



## HIGHLIGHTS

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## Director's Report

by **Connie Beck**

► I'm excited to share with you all that DHHS and county staff have been working on a proposal for Proposition 1 funding to build a new Sempervirens and we're just about ready to submit it.



It's hard to believe, but it's been 55 years since Sempervirens opened its doors at 720 Wood St. on the Behavioral Health campus. And while the 16-bed locked psychiatric facility is an asset to the community, it is also in need of many repairs.

In 2020, the Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury issued a report noting that the building is quite old and recommended that the county "specifically include Sempervirens Psychiatric

Health Facility as a high priority project." Again in 2022, the Grand Jury found that, "the Sempervirens Psychiatric Health Facility is a building in disrepair. The deferred maintenance issues concerning rainwater leaking from windows, the ceiling, and drafty dormitory windows cause discomfort and increase anxiety for residents and staff." And both reports made it clear that Humboldt County should plan and build or locate a new psychiatric health facility as soon as possible.

When Prop. 1 was approved by state voters in March 2024, it included more than \$6.3 billion to develop behavioral health treatment facilities, residential care settings and supportive housing to help provide appropriate care facilities for individuals experiencing mental health and substance use disorders. If our application is approved, we will receive 90% of the funding need to build a new facility with 16 psychiatric

health facility beds and four crisis stabilization unit beds. It will be similar to what we have now, but a modern health care facility built for privacy, safety and compassionate care to promote healing and recovery with dignity.

We should find out in May if we will be awarded the money and if so, construction is expected to start in early 2026.

In other building and construction-related news, we are getting closer to starting the design phase for the Behavioral Health Crisis Triage Center on the Mad River Community Hospital property and working to finalize the lease agreement on the future Navigation Center in Eureka so that we can break ground.

As 2024 starts to wind down, we have a lot in the works over the next few years and will continue to keep you posted. ◀

## Prepare yourself for winter driving

by **Terrence McNally, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator**

► As we head into winter and are driving for work or during personal time, many of us will travel through upper elevation hills and mountain passes where the risk of snow or road blockages, due to slides, becomes more acute. Even if you live along the coast, driving U.S. Highway 101 north or south or highways 299 and 36, snowfall or slides can happen unexpectedly.



You could be stuck in a road closure due to snow or a road blockage for hours. In some places, it's not

unheard of for drivers to be stuck in snow for many hours or even days as road crews work to clear passages. So, make sure you'll get through it in the safest and most comfortable way possible.

Check out the National Weather Service's graphic of automobile emergency winter supply recommendations.

That looks like a lot and there's nothing wrong with building your kit over time. Just make sure your kit is adequately stocked with a winter drive ahead of you.

And driving anywhere in the county means we're frequently in areas with limited to no phone service. Without much fanfare, Apple released its Emergency SOS feature on its newer

iPhones. Please note: You'll need an iPhone 14, 15 or 16 running iOS 16.1 or later.

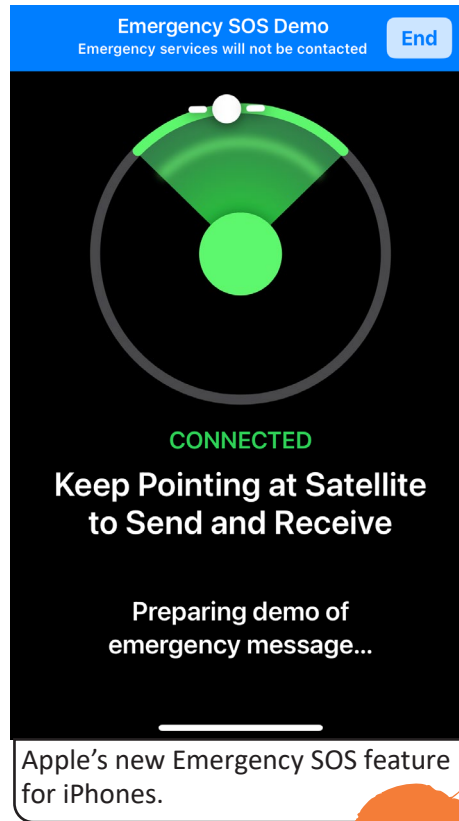
Emergency winter supply recommendations from the National Weather Service.

## Winter driving, continued from page 1

But the Emergency SOS function is a remarkable advance that allows users to contact emergency assistance even when lacking a cell signal. Instead, Emergency SOS utilizes available satellite communication to connect to emergency services.

Better yet, you can run a test function from your iPhone and give it a try well before needing it. Find “Emergency SOS” in your iPhone’s Settings and scroll to the bottom to “Try Demo” where you’ll be prompted to get a clear view of the sky and the test function will have you physically point the cellphone toward the available satellite. This can take several seconds as your phone attempts to connect with an overhead satellite. You’ll next be guided through a series of texting options to establish test communication.

In the case of an actual emer-



gency, it’s best to try calling 911 first and if the phone establishes that no cell coverage is available, you’ll be automatically guided toward the Emergency SOS function.

It’s also recommended that you complete your phone’s “Medical ID” section (including emergency contacts, medications and allergies), also in Settings, so that information can be quickly transmitted to emergency responders.

Apple is not the only cell phone company offering emergency connection services. A similar emergency SOS function is available on Google Pixel 9s.

It’s a great start, so if you have a newer iPhone or Pixel, make sure to pack it along on hikes and campouts year-round where cell coverage is limited.

Stay winter safe out there, DHHS. ◀

## Social Services Report

by **Ryan Bishop**, Deputy Branch Director

► As we continue to navigate budget constraints within Social Services, our focus remains steadfast on improving efficiency and reducing costs.



Several key initiatives are beginning this fall to achieve these goals.

Our primary initiative this season involves a thorough review of existing contracts to identify potential cost saving opportunities. A significant focus is on revamping CalFresh Outreach contracts. By leveraging technology to enhance service delivery and communication, we aim to streamline operations. Additionally, we are prioritizing retention services to ensure that eligible individuals remain enrolled in CalFresh, thereby reducing the administrative burden associated with procedural discontinuances and recidivism. Moreover,

we are requiring our partners to provide matching funds, decreasing the reliance on county dollars to support these programs.

Another area of emphasis is optimizing our use of physical space. We are reassessing telework schedules and implementing desk-sharing arrangements for staff who telework more than 50% of the time. This not only makes better use of our facilities but also fosters a more collaborative work environment. Furthermore, we are reviewing building leases and storage units to explore opportunities for consolidation and termination, aiming to reduce overhead costs.

We have also collaborated closely with the Information Services team to eliminate hundreds of desk phones, saving tens of thousands of dollars per year. This move underscores our commitment to fully utilizing available communication solutions such as email, chats and cell phones.

Improving efficiency within Social Service programs remains a priority. For instance, we are revising the General Relief program to simplify

customer reporting requirements, thereby lessening the administrative workload for staff. Additionally, we are scrutinizing the forms we print and mail locally in all Social Service programs, identifying those that can be eliminated to reduce associated staff time and mailing costs.

Even small measures are being considered to enhance efficiency. We are consolidating office supplies to single locations within each building to prevent over-ordering. By maintaining lists of pre-approved office supplies, we aim to minimize the need for special orders. In line with this, we have decided to stop ordering paper calendars, a seemingly minor change that contributes to overall savings.

These initiatives may appear incremental, but collectively, they signify our dedication to prudent fiscal management and operational excellence. By continuously seeking ways to improve efficiency and cut costs, we are committed to ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of Social Services. ◀

# Behavioral Health Director's Report

by **Emi Botzler-Rodgers, LMFT**

► The Behavioral Health branch has been engaged in various efforts around equity work and branch culture change.

We have been working over the past few years with local consultants, both from



Humboldt Area Foundation and from Stepping Stone Consulting. It is good, hard and humbling work.

We recently also executed an agreement with Kauffman and Associates Incorporated, an organization that is supporting us in strengthening relationship through engagement with local Tribes. This work is meant to help us better understand the behavioral health needs of this community and to build relationships to partner in ensuring we

support access to services. This is also an opportunity to do better in communicating and educating the community around the role and responsibility of DHHS Behavioral Health.

As we do this work, I am repeatedly struck with how much personal vulnerability is required along with the professional effort. To address systemic and structural racism, which were long standing issues before many of us were in our positions, we must reflect on our own values and intentions. Each time I engage with consultants, coaches and with county staff, I am grateful for the willingness to be present, lean in and to have difficult conversations. I am also humbled by the willingness to grow, learn and consider blind spots and bias. All of these things are required for true and lasting change.

Behavioral Health is working on an Equity Action Plan (EAP) to formalize this work and ensure that we are

identifying and measuring goals and objectives and moving our efforts forward intentionally and sustainably. The EAP includes areas of work such as equity-focused shifts in policy and practice, staff engagement, training and coaching, improving hiring and recruitment and retention, as well as building relationships with local communities.

The Behavioral Health branch has much continued work to do around equity and branch culture change. We have work to do around building relationships and increasing understanding of our often-complicated systems, as well as supporting the community in accessing our services. We have a lot of work still to do and we have solid, unwavering commitment to do this work by staff throughout the branch. I am grateful for the willingness of our staff to lean into this work, to lean into equity and engagement with openness, vulnerability, kindness and compassion. ◀



## Children's Behavioral Health offers range of services



► The DHHS's Children's Behavioral Health team (pictured above) works closely with Child Welfare Services, Public Health, the Probation Department and community-based providers and offers a range of services, including assessment, treatment, medication support and case management for children, youth and families. To learn more, visit [humboldt.gov.org/ChildrensBehavioralHealth](http://humboldt.gov.org/ChildrensBehavioralHealth). ◀



# Substance Use Prevention staff addresses cannabis use, health with SoHum students

by Katie Jo Slaughter, Senior Health Education Specialist



► In Southern Humboldt County, also known locally as “SoHum,” is the heart of multi-generational and legacy cannabis cultivation in Humboldt County. Cannabis use education for young people is critical upstream prevention work in this community.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, any substance use, including recreational cannabis use, increases a young person’s risk of developing harmful substance use later in life.

Public Health’s Substance Use Prevention Program was one of five Local Health Jurisdictions in California to be awarded a California Department of Public Health Youth Cannabis Education & Prevention grant for 2023-2026. Other jurisdictions include: the City of Long Beach and Butte, Santa Clara and Shasta counties. With this funding, our team began building relationships with Southern Humboldt Joint Unified School District and its Wellness Center staff and partners. The Wellness Center team includes our program’s

long-standing collaborators at the Southern Humboldt Family Resource Center.

The heart of our cannabis use education efforts is delivering Stanford Medicine’s “Smart Talk: Cannabis Prevention & Awareness” series. Our team is certified to deliver these sessions and conduct pre/post surveys for students grades 7 through 12. Last fall, the principal at South Fork High School in Miranda was teaching the Graphic Arts class. She asked if we were available to do a Photo Voice Project instead of Smart Talk sessions which ended up being a tremendous success for our team in fall 2023. Building that relationship with the principal opened doors to return for spring semester and deliver Stanford Smart Talk About Cannabis sessions to more than 225 students in grades 7 through 12 at Miranda Junior High and South Fork High schools.

Despite challenges when students were triggered by the course content or experienced behavioral issues in the classroom, our intrepid team of Health Educators pivoted and tried new and more effective methods of delivering the lessons. They engaged Stanford’s REACH Lab team to help modify the course content to be more relevant, and they worked closely with school administration and our partners to successfully deliver the lessons. In total, SUP’s team of Health Education Specialists delivered nearly 60 hours of in-school education from February through April.

Doing the pre/post surveys generated a wealth of data that shows the positive impact of these sessions and what our team needs to address in future educational sessions. For example, over half of the high school and middle school students reported that they would remain cannabis-free after completing the Smart Talk sessions, and 38% of South Fork High School students and 25% of Miranda Junior High students reported that they wanted to cut back or reduce their cannabis use.

Our team also learned that students at both school sites had mixed feelings on whether cannabis smoke or vapor is harmful to their lungs—which points to a future focus for our cannabis use education for SoHum students.

During the Stanford Smart Talk about cannabis sessions, students asked us to provide education on fentanyl and training to use Narcan—which our team provided to nearly 155 students at South Fork High School and 11 students at the Southern Humboldt-based Osprey Learning Center. This work was funded by our Department of Health Care Services Substance Use Block Grant. We were able to respond mindfully and promptly to the students’ substance use prevention needs.

In the prevention field throughout California, we like to call this “prevention in action.” This type of response to young people’s feedback is considered a best practice. ◀

## Flu vaccines available now

► DHHS’s Public Health Clinic, located at 529 I St. in Eureka, is hosting free community walk-in flu vaccine clinics Fridays through March 28, from 1:15 to 3:45 p.m. Closed Friday, Nov. 29, for county holiday. ◀

From left, DHHS Payroll/Personnel Specialist Carol Lang receives a flu vaccine from Public Health Nurse Amelia Gonzalez.





## Equity Update

by Neftali Miller-Rubio, Racial & Cultural Equity Manager

► This quarter’s Equity Update provides a snapshot of accomplishments from the DHHS Racial Equity Strategic Plan (RESP), what is coming in the year ahead and how staff can get involved. DHHS continues to create necessary space for all staff to expand their understanding of concepts related to bias and racism. With increasingly limited capacity, aligning efforts across DHHS is essential. This remains a focus as we craft strategies to lead us through 2025 and beyond. Read on for more information.

### Accomplishments

- Launched three trainings for all staff: “Exploring Racial Equity: Common Terms,” “Implicit Bias: An Introduction” and “Foundations of Racial Equity”
- Began Racial Equity Coaching for all supervisory-level staff
- Assisted in developing the Workforce Development Survey, ensuring baseline data is secured to chart future growth
- Developed new resources: an FAQ and Glossary of Terms

- Began Mid-Day Movies, this series includes film-shorts and discussion space for all staff to casually meet up over lunch.
- Recruited 10 subject matter experts from our local community who facilitated 61 trainings over an 11-month period
- Launched race-based affinity training sessions, inviting BIPOC staff to learn together for the first time at DHHS
- Branch Leadership Coaching has begun with all DHHS branches and will continue in 2025, advancing projects addressing structural change.

### Data

- “Exploring Racial Equity: Common Terms” and “Implicit Bias: An Introduction” have both reached 97% of staff, “Foundations of Racial Equity” has reached 80% of staff
- Foundation post-survey data rated the usefulness of the training at 4.1 out of 5, and effectiveness of facilitation at 4.4 out of 5, 5 being “extremely useful/effective” – this was an 86% response rate
- Over 90% of Workforce Development Survey (WDS) respondents report being familiar or very familiar with core terms explored in trainings

- 60% of WDS respondents indicate that equity trainings have impacted how they approach their job or interactions with clients, co-workers and/or the community.

### What’s next

- Increasing opportunities to find belonging, particularly for BIPOC staff
- Developing recommendations for a bias education framework to support BIPOC staff
- Begin development of the 2026 Plan revision!

### Get involved

- Talk to your branch representative on the Racial Equity Steering Committee to learn about current work being done departmentwide, and in your branch!
- Talk to your supervisor about leading an equity-focused topic in an upcoming team meeting (ask us for links, articles and discussion prompts!)
- If you are a supervisor, manager, deputy or director – schedule a coaching session!

Coaching Sessions continue for supervisors, managers, deputies and directors. All staff are welcome to contact the Racial & Cultural Equity Manager and Steering Committee via email here:

[DHHSRacialEquity@co.humboldt.ca.us](mailto:DHHSRacialEquity@co.humboldt.ca.us) ◀



From left, Health Education Specialist II Melissa Reed, Second District Supervisor Michelle Bushnell and Humboldt Domestic Violence Services Executive Director Emely Fuentes-Neilson.

## National Domestic Violence Awareness Month

► The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors recently recognized October as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month with a proclamation. ◀



# Public Health Director's Report

by Sofia Pereira

► Recently the Public Health Branch was awarded reaccreditation status by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) signifying that our team has demonstrated meeting national standards and measures in providing quality essential public health services, including:

- Assessing population health
- Investigating public health problems
- Informing and educating the public about public health issues
- Mobilizing community partners
- Creating policies and plans
- Enforcing public health laws and regulations
- Enabling equitable access
- Supporting and building a diverse and skilled workforce
- Maintaining a strong public health infrastructure
- Improving and evaluating services
- Advancing health equity across a diverse population.

This achievement is earned through a rigorous, multi-faceted, peer-reviewed assessment process, based on significant effort from our Public Health staff. Accreditation reflects our staff's commitment to our community and continuously improving their pro-

grams to serve our community.

Our staff show up to work every-day with a commitment to improving our community's health and wellbeing. This work is not easy—it requires high levels of training and compliance to ensure high quality delivery of services. Through accreditation, innovative programs like gun lock-box distribution and tobacco retail licensing were recognized as meeting national standards and measures. All aspects of our branch's work were evaluated, including the Nursing Division, Healthy Communities and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Divisions, the Division of Environmental Health, our Public Health Laboratory and several other programs such as Emergency Preparedness and Epidemiology. By achieving reaccreditation for another five years, PHAB acknowledges our branch's capacity to evolve, improve and advance the health of the people of Humboldt County. It's something our community can be very proud of.

A letter sent to Public Health from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Dr. Mandy K. Cohen and Director, of the CDC's National Center for State, Tribal, Local and Territorial Public Health Infrastructure and Workforce Leslie Ann Dauphin Ph.D. commended Public Health for its "commitment to continuous improvement."

"Participation in the national accreditation program is a meaning-

ful way to demonstrate accountability to national standards. Your reaccreditation lets your partners and community know that you have continued to strengthen and advance your performance since receiving initial accreditation."

We were first accredited in 2016, becoming the first rural county in California to receive this distinction. It is often challenging for small, rural counties to achieve accreditation due to a variety of factors, further amplifying the significance of our reaccreditation.

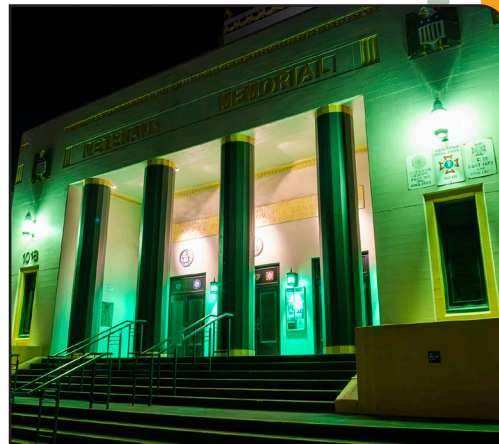
Another aspect of accreditation is demonstrating how we work collaboratively in the community. As required by PHAB, we work with community partners to complete a Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan and support the Live Well Humboldt initiative including the [Livewellhumboldt.org](http://Livewellhumboldt.org) data dashboard. Together these services help support equitable opportunities for health and wellness in the community. In 2025 we will be doing our next Community Health Assessment and providing updates on our current Community Health Improvement Plan's priority areas, so stay tuned!

A big thank you to our incredible staff in Public Health who work tirelessly to improve the health of our community. This recognition from both PHAB and the CDC are theirs to celebrate! ◀



Public Health staff showcase their Public Health Accreditation Board plaque, from left, Laboratory Director Pepper Stockton, Health Officer Dr. Candy Stockton, Epidemiologist Sebastian Garcia, Director of Nursing Megan Blanchard, Administrative Analyst II Jan Bramlett, Program Coordinator Marian Strong, Branch Director Sofia Pereira, Deputy Branch Director Lara Weiss, Director of Environmental Health Mario Kalson and Administrative Secretary Chris Ash.

## Thank you, Veterans!



► As part of Operation Green Light for Veterans, some government offices, including the Veterans Memorial Building of Eureka (above), illuminated their buildings green from Nov. 4 through 11, to raise awareness on issues veterans face and highlight resources available to veterans at the county, state and federal levels. To learn more about resources the local Veterans Service Office has available, visit [humboldt.gov/VSO](http://humboldt.gov/VSO). ◀

### North Coast Stand Down

► DHHS Veterans Service Office (VSO) staff participated in the North Coast Stand Down at Humboldt County Fairgrounds in late September. The annual event gathers government, non-profits, businesses and individual volunteers to help local veterans and their families by providing food, lodging and vital services in a supportive environment. The Stand Down brings multiple programs to one location to increase access to benefits while reconnecting veterans with the community. ◀



DHHS Veterans Service Officer Rena Maveety and Office Assistant Dawn Ewing consult with Persian Gulf War Veteran Roger Alan Massey.

### Veterans Day proclamation

► At its Nov. 5 meeting, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors honored veterans across the country for their services with a Veterans Day proclamation. ◀



Ewing answers questions during this year's North Coast Stand Down.

From left, Fourth District Supervisor Natalie Arroyo and Maveety.

## CWS Report by Cynthia Sutcliffe, Program Manager



► We (Child Welfare Services [CWS] and Juvenile Probation) are well into the second year of our three-year Comprehensive Prevention Plan. The 16 Family Resource Centers, the Social Service Departments at Bear River Band of Rohnerville Rancheria, Trinidad Rancheria and the Wiyot Tribe, as well and the Humboldt County Transition-Age Youth Collaboration compose the Community Pathway sites. During this past year, the Community Pathway sites have increased the number of families referred to programs and services that reduce family stress and the

potential discord that is can be associated with that stress.

A new “Motivational Interviewing” course began this semester at College of the Redwoods. The 15-week course offered to CWS staff, Probation staff and Community Pathway staff adds a tool to their client engagement toolbox. Motivational interviewing is a workforce development component of our three-year plan. The course will be offered again, starting in late January 2025.

Juvenile Probation has expanded their Parent Project training to three of the Community Pathways sites. This broadens the reach of Parent Project to more rural areas of our county. Parent Project teaches parents of teenagers, effective strategies to increase cooperation, school

participation and social responsibility.

Work is almost complete on the new Linkages 2.0 training. Classes will be a mix of Welfare-to-Work, CalWORKs and CWS staff. Linkages 2.0 is one of the components in the tertiary prevention plan of our three-year plan, for families involved in CWS.

To learn more about Family First, you can attend the three trainings offered through the Northern Region Training Academy. The California Family First Prevention Services (FFPS) learning series consists of the FFPS Overview, Shifting Mindset and Implicit Bias and Disproportionality.

[More about FFPS is available at cdss.ca.gov.](https://cdss.ca.gov)

[View our three-year plan at caltrin.org.](https://caltrin.org) ◀

**At least 1 in 10 Americans aged 60 and older have experienced some form of elder abuse.**

**Elder abuse comes in different forms:**



- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Abandonment
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Financial abuse
- Self-neglect.



**If you are worried that you or someone you know is experiencing elder abuse,**



**call the Humboldt County Adult Protective Services 24/7 reporting hotline at 707-476-2100.**

**Elder Abuse Reporting Hotline available 24/7**

► If you suspect that you or someone you know is the victim of elder abuse, call the Humboldt County Adult Protective Services 24/7 reporting hotline at 707-476-2100. ◀



Humboldt County  
Department of  
Health & Human  
Services

## Help Wanted

► DHHS is currently recruiting qualified applicants for a variety of positions. For a list of job opportunities, visit [humboldt.gov/jobs](https://humboldt.gov/jobs) and click Job Opportunities, or contact Employee Services at 707-441-5510. ◀

