Commitment • Collaboration • Compassion

BE WELL

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JOIN US AT OUR 2024 COMMUNITY HEALTH FAIR!

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HHSA participates in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) Regional Partnership’s Workforce Education and Training Program that is supported by County Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funds with matching funds from the Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI). The California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) provides fiscal and administrative services to counties to support these strategies. This collaboration is one example of how HHSA is taking action to meet Goal 5 in our 2024-2026 Strategic Plan, to ‘Strengthen Organizational and Workforce Resilience to Support the Delivery of Quality Services.’

Through this collaboration, in Fiscal Year 23-24, 18 behavioral health clinicians in Napa County were supported with $180,000 in student loan repayments, and two $5,000 stipends were administered to graduate students to support their mental health studies.

The Fiscal Year 24-25 application cycle was recently opened for undergraduate scholarships and graduate student stipends, and currently, CalMHSA is screening 21 applicants for the 2024-25 Loan Repayment Program. The launch of the application cycle for Fiscal Year 24-25, brings the continued investment in accessible, effective mental health services to help build a robust behavioral health workforce that will be ready to meet the community's needs.

In addition to these programs, HHSA recognizes the unique insights individuals with personal mental health experiences bring to the profession. Felix Bedolla, MHSA Project Manager for HHSA’s Behavioral Health Division, emphasizes the effectiveness of caregivers with lived experience, noting that "some of the best healers have been there themselves." Therefore, in alignment with HHSA Strategic Plan goals to retain and increase staffing that is representative of the community we serve, HHSA continues to explore and prioritize expansion of peer support services.

For more information about these programs, please contact Felix Bedolla at 707-299-1759 or by email at Felix.Bedolla@countyofnapa.org.
Parents use lived experiences to help others navigate the child welfare system.

When parents become involved with child welfare services, they often have feelings of frustration and anger regarding the process. They often feel alone and don't trust their social workers due to past experiences or unfamiliarity with the system.

The Parent Partners program by HHSA Child Welfare Services (CWS) is about meaningful family engagement. This helps build trust between our social workers and the families that they serve. The program connects parents with active CWS cases to parents who have been in their shoes to offer support. The program teaches parents how to advocate for themselves. It also helps clarify complex child welfare terms and steps, making it easier for parents to participate in their cases and communicate their needs.

Recently, Julie Gibson and Irina Perez, two of our Parent Partners, chatted about their work helping families in Napa. Julie shared her personal experience with CWS, being separated and reuniting with her children. Irina shared how struggles with substance abuse and legal issues inspired her to become a bilingual Parent Partner.

What motivated you to become a parent partner, and how has this journey been for you so far?

Julie: “Becoming a parent partner is personal for me. My own kids were taken away when I was just 19, and then later, my daughter was taken, and I was able to get her back. It was tough, and I always think, if only I’d had someone to show me the ropes back then. That’s what I’m here for now. Just recently, my sons reached out to me after years, and it’s amazing. One’s a firefighter, doing great. It’s all about rebuilding those bridges, and that’s exactly what I want to help others do. I want to be the support I never had.”
Irina: “When CWS got involved, my life changed. I didn’t make it easy for them, fighting back at every turn, but when I finally committed to recovery, I grabbed every bit of help they offered me. It really turned things around for me—I got my daughter back. The way I got this job was something else; just after sharing my gratitude at the HHSA - ADS graduation, they offered me a chance to be a parent partner. Now, here I am, six years clean, guiding parents down a path I once walked. Doing this work that means so much.”

How do you approach building trust with families navigating the child welfare system?

Irina: “Building trust with parents is about meeting them where they are. I tell them, “Look, I was just like you, angry and not ready to trust. I get it.” It’s about speaking to their fears and understanding that they don’t trust us because we represent a system alien to them—a system they see as having more power over their lives. But I’m here to hold their hand through this process because I’ve been there, I’ve felt that distrust, and I know what it’s like. It’s like putting together a puzzle with them, piece by piece until they can see the whole picture. And in that process, we’re helping parents to understand and navigate their situation with confidence.”

In your experience, what’s the most significant misunderstanding people have child welfare services, and how do you help change that perspective?

Julie: The biggest misconception is that child welfare services are out to separate families. But this isn’t true. They come to your door because something happened that needs addressing, not out of a desire to take kids away for no reason.

Irina: To change people’s minds, I show them that we’re not the enemy. Parents often think child welfare services are the bad guys. But we’re here because something went wrong, and the parents don’t even realize there’s a problem. I help them see it’s not about social workers wanting to break up families; it’s about keeping kids safe. I’ve been through it myself—I became a better person, parent, and friend because they stepped in. I encourage parents to see this as an opportunity to learn and improve, just like I did, especially those working on their recovery.

In alignment with our 2024-2026 HHSA Strategic Plan Goal 1 to ‘Increase Accessibility and Equitable Outcomes,’ HHSA - CWS is committed to helping families overcome barriers to reunite with their children. Our Parent Partner Program plays an important role by providing education and support, resulting in fewer placement moves for foster children and lower rates of re-entry into care.

A big thank you to Irina and Julie for sharing their experiences. If you, or someone you know, are currently working with HHSA Child Welfare Services and have an interest in Parent Partner support, please let your social worker know or call 707-253-4744.
PROTECTING WHAT’S LEFT BEHIND

THE ROLE OF NAPA’S PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR

The Public Administrator (PA) within the Comprehensive Services for Older Adults (CSOA) division plays a vital role within the Napa community. When someone passes without a will or clear instructions for their assets - including property, finances, and personal items - the Public Administrator makes sure the Estate is protected and managed correctly.

Take, for example, when an older adult passes away with no family to step in. A judge is able to grant the PA the authority to manage their affairs and make ethical decisions on how to handle the remaining assets. The PA office takes inventory of remaining assets, settles debts, and locates heirs to inherit the remainder of the Estate. The Public Administrator also helps make appropriate funeral and burial arrangements. By respecting the deceased's wishes and following the Probate Code, our PA treats their legacy with dignity.

Last year alone, our office was responsible for 55 active Estate cases, underscoring the scope of our work in safeguarding the assets and legacies of the deceased. Among these cases, we successfully managed the sale of 7 properties. In alignment with Goal 2 of our 2024 - 2026 HHSA Strategic Plan to ‘Strive for Excellence in Services and Outcomes,’ the Public Administrator's office staff works daily with the families of decedents, community partners, and contracted agencies to ensure that decedent estates in Napa County are not subject to loss, waste, or theft.

For more information on the Public Administrator, please visit Public Administrator | Napa County, CA (countyofnapa.org)
In an effort to stay connected with Community Partners, HHSA’s Self Sufficiency Services Division (SSSD) began the new year by hosting a presentation for local Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). The event titled “What’s Happening in Public Assistance?” received a positive response, with 30 organizations and over 100 attendees participating in the presentations.

SSSD staff addressed various topics, starting with an overview of Public Assistance programs, followed by updates to the Medi-Cal program, which included Expanded Medi-Cal and Medi-Cal Renewals. Maximus, a service provider that helps local government deliver health and human service programs, contributed to the presentation by showcasing their services, which included information about how they support Medi-Cal beneficiaries who are enrolling in managed care plans. The presentation also included EBT safety tips to prevent skimming, detailed instructions on how customers can apply for benefits, like BenefitsCal, and guidance on subscribing to SSSD News Flashes. Additionally, attendees had access to a resource table filled with informational flyers designed for CBOs to distribute.

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with attendees noting the quality of the presentation and its usefulness. Continuing our efforts beyond this successful event, HHSA plans to develop more opportunities for information sharing and collaboration that aligns with the interests expressed by our partners and the 2024-2026 HHSA Strategic Plan Goal 3 to ‘Collaborate with Community Partners to Maximize our Reach and Collective Impact to Enhance Community Health and Well-Being.’
According to the World Health Organization, immunizations prevent 3.5-5 million deaths each year. Vaccines work by teaching the body's immune system to recognize and defend against harmful viruses and bacteria before being infected. They can decrease the negative effects of an infection and even prevent an infection from starting after an exposure. This is how the HPV vaccine prevents cancer and is at the center of the newly passed Cancer Prevention Act that expands insurance coverage and ensures all children are fully vaccinated against HPV before reaching adulthood.

In alignment with the 2024-2026 HHSA Strategic Plan Goal 1 to ‘Increase Accessibility and Equitable Outcomes,’ Napa County’s Health & Human Services Agency- Public Health Division supports this effort by offering all recommended and school-required vaccines to Children 0-18 years old under the Vaccines For Children (VFC) program. Through our Immunization Program, we work with schools to provide on-site clinics, ensuring middle-schoolers are up to date with their 7th grade vaccine requirements.

In 2023, the Immunization Program team also provided annual flu clinics throughout Napa County, from American Canyon to Calistoga to all persons six months and older. The Vaccination team was present at 59 outreach events throughout the county offering various vaccines, including that for Flu, Covid, and Tdap, and continues to provide immunizations to eligible home-bound individuals.

To schedule a vaccination or other service, or see where we will be offering the next community vaccination clinic, check out our website at Immunizations | Napa County, CA (countyofnapa.org).
Join HHSA and our community partners for a day dedicated to "Building Happy and Healthy Communities." This year, we’re excited to focus on health, wellness, and emergency preparedness.

This event will include games and prizes, health screenings, vaccines, and emergency preparedness resources. It’s a fantastic chance for you to learn more about local efforts to improve health outcomes and take steps toward better personal and community well-being.