a child.	 ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (AAP) The AAP social workers help families with eligible adopted children meet the financial, medical and other essential needs of raising children. The social workers work closely with Foster Care Eligibility to ensure adoptive parents receive uninterrupted financial and medical benefits while eligible for AAP. The social workers reassess cases every two years to verify families are receiving their financial and medical benefits as appropriate. If a family desires to have their benefits reassessed, or there is a change in the circumstances/needs of the child or the family, the AAP social worker completes an assessment and confirms the applicable benefit changes took effect. The worker also helps families identify needs and provides community resources for assistance.	 POST-ADOPTION INFORMATION & INQUIRIES Social workers in the Adoptions Program respond to inquiries regarding post-adoption information. Adoptive families have unique needs and may require special assistance as the family grows and matures. In addition, the County of Orange Social Services Agency strives to provide information, following state regulations, for adoptions finalized after 1967 in Orange County, California. Often times adoptees, birth parents and siblings of adoptees are eager to find one another. The Adoptions Program may help facilitate these connections with the proper confidentiality waivers and permissions.	 ADOPTION CLERICAL SUPPORT TEAM The Adoption Clerical Support Team performs a range of critical tasks to support the Adoptions Program. The clerical team includes court typists, unit clerks, AAP clerks, a case assignment/legal assignment clerk and a vital records/post-adoption inquiry clerk. This team provides support with case and legal assignments, processing court reports, requests for vital records, interfacing with the California Department of Social Services to request the Adoption Freeing documents, coordinating the adoption signing packets, and processing AAP files, along with a range of other essential and valued responsibilities.
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TRANSFORMING THE FUTURE OF SSA TRAINING

by Perla Cabrera, Social Services Supervisor I



The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented changes and challenged the method in which essential services are delivered, especially during a time when those most vulnerable within our Orange County community are in dire need. The urgency of the situation prompted our Agency to reexamine and adapt our business practices to ensure the continuity and enhancement of services, while ensuring the protection and safety of Orange County residents and SSA staff. Upgrades have included safety precautions such as sanitization stations, plexiglass installation in employee work areas and taller cubicles to facilitate physical distancing; however, one department will be getting a slightly different makeover: SSA's Training and Career Development (TCD).

Since TCD transitioned to online training in April 2020, there has been no in-person training. TCD took on the challenge of tailoring training material to an online format within a short timeframe and, with each class, there were many successes and lessons learned. To provide more efficient online training and enhance the learning experience for trainers and trainees alike, TCD is modifying both their virtual and in-person classrooms. The remodel includes acquiring new equipment ranging from mobile adapter speakers and XP-PEN graphics tablets to new software such as Visme and Adobe Premiere. These upgrades provide trainers with various techniques to illustrate policy concepts, whether through whiteboard diagrams or video simulations.

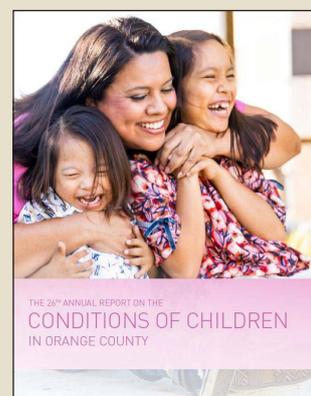
With staff working both from home and in the office, TCD aims to modernize training by delivering content in different forms such as webinars, podcasts, videos and gamification, to name a few. To contribute to high-quality material development, some of the TCD trainer offices will be converted into a full-service recording and editing studio with studio lighting, a microphone system and acoustic foam. Additionally, docking stations will be available for trainers to connect their equipment when in the office and UV light sanitization wands have been furnished to disinfect the area for safety.

Currently training is facilitated online; however, TCD is eagerly preparing to welcome trainees back into our classrooms when it is safe to do so. To allow for physical distancing and sanitization protocol, classrooms will be set up in small pods of 20 trainees and will allow them to utilize County laptops. All classrooms will be equipped with Bluetooth printers and projectors to permit an easy setup process for both trainees and trainers. The remodel is on track for completion by December 2020 and TCD looks forward to delivering an improved training to our staff, with a more engaging and interactive format.

26TH ANNUAL REPORT ON CONDITIONS OF CHILDREN

The [26th Annual Report on the Conditions of Children in Orange County](#) is now available, offering a comprehensive assessment of the health, economic well-being, education and safety of the County's children. The ten-year reflective report demonstrates the changes in trends of the four interdependent areas that influence the lives of children and youth in Orange County. Key improvements include:

- **Good Health:** Orange County women receiving early prenatal care is rebounding, which may be in part driving the infant mortality rate drop of 31% between 2009 to 2018.
- **Economic Well-Being:** The number of total Orange County child support cases decreased by over 30% from 89,852 cases in 2010/2011 to 62,851 cases in 2019/2020. Over the same period, improvements in child support collections per case have increased by over 12%, ensuring an increase in income to parents to provide for the basic needs of their children.
- **Educational Achievement:** The rate of dropout among high school students is approximately one in 20 students, lower than the state and national dropout rates. Further, over half of Orange County third graders meet or exceed the statewide achievement standards in Math and English Language Arts, higher than the state rates.
- **Safe Homes and Communities:** In 2019, 4.7% of juvenile prosecutions were gang-related, down 65% from 13.6% in 2010.



The new report also includes a designated section on COVID-19 and how Orange County has proactively responded to the pandemic thus far. Learn more about the other indicators and read the full report by clicking [here](#).

CELEBRATING FAMILIES: BRINGING SMILES AT HOME



Top row: Danielle Hensley, Jessica Chilton, Jaqueline Ruvalcaba, Cynthia Barrientos-Galvez

Bottom row: Megan Moore, Pedro Vargas, Sayaka Hur

The Family Engagement/Child and Family Team with SSA's Children and Family Services (CFS) Division has traditionally hosted a bi-annual heartwarming, in-person event known as "Celebrating Families." This event honors the incredibly hard work made by parents to overcome severe obstacles, reunite with their children and provide a safe and loving family home. Celebrating Families also acknowledges the collaboration made between the nominated families and their former social workers.

With health and safety mandates restricting group gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Celebrating Families event unfortunately could not be hosted as a live celebration this year. Despite this challenge, the Family Engagement/Child and Family Team was still committed to recognizing the families who transformed their lives and the lives of their children, reaching full circle to successful family reunification.

Family Engagement Senior Social Services Supervisor Cynthia Barrientos-Galvez and Parent Engagement Coordinator Pedro Vargas came up with a creative plan to transform this year's celebration into a safe at-home festivity called "Celebrating Families: Bringing Smiles at Home."

During November 2-4, 2020, six in-home and socially distanced family visits were made by Pedro and each family's former social worker who partnered with them throughout their journey. During the visits, the SSA team presented each family with a celebratory care package/travel bag filled with personal items selected for each child's likes. Families were also provided a gift card, certificate of recognition and a note of appreciation and acknowledgment from their former social workers. Pedro shared the following about these special visits, *"Despite the pandemic situation, families and workers were thrilled to reconnect with each other. While parents expressed gratitude for the recognition, gifts and certificates, they seemed most touched by being able to share the recognition with their former social worker."*

Celebrating Families also honors our dedicated social workers who work tirelessly to support and encourage families and children throughout the reunification process, referring them to community services, helping them to remove barriers and expand their network of support, with the goal of family self-sufficiency.

This year, SSA acknowledges Senior Social Workers Jessica Chilton, Sayaka Hur, Danielle Hensley, Jaqueline Ruvalcaba and Roxanne Biles as well as Senior Social Services Supervisor Megan Moore for their successful partnership, commitment and contributions throughout the family's journey. Sayaka Hur expressed: *"It was extremely rewarding to have this opportunity to visit the family in-person and reflect on their journey. I was happy to learn that the family continued to do well after the case closed despite new challenges presented by the pandemic. Seeing families make changes and reunify is by far the best part of being a back-end social worker!"*

SSA salutes our celebrated families and the abundant efforts of their former social workers, community partners and staff who help them achieve success and ensure families thrive.

YOUR MONTHLY MICRO-MINDFUL MOMENT

The Thanksgiving holiday oftens serves as a reminder for us to incorporate gratitude and thankfulness in our mindfulness practice.

For this month's Micro-Mindful Moment, begin each day with a simple meditation practice of listing five things for which you are grateful. This could be as simple as having your favorite breakfast, seeing the sun rise over your backyard or receiving a hug from a loved one. Going through this exercise regularly can help reduce a little stress and anxiety while cultivating appreciation for the important things in life.



SSA VIRTUAL OUTREACH: DEEP DIVE TRAINING TO CALOPTIMA

On November 3, 2020, SSA was invited by CalOptima, a community-based partner that administers the health care coverage plan for Orange County residents, to conduct a virtual training targeted to CalOptima's frontline staff and a broad range of service providers. Approximately 105 attendees participated in the live training and more have dialed into the recorded training session.

The virtual event furnished CalOptima frontline staff and service providers with knowledge and resources to bridge the gap and connect Orange County residents in need of SSA's public assistance services. SSA was represented by the following subject matter experts:



Pictured: Nadia Moradi, Melissa Vargas

- Melissa Vargas, representing the Assistance Programs division, provided an in-depth training on the eligibility and enrollment process for Medi-Cal.
- Maria Carrasco, also from Assistance Programs, delivered a high-level discussion on General Relief, CalFresh and the Restaurant Meals Program.
- Nadia Moradi, representing the Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services division, presented on CalWORKs, Welfare-to-Work and information about subsidized child care services.

Melissa shared the following words about her experience: *"Presenting at the CalOptima event reinforces and strengthens the collaborative partnership we have to jointly provide quality services to the residents of Orange County, helping remove barriers to improve customer service."* Nadia added, *"With the significant and increased demand in public assistance benefits since the beginning of COVID-19, SSA continues to step up to support and participate in virtual events that help educate and inform not only clients, but our valued partners."*

A special thank you to the dedicated support of our subject matter experts who made this event possible. We appreciate all that you do to make these events valuable!

EMPLOYEE EDUCATIONAL JOURNEYS IN SSA



Pictured: Monique Matautia

My name is Monique Matautia. I am currently an Eligibility Technician for the Medi-Cal program at the Garden Grove Regional Center. I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice from California State University, Long Beach and recently obtained a Master of Science degree in Organizational Leadership from the University of Redlands.

My educational goals were to obtain degrees that would enhance my skills in order to empower underserved communities. I achieved this by being aware of what I wanted to do and looking into resources that would help me to do this. Accomplishing my educational and career goals are important to me in order to set an example for the younger generations. I want them to see that someone close to them was able to get a graduate degree in hopes of inspiring them to do the same, if they choose.

As a single mother, I had to overcome time and stress management. Luckily, my family supported me and were able to assist me with tending to my son while I was at school or needed some independent time to complete my coursework. One tip I can share is to communicate often with your supervisor and leadership if possible. My previous supervisor was extremely supportive of my educational goals. She helped me to get an adjusted schedule the entire time I was in school so that I was able to attend class without being late. My leadership team was extremely supportive in helping me decide what it is I may want to do while at SSA. They encouraged me to volunteer for different opportunities so I may gain more experience and find out how I can best utilize my skills.

I would encourage people to pursue education while the opportunity is available with the partnerships and tuition reimbursement. It will most likely take time to move around family obligations; however, your family and friends may be more than willing to help you accomplish your goals. It is a great investment that can benefit your family and yourself.

For more information about the County's university partnerships, click [here](#). For more information about Educational & Professional Reimbursement, click [here](#).

SSA'S HOLIDAY DONATION DRIVE IS UNDERWAY!

Operation Santa Claus and Senior Santa & Friends Need Your Help!

Help brighten the lives of our community's most vulnerable by donating toys and gifts this holiday season.



GIVE ONLINE

ssa.ocgov.com/ssa_volunteer/donations/osc_donation

ssa.ocgov.com/ssa_volunteer/donations/sr_santa_donation

DONATE NEW UNWRAPPED TOYS

Drop off at 1505 E. Warner Ave., Santa Ana, CA 92705 or email operationsantaclaus@ssa.ocgov.com for a list of donation sites.

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

Volunteers are needed in November and December to sort gifts, restock and assist shoppers. Sign-up at www.signupgenius.com/findasignup and search for a sign up under the email address operationsantaclaus@ssa.ocgov.com

QUESTIONS?

Call 714-679-2438 for more information.



*****GIFTS FOR TODDLERS, TEENS, AND GIRLS ARE IN HIGH DEMAND.**

**"We make a living by what we get.
We make a life by what we give."
-Winston S. Churchill**

Operation Santa Claus is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization operated by the County of Orange Social Services Agency.

WINNERS SELECTED IN SSA'S INNOVATION CHALLENGE

Heart of SSA Presents:



In January 2020, SSA proudly launched the "Heart of SSA: Innovation in Action Challenge" as a follow-up to the successful Heart of SSA Core Values in Action campaign.

The Innovation in Action Challenge has proved to be an exciting opportunity to inspire us all to think outside the box, closely aligned with SSA's mission to deliver quality social services that are accessible and responsive to the community, encourage personal responsibility, strengthen individuals, preserve families and protect vulnerable adults and children. Due to our Agency's rapidly changing circumstances and responses related to COVID-19, our submission deadline and judging period was extended to allow for necessary flexibility; however, we are now pleased to announce our incredible winners and thank everyone who participated in this challenge!

INDIVIDUAL WINNERS

1. Katherine Rieger, Assistance Programs
2. John Parr, Administrative Services
3. Jeffrey Liu, Assistance Programs

TEAM WINNERS

1. Gregory Manning, Administrative Services and Diana Cruz-Toro (retired), Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
2. Nadine Alam, Tristy Nguyen, Christa Tipton and Kristen Vargas, Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
3. Joyce Kato, Itzel Lopez, Alejandra Cruz and Sarah Wunschel, Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services



Top row: Katherine Rieger, Jeffrey Liu, Gregory Manning, Nadine Alam

Bottom row: Itzel Lopez, Joyce Kato, Alejandra Cruz
Not pictured: John Parr, Diana Cruz-Toro, Christa Tipton, Tristy Nguyen, Kristen Vargas, Sarah Wunschel

The challenge accepted 42 total entries from SSA employees in two categories: individual and teams composed of no more than six members. All contest entries have been provided to our Deputy Division Directors on the SSA Leadership Development Team for their review, development and assessment for future operational implementation. Congratulations and thank you to everyone who participated and presented their ideas to better serve and support our community in an innovative and integrative manner. Your input and care may truly change someone's life. More information about our winning submissions will be shared in the future.

BEYOND THE CALL: EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE IN ACTION

CATHERINE TANG, Senior Social Services Supervisor (SSSS)/Children and Family Services

Catherine Tang of the Specialized Family Services Continuing & Court Officers department was recently recognized as the CFS Employee of the Month for October 2020. The following words of recognition was shared about Catherine:

"Catherine sets the standards high with her passion for teamwork. As a new supervisor working with Catherine, I have felt welcomed, valued and heard. Catherine has demonstrated her compassion for her team members by always being available to help and take on tasks to meet the needs of the Agency.

Catherine has included me in decisions and has made me feel my opinions matter and are important. Catherine goes above and beyond for her teammates and workers because Catherine has a heart to help people. Catherine's dedication to helping me shows her compassion for the people I will be serving. Catherine is always trying to make everyone's life a little bit easier by doing everything she can to offer assistance. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Catherine has kept in regular contact with her staff and peers to ensure everyone is taking care of themselves. Catherine has set up video conference calls with her staff and her peers to ensure everyone is maintaining contact with one another for support. I truly believe Catherine is the definition of teamwork!"



BEYOND THE CALL: EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE IN ACTION

Ji LEE, Senior Social Worker (SSW)/Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services

SSW Ji Lee of the Adult Protective Services (APS) program was recently presented with Adult Services' You Rock Award for October 2020. The following words were shared about Ji:



"In addition to performing her regular job duties as an APS investigating field SSW and a Police Outstation SSW, Ji also functions as an APS Repatriate SSW. In this role, Ji is responsible for working with the International Social Services Agency (ISS) to bring identified APS clients living in another country back to the U.S. and link them with various services. In May 2020, Ji received a Repatriate case for a client coming from Korea and worked tirelessly with ISS coordinating logistics to get the client to Orange County safely. Ji worked closely with other county agencies and contracted providers to link the client with needed shelter, income and medical services. Ji coordinated all of this while continuing to work her regularly assigned cases and also while training a new APS SSW on how to work repatriate cases. Ji did a tremendous job on this case, often spending hours each day coordinating appointments, dialoging with various agencies and completing necessary documentation and required forms. Ji, once again you went above and beyond, not only assisting our APS clients locally, but also assisting those on the other side of the world. Ji, you absolutely ROCK!"



SHANNON CAPTAIN, Social Worker II (SWII)/Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services

SWII Shannon Captain of the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program recently received the following words of recognition from an IHSS relative caregiver:

"I have had the privilege of working with Mrs. Shannon Captain for the past several years and I find that she is sensitive to the client's unique needs and she goes above and beyond the call of duty to provide assistance to me and the client. I am particularly grateful for the sensitive manner that Mrs. Captain speaks to the client, as well as how she easily engages him in conversation to ensure that whatever he must contribute to the discussion is heard. The client genuinely loves and respects Mrs. Captain and even though I am highly skilled in working with children and individuals with exceptional needs, without Mrs. Captain's grace, diligence and professionalism, I would be extremely stressed out at this time. Mrs. Captain's supreme intelligence, skill, tenacity and integrity as illustrated in her exceptional work ethic in the matter of evaluation, collaboration and consultative work with me and the client is superior. Additionally, I am especially grateful for Mrs. Captain's cultural awareness and veracity in providing the highest level of support to the client."

DIANA LARUSSO and DELCIE HYNES, Administrative Manager I's (AMIs)/Administrative Services

AMI's Diana LaRusso (left) and Delcie Hynes (right) of SSA's Emergency Management Team recently received the following words of recognition from Donna Boston, Director of the OC Sheriff's Department, Emergency Management Division:



"I write to let you know that there are many compliments being paid to Delcie Hynes and Diana LaRusso regarding their response to fires affecting Orange County last week. Both Delcie and Diana are always responsive, and on this occasion, their response was exceptional. Sometimes we are able to see the "service above self" attitude demonstrated in our County family—and this was definitely one of those outstanding times."



KENDRA CARRAWAY, Case Manager (CM)/Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services

CM Kendra Carraway recently received the following words of gratitude from a client:

"Hi! I don't know if you'll remember me. I was a single mom with two boys. You helped enroll me in a program that allowed me to apprentice as a mechanic at a shop. I just wanted to let you know that I not only became a mechanic, but I've been running my own mobile mechanic business for the past three years. I haven't been on assistance since and I'm one year away from owning my first home. I just wanted to say THANK YOU! I've always been caught up in welfare. Nobody ever told me I had an opportunity to learn a trade. You actually cared enough to make sure I stayed in the program and I like to think it's because of you that I made it. So, thank you. Keep up the amazing work you do. It really does help change lives."

BEYOND THE CALL: EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE IN ACTION

BRENDA HIGUERA, Senior Social Worker (SSW)/Children and Family Services

Brenda Higuera of the Court Services program, Dependency Investigations (DI) unit, recently received the some words of gratitude from a client, as shared by her supervisor:

"I wanted to reach out to all of you and share a beautiful call I received today. It was the foster father to Brenda's DI case. He wanted to express how grateful he was to SSA but especially Brenda. He shared how caring, professional, hardworking and compassionate Brenda was in handling this case. The foster father was in tears because he was going to have a new social worker. He couldn't say enough nice things about SSA as a whole and especially Brenda. His exact words, 'The world needs more people like Brenda and the people who work for SSA.'"



ROBERTO JAMES, Eligibility Technician (ET)/Assistance Programs

ET Roberto James (not pictured) of Orange's Call and Processing Center recently received the following words of recognition from a customer, as shared by a supervisor:

"A customer wanted to recognize Roberto for his great customer service. She said Roberto is an asset to our call center. She retired from a customer service department herself and she knows it takes a special type of person to work in a call center. She stated when she called she was very upset, but Roberto showed empathy to her situation and that "calmed her ruffled feathers." Roberto, thank you for your great representation of the call center and the service you provide to our customers."



AHMAD SADEQ, Eligibility Technician (ET)/Assistance Programs

ET Ahmad Sadeq of Orange's Call and Processing Center recently received the following compliment from a customer, as shared by a supervisor:

"I received a call from a customer who stated that she has several serious health conditions and was so grateful she got to speak with you today! She said you were so patient and understanding. You worked together with her to get all of her Medi-Cal issues solved. Thank you Ahmad, for being such a great asset to our team!"

DENA TURRIETTA-QUEVEDO, Social Services Supervisor I (SSSI)/Administrative Services

SSSI Dena Turrietta-Quevedo of Program Integrity recently received the following words of gratitude from a client:

"Dena, thank you so very much for all of your help with my case. I was able to get benefits retroactively activated and process my billing. I wouldn't have been able to do this without your help. It is all greatly appreciated. I may have a negative perspective when it comes to the world but your actions have shown me how wrong I am and there is good along with the bad. Keep up your good work, through your actions you show you really do care about your clients and it's a breath of fresh air in this stressful time."



KASEY DAVIS, Social Services Supervisor I (SSSI)/Administrative Services

SSSI Kasey Davis of Program Integrity recently received the following words of appreciation from a client:

"Dear Kasey, I cannot thank you enough...thank you for helping me, always picking up the phone and assisting me with this process, especially with the current situation. This monetary assistance makes a world of difference in my kid's life. It is one less thing I have to worry about, if I will have enough money to buy food at the end of the month. You are a blessing, thank you for the work you do, it does more than put food on my table and it makes my kids happy, I can see it."

SSA PROMOTIONS

EMPLOYEE NAME	CLASSIFICATION	DIVISION
AVILA, NORMA S	SENIOR SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR	CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
BIRD, STEPHANIE IDA	SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER	CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
DODDS-TSANG, YVETTE MAI	SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER	CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
ENRIQUEZ, MARIA ISABEL	SOCIAL WORKER II	FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & ADULT SERVICES
INIGUEZ, MARGARITA	SEINOR SOCIAL WORKER	CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
LAPHOND, JULIETA	SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR I	FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & ADULT SERVICES
LEE, DORTHE	EXECUTIVE MANAGER	ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
MEDRANO, MIRKELIA	STAFF SPECIALIST	ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
MENDOZA, ERICA I	SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER	CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
NGUYEN, NANCY PHAM	SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER	CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
ORNELAS, MAVY C	SECRETARY III	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
PRADO, OYUKY ARLIN	SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR I	FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & ADULT SERVICES
SANCHEZ, ANGELICA	STAFF SPECIALIST	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
VUONG, CATHERINE HO	SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER	CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

LOOKING TO PROMOTE?

Be sure to stay up-to-date on current job opportunities here at SSA and throughout the County! To view current recruitments, sign up for job alerts and/or apply, click [here](#). For Frequently Asked Questions about the County job application process including links to practice online assessments, click [here](#).

SSA TODAY QUIZ

Congratulations to Claudia Castro, who was randomly selected as the winner of September's SSA Today Quiz on the topic of pumpkins! Claudia was one of 26 respondents who answered all five questions correctly.



What do you know about holiday desserts? Test your knowledge of random facts about this topic on this month's SSA Today Quiz. Get all five answers correct and you may be randomly selected by the SSA Today Newsletter Committee to be featured in a future issue of SSA Today!

To take this month's SSA Today Quiz, click [HERE](#).

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