



HHSA NEWS

A Message from Karen Larsen



HHSA Director, Karen Larsen, with Dr. Thomas Insel, Staff from HHSA Homeless Services, and the City of West Sacramento

The trees are starting to change as an indication of the Fall season ahead and our children are going back to school. As I get older, the summers seem to get shorter and the years seem to fly by.

The Focus Article this month is about all of you. When we first integrated as an Agency in 2015, we focused much of our efforts on integrating our services for the benefit of the people we serve, and we realized a little belatedly that we needed to also focus on adequately supporting our employees through the transition. We quickly readjusted and began intentionally working to ensure that all of our employees felt supported, engaged, and appreciated. Our efforts have ranged from our Annual Barbecue, to implementing Strengths Finder and Appreciation Languages trainings on the Agency-wide scale, to more individualized approaches such as personal notes, acknowledgements, and other acts of kindness. In preparation for this article, Branch Directors were asked to share all that they have done for employee engagement and I was so overwhelmed with all that

they reported (read the focus article on page two for details).

Overall, when looking at all of our engagement efforts, both big and small, it's clear that we are aiming for improved retention and engagement... and our efforts are working! Over the past few years, the results of our Employee Engagement surveys have improved by over 20% in almost every metric. As with everything, we still have work to do and we will continue to focus on our employees because we value each of you and a healthy, happy workforce results in improved outcomes for the people we serve.

August was relatively calm for a lot of our Branches as many people were out on summer vacations and our Board of Supervisors was on recess. However, our Administrative Branch was the exception. The fiscal teams were faced with closing Fiscal Year 2018-19 and preparing the adopted budget for Fiscal Year 2019-20, the contracts team had the rush of contract renewals for the new fiscal year with a smaller team than optimal, human resources was faced with dozens of new position requisitions, and support services and information technology were finalizing the benefits center move and deploying new computers throughout the Agency. Needless to say, the Administrative Branch has been very busy!

The HHSA Executive Team and the Board of Supervisors are working together to develop new Strategic Plans for our Agency and for the County that inform and complement one another. HHSA has provided several Workshop presentations for Board Members over the past several months on topics of interest toward this end. This month, Ian Evans (Adult & Aging Clinical Manager) and Karleen Jakowski (Child, Youth & Family Deputy Director) participated in a Safe Communities workshop with our Board, discussing the criminal justice continuum and how we can intervene to avoid disproportionate involvement for people struggling with behavioral health conditions and juveniles who have adverse childhood experiences and trauma. But these workshops are just one of the many ways that the HHSA Executive Team and the Board are intentionally seeking and incorporating feedback from our community, stakeholders, and staff to inform the new Strategic Plans. We are also using data to inform our strategies and to target our outcomes. I am excited about the new Strategic Plans and the steps we are taking to build them as we have improved our development process and we have more data available than ever before.

Finally, we were honored to host Dr. Tom Insel for a visit this month. [Dr. Insel](#) was appointed by Governor Newsom as the "Mental Health Czar" for the State. He is several counties in California to learn about how we provide services. Dr. Insel is a neuroscientist and psychiatrist who led the National Institute for Mental Health for over a decade and founded Mindstrong Health. He was able to visit the Davis and West Sacramento sites and learned about several of our programs and services.

In gratitude,

Karen Larsen



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EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Focus

Since the integration of our Agency in 2015, Employee Engagement has become an increasingly important priority for us. If you are familiar with the [rule of 150](#), then you are likely well aware of the struggles we face as an Agency with over 600 employees. For those who are unfamiliar, the Rule of 150 was coined by British Anthropologist, Robin Dunbar, and is defined as the “suggested cognitive limit to the number of people with whom one can maintain stable social relationships and thus numbers larger than this

generally require more restrictive rules, laws, and enforced norms to maintain a stable, cohesive group”. With an Agency as large as HHSA, it can be challenging to create personal connections and engage employees on a one-on-one and regular basis. We have to work extra hard on building and maintain cohesion between Branches. This month we wanted to take a deeper look at all the employee engagements efforts we have been implementing, including Countywide, within HHSA, and at the Branch level.

Countywide Efforts

The [Countywide YES Team](#) conducted an employee engagement survey in 2016 and again in 2018. As a whole, our Agency has improved in all the measures below which are designated as the drivers of public sector employment. In addition to the survey, the YES Team has six employee engagement objective areas including: training, mentoring, workplace wellness, professional development, core competencies, and performance evaluations. [Click here](#) to learn more about each objective and the strategies in those categories.

HHSA Efforts

To help us improve and grow our employee engagement initiatives we have focused on a several priority areas, and have highlighted examples of each below.

- **Trainings:** Strengths Finder, Appreciation language, New Employee Orientation (Both Ongoing and Modified NEO), and Operational Excellence (OpEx) Classes.
- **Policies & Procedures:** Alternative Work Schedule, Continuing Education Leave Policy.
- **Wellness:** Wellness Warrior Challenges, Mindful Movement Monday's, Wellness Updates in New Employee Orientation, Wellness Section of Monthly HHSA Newsletter.
- **Agency Culture and Practices:** Performance Evaluation timeliness, Exit Interviews, HHSA Employee Engagement Team (HEARS), BRAVO, and Performance Management Steering Committee (PMSC).

Branch Efforts

At the Branch level, employee engagement can be more focused on individual job function and the priorities of the Branch. Our Branch Directors, Managers and Supervisors are making strides to attend to staff needs and provide individualized opportunities for staff engagement. Here are some examples of what's going on within our Branches:

Administration::

- All staff meetings that include team building activities utilizing Strengths Finder and Appreciation Languages.
- "Ask Rebecca", allowing employees to submit questions directly to the Assistant Director.
- Welcome Meetings and Annual Check Ins with Assistant Director for all Administration employees
- Acknowledgment of successes, through thoughtful actions such as providing cookies for staff at the beginning of the new fiscal year.
- Regular networking opportunities for all staff (including free coffee!)

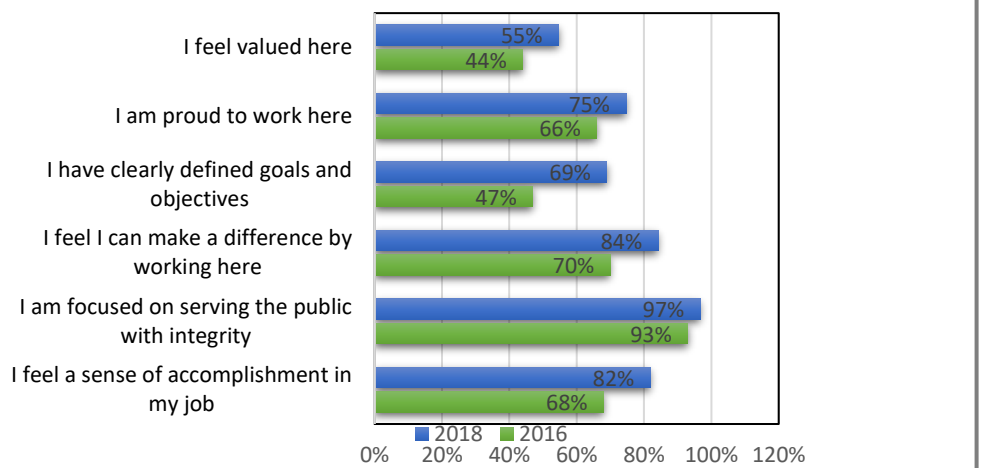
Adult and Aging:

- Goodies! :-)
- Respecting each other's time – closing the computer and leaving phones alone so staff know they have their Supervisor's attention.
- Frequent email updates as well as verbal/in-person communication and team meetings combining information, rapport building and educational events.
- Addressing needed improvements with an eye to tailoring delivery with staff based on their strengths and appreciation language.
- Telecommuting in IHSS allows less time going to/from the office just to complete documentation.

Child, Youth & Family

- New Hire Focus Groups to build in an open feedback loop to management about what is working/not working/needs to change
- CYF Branch Newsletter and Brown Bags with Leadership to Increase Communication
- Increased contracted services for supervised visitation
- Weekly Training for CWS Staff-based on feedback from new staff
- CWS staff invited to participate in planning for County Self-Assessment and Peer Quality Case Review
- Children's Services Coordinators to assist with referrals and assessments for all children entering out of home care

Employee Engagement Results



Community Health:

- Utilizing live polling software during all staff meetings to get real time feedback from staff and to answer any questions and concerns staff may be facing.
- In June, WIC leadership sponsored a WIC staff picnic at Bridgeway Island Park in West Sac to celebrate the staff.
- Staff reports from our Branch Leadership Team meetings in order to keep all staff up to date on conversations at the leadership level.
- Supervisors/Managers have begun conducting stay interviews as part of their regular staff check-ins
- Exit interviews to staff who have decided to leave the Branch for other positions .

Service Centers:

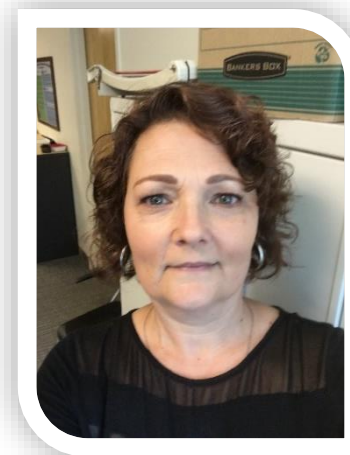
- Supervisors and Managers have also had a DISC assessment and worked through the Work of Leaders curriculum. This assessment tells leaders key characteristics about who they are as a leader, areas they shine and areas to pay attention to.
- Supervisors and Managers have undergone over 20 monthly courses from UC Davis Extension Management and Supervisory Development program working towards providing better communication, coaching and performance management with all of our teams.
- "Top Banana Award" every month an employee or employees who really go above and beyond are recognized.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR SPOTLIGHT: ADULT & AGING

Meet our new Adult and Aging Deputy Branch Director, Mila Green!

Manager, Mila Green has been promoted to Adult & Aging Branch Deputy Director. Effective July 8th, 2019. Mila began with HHSA 9 months ago as Manager over Access and Crisis Services. She brought a wealth of experience in private healthcare management teams overseeing statewide Mental Health contracts, and working in various levels of government. Drawing on her Certification in Healthcare Quality, Mila is a champion for both continuous quality improvement and data-driven service delivery and decision-making. Clinically she has served youth, TAY, adults, older adults and families in three different countries, across clinic, school-based, inpatient, skilled nursing and non-profit settings.

In her new role, Mila will oversee alignment of Performance Management (performance measures and quality improvement) across all Mental Health contracts, Strategic Planning within the Mental Health Programs, alignment between Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Program and MHSA Planning functions, as well as assuring a continuing strong development of our Mental Health Crisis Response system, and overall fiscal sustainability of our Mental Health system of care.



- **How long has Mila worked for Yolo HHSA?** 1 year
- **Top 5 Strengths:** Developer, Input, Consistency, Empathy, and Learner
- **What brings Mila joy?** Caring for rescued animals

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY AT HHSA

Food Distribution in Winters

The last food distribution on school campuses through the food bank stopped about 7 months ago in Winters. The Service Centers Branch worked as a team to remedy the situation by distributing food from the Winter's Office. In addition to providing food, the office is staying open late and giving residents information on our programs, with a focus on CalFresh for those who are food insecure. In the month of July, we were able to get food to 297 Winters Households and over 1000 individuals. We are super proud of the team and the impact they are making in Winters!



Forensic Grants

Yolo County recently received three new grants, totaling \$2.73 million, focusing on expanding opportunities for diversion from the criminal justice system. These three grants will support the use of restorative justice in the juvenile justice system, provide additional diversion opportunities for the mentally ill, and assist individuals experiencing homelessness who are currently enrolled in one of Yolo County's diversion programs. These grant proposals were developed through a collaborative effort by the Yolo County Criminal Justice Grant Writing Team.

SB173 Cal Fresh for Students

The Governor signed SB 173 (Dodd) into law this month. This legislation, sponsored by Yolo County, seeks to reduce food insecurity on college campuses by requiring the creation of a standardized form by which colleges and universities will verify a student's participation in state or federal work study. In turn, this standardized form will assist county welfare agencies in determining if a student qualifies for a CalFresh eligibility exemption.

September is Farm to Fork Month

The Sacramento region is known as the Farm to Fork capital of the country and September is Farm to Fork month! To celebrate, the Hanna and Herbert Bauer Memorial Community Garden and the CalFresh Healthy Living Program is hosting three free gardening classes throughout the month that focus on food preservation. These classes offer Yolo County residents an opportunity to enhance their ability to consume fresh, local produce by gaining skills and knowledge that make home gardening and food preserving fun and easy. These classes will be taught by UC Master Food Preservers and Master Gardeners of Yolo and Solano Counties. No gardening experience is necessary to participate and all are welcome to attend.

Child Welfare: County Self-Assessment

In the spirit of Continuous Quality Improvement, the Child, Youth & Family Branch is planning for our County Self-Assessment (CSA). The CSA is an in-depth review of our Child Welfare System and includes an analysis and review of our data, outcomes for safety, permanency and wellbeing, as well as an assessment of stakeholder, client and staff feedback. Based on the assessment and analysis, our team will be developing a System Improvement Plan (SIP) that will include strategies to improve outcomes and strengthen service delivery. The theme selected by our planning team is Blazing the Trail, to capture the innovative spirit of Yolo County and to continue efforts initiated by the Child Welfare Assessment in strengthening our service delivery. Conducting a quality CSA is a significant undertaking that includes a week long Peer Quality Case Review, stakeholder meetings, surveys and focus groups along with a robust analysis of our data. Our Continuous Quality Improvement Team is leading this effort and will be conducting focus groups in the Fall to gather feedback and engage our community. More details to come!

HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

Employee Engagement: Training & Development

The results from the 2018 Employee Engagement survey revealed an overwhelming request for training and development. In response to this request, HHSA Human Resources developed the following training series:



We were pleased to see so many of you attend the Becoming Promotable sessions. The next round will incorporate more activities and group interaction as we dive deeper into skills and career development.

HHSA is committed to assisting employees and leaders reach their career goals and will continue to find innovative ways to support and encourage growth. Stay tuned for future training opportunities near you...

All Staff	Leadership
Becoming Promotable (3/20/19 & 3/22/19)	Progressive Discipline (5/15/19 & 5/16/19)
	Difficult Conversations (7/26/19)
Effective Communication (10/4/19)	Completing Effective Evaluations (8/22/19)
	Introduction to ADA (9/27/19)

WELLNESS TIP OF THE MONTH: HEALTHY SNACKING

Don't get "hangry" – choose healthy snacks for more energy and a better outlook on your day

September 12, 2019 is officially "Healthy Snack Day" statewide, with thanks to the CalFresh Healthy Living program! Bringing healthy snacks into the spotlight is important because the "how" and the "what" we snack on can have a big impact on our energy, mood, and health goals.

Ever been "hangry"? You know, that feeling of irritation and frustration that is caused from being really hungry because it's well past your time to eat? It's no fun, and can definitely have repercussions on those around you as well as your food choices when you do get to eat (think gorging at your next meal to compensate for your hunger).

Snacking is one way to curb the "hangry" moments in your life, but it too can either help or hinder your overall wellbeing depending upon what you choose. Snacks are like "mini-meals" eaten between regular meals to help sustain your energy. A snack should be smaller than a meal (example: between 150-300 kcal/snack), and include components to help keep your energy steady. Here are a few tips on making healthy choices with your snacks:

- Quality of calories counts: A good snack has more than just some empty calories to tie you over. It should also include some protein and/or fat, and possibly some fiber too.
- Keeping healthy snacks on hand at work makes it easier to resist reaching for the candy bowl at your neighbor's cubicle or running out on break for fast food.
- If getting your fruits and veggies into your diet is challenging at meals, make those items a cornerstone of your snack. Examples include: carrots and hummus, apple slices with a tablespoon of peanut butter, cherry tomatoes and cucumber with a cheese stick.
- Snacks might take some preparation, especially if you're trying to make them healthy. In part of your meal prep, consider portioning out snacks for the day or week. Ideas for this include portions of trail mix, cut fruit, mixed veggies for dipping, hardboiled eggs, whole grain crackers with some cheese.
- Avoid the "handful" pitfall. If you keep bags of snacks at your desk, avoid opening the bag and taking a handful or two (or three...). Pour some out onto a napkin or bowl to keep the portion in check.
- Determine what kind of snacker you are. Do you like crunchy or chewy things? Sweet or salty? Creamy? Colorful? Once you know, find healthy snacks that fit your interests so that you're not tempted by the less healthy alternatives.
- Snacks can be small portions of a meal. Got leftovers? Portion them out into half servings for a delicious snacks later on.
- Have a snack potluck with your co-workers or work team. This can be a fun way for everyone to share their healthy snacks with other and to get idea for new snacks you hadn't thought of trying.
- Don't let yourself get too hungry before you grab a snack. This can lead to over-eating, making less healthy choices, and that unpleasant 'hangry' feeling mentioned earlier.

For more ideas about healthy snacks, please visit: [Healthy Snack Day](#) or [Choose My Plate](#).

In Good Health-

The Community Health Branch- Health Promotion Unit

PERFORMANCE & PROCESS MANAGEMENT HIGHLIGHT

HHSa Policies and Procedures: Priorities and Upcoming Projects

The HHSa Performance and Process Management (PPM) Program in the Administration Branch has been working to advance our strategic plan goal of strengthened integration by developing new policies and procedures for our Agency, with a specific focus on policies that were identified by staff as top priorities for the entire Agency.

Starting last fall, the PPM team held interviews with Executive Leadership, conducted a dot-voting prioritization process with HHSa Managers, and polled every HHSa employee to find out which policies you wanted to focus on in the next few years. We compiled all that feedback and are kicking off projects in each of the areas that were identified as high priority.

Yolo County Health and Human Services Agency
2018-2019 Strategic Plan Goals

GOAL 3: Strengthen Integration

- Provide training and development opportunities for Agency employees.
- Increase employee retention.
- **Develop consistent agency wide policies and procedures.**
- Improve the Agency's preparedness to respond to emergencies that require the provision of mass care, public health and/or medical services.



We have already had some major successes developing these priority policies. For example, we rolled out the new alternative work schedules policy effective August 1st and adopted a financial approval authority process for our fiscal staff. We have also completed a funding applications policy, which will be coming out soon. You can look forward to improved processes for Position Requests, Signature Authority, IT Helpdesk Requests, Active Contract Management, and much more!

All of this has been made possible by the feedback, support, and expertise that everyone across our Agency has provided to the PPM team.