



**COUNTY *of* VENTURA**

County Executive Office  
Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Fiscal Year 2022-23 Report



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Message from the Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion | 2  |
| Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.....             | 3  |
| DEI Youth Equity Initiative.....                         | 4  |
| DEI Learning & Training Opportunities.....               | 5  |
| Diversity Calendar Impact.....                           | 6  |
| Honoring Our Community.....                              | 7  |
| Diversity Calendar & Events / Social Media Efforts ..... | 8  |
| Staff Spotlights.....                                    | 9  |
| Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Groups.....              | 11 |
| Healthcare Equity Advisory Council.....                  | 12 |
| Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council.....             | 13 |
| Public Safety Racial Equity Advisory Group.....          | 15 |
| County Agency DEI Efforts.....                           | 17 |
| Community Partnerships & Connections.....                | 25 |
| Moving Forward in 2023-2024.....                         | 26 |

## MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) is part of ever-evolving efforts throughout United States history to increase rights and access for groups of people who have traditionally been excluded or marginalized. This work has been visible through landmark legislation and social movements that have helped to increase equality and create equity for those not historically centered in our laws, such as People of Color, women, people with disabilities, older adults, and people who are LGBTQ+.

Navigating the loss of DEI Champion, Supervisor Carmen Ramirez, the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, aimed to build upon her legacy of advocacy for underserved communities through collaborative leadership and community engagement. The Office of DEI in the County Executive Office grew from three to five staff positions. Alongside the DEI Council, DEI Leadership Accountability Team, and countless County employees leading this work, we continued to normalize conversations around racial and social inequities.

The Office of DEI has accomplished much in the past year:

- Built deeper connections with County agencies and provided consulting on DEI-related topics and projects across the County
- Secured an equity consultant, Equity Praxis Group, to conduct a three-phase equity assessment and action plan project over the next 18 months
- Received preliminary approval by the Board of Supervisors for funding to partner with Public Health on a racial equity map and dashboard project for the County of Ventura
- Created the Youth Equity Initiative (YEI) in partnership with the Ventura County Probation Agency adding two dedicated positions to the CEO's DEI team
- Represented the County at community cultural events
- Developed and delivered DEI related trainings on various topics
- Provided leadership, facilitation, and staff support to several cross-sector groups, including the DEI Council, the County's Public Safety Racial Equity Advisory Group, and the Healthcare Equity Advisory Council
- Promoted the Diversity Calendar, honoring and celebrating various cultures, races, ethnicities, and backgrounds of traditionally underrepresented communities
- Supported the Board of Supervisors in formally recognizing many Diversity Calendar events

We continue to be committed to the long-term work towards healing racial and social disparities. The following report highlights DEI work that is happening throughout our County's many agencies and demonstrates our County's commitment to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging in our workplace and as we serve our community.

Sincerely,

Kate English  
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager

## OFFICE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Office, within the County Executive Office, serves to advance DEI goals across the County's agencies through collaboration, training, advising on policy, and promoting an inclusive workplace.

What does the Office of DEI do?

- Works to resolve issues rooted in bias and discrimination through research, data analysis, education, and partnerships
- Advances racial and social equity in County operations
- Convenes and provides logistical support for several cross-sector collaborative groups
- Provides support to agency DEI teams across County agencies
- Creates and organizes DEI related trainings and events for County employees
- Provides guidance and support to ensure the long-term sustainability of DEI goals
- Supports the commitments in the Board of Supervisors resolution declaring racism a public health crisis in Ventura County
- Partners internally and externally to promote equity and inclusion in Ventura County
- Honors the diversity of identities and cultures of communities throughout the county



Kate English

### **Kate English, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Manager (they/she)**

Kate has 19 years of experience in community leadership working for racial and social justice in Ventura County. Kate works to bring voices that are not traditionally centered into meaningful decision and policy-making processes. She has advocated for Ventura County youth, the LGBTQ+ community, and farmworkers. Her new role as DEI Manager for Youth Equity aligns with her vocational calling to work alongside youth to improve systems, policies and programs that impact their lives. Kate has deep connections with various communities and community-based organizations throughout Ventura County.

Kate is a graduate of Ventura College and CSU Channel Islands.



Steven T. Auclair

### **Steven T. Auclair, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Coordinator (he/him)**

Steven is active throughout Ventura County, serving as the Vice-Chair of the Citizens Advisory Commission for the City of Port Hueneme and many local community organizations. Before joining the DEI team in 2021, Steven worked in DEI-related areas across the public, private, and non-profit sectors, most recently working with the State Assembly and in higher education. Steven has been recognized for his work in staff development, organizational culture reform, and leadership in diverse communities.

Steven is a graduate of Allan Hancock College, Westmont College, and CSU Channel Islands.



Lucas Saucedo

### **Lucas Saucedo, DEI Program Assistant for Youth Equity (he/him)**

In 2023, Lucas joined the DEI Office with a focus on supporting the new Youth Equity initiative. Before joining the DEI team in 2023, Lucas worked in municipal government and higher education, most recently working with California Lutheran University and Pepperdine University. Lucas has worked to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion through policy change, programs, and advocacy.

Lucas is a proud graduate of California Lutheran University.

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION YOUTH EQUITY INITIATIVE



In March 2023, the County Executive Office in partnership with the Ventura County Probation Agency (VCPA), launched the new DEI Youth Equity Initiative with two fixed-term staff positions - DEI Manager for Youth Equity, Kate English, and Youth Equity Coordinator, Lucas Saucedo.

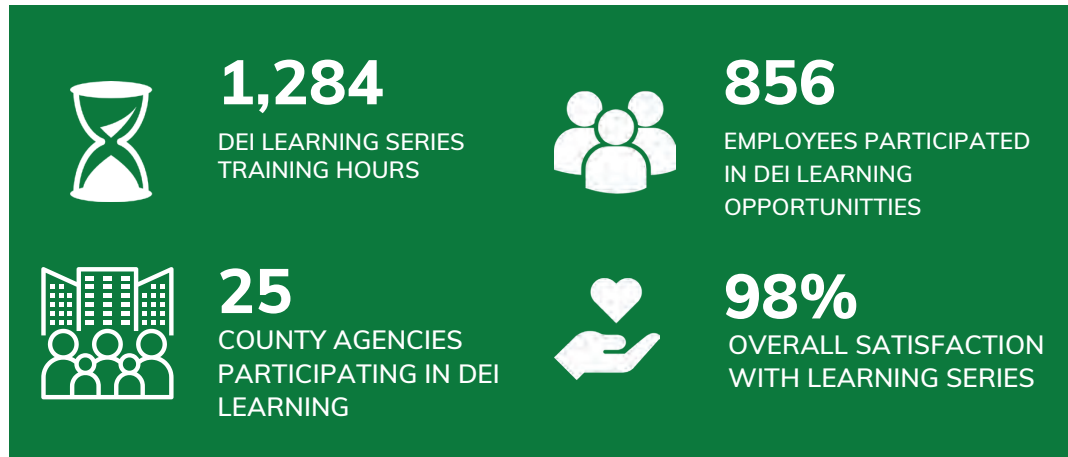
In the coming years, the Youth Equity Initiative will work in three key areas to explore the root causes of disparities for youth and to advance youth equity:

- Amplifying Youth Voices
  - Partnering with youth and youth organizations on annual Ventura County Youth Forums
  - Bridging local Youth Advisory Councils to systems that impact youth
  - Creating opportunities for youth perspectives to be incorporated into policy-making
- Influencing Policy & Practice
  - Convening and facilitating the Youth Equity and Success (YES) Collaborative
  - Participating in cross-sector collaboratives aimed at youth wellness and equity
  - Gathering and analyzing local data on disparities for youth and helping to establish meaningful benchmarks to measure progress over time
  - Researching best practices, successful models and evidence-based programs in other jurisdictions to introduce to policymakers and organizations in Ventura County
- Capacity Building
  - Providing DEI trainings for youth-serving organizations and agencies
  - Connecting youth-serving organizations to resources and funding opportunities
  - Consulting with youth-serving organizations in Ventura County on equity issues
  - Bridging youth-serving organizations and County agencies for partnership opportunities

An overarching goal of the Youth Equity Initiative is to activate and include youth voices into the systems that impact them with the eventual hope to center this work entirely in the community.

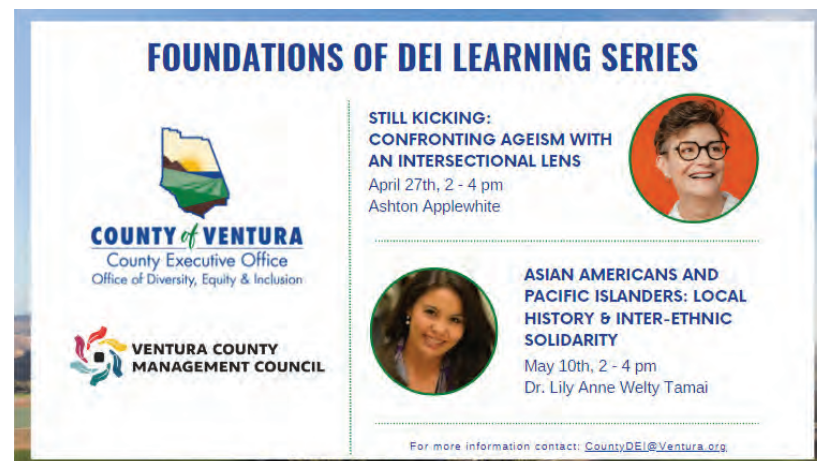


## DEI LEARNING & TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



During the 2022-2023 year, the Office of DEI offered several learning opportunities:

- Hosted four fellows from Cal Lutheran University's ASCENSO Hispanic Fellowship program who worked to promote awareness of social justice issues impacting Hispanic communities in Ventura County
- In partnership with the Management Council, offered the second virtual learning series of Foundations of DEI
- In partnership with the DEI Council, we offered three DEI Staff Discussion Panels for Asian American & Pacific Islander Month, Latino Heritage Month, and National Disability Employment Awareness Month
- 97% of training series attendees said that the trainings expanded their understanding, with 96% saying they were likely to sign up for future trainings
- Introduction to DEI trainings for all cohorts of the Leadership Excellence and Action Program (LEAP), as well as all County intern cohorts
- Created and delivered LGBTQ+ Cultural Responsiveness training for Ventura County Medical Center Grand Rounds, Santa Paula West Medical Clinic, and the Health Care Agency's anti-racism conference
- Created multiple mini-trainings for the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council on topics such as Cultural Humility, Equality & Equity, Inclusive Language, and Accessibility



## DIVERSITY CALENDAR IMPACT



The DEI Calendar celebrates various identities, races, ethnicities, cultures, and backgrounds of traditionally underserved communities. The calendar serves as a road map for the DEI Council and various County agencies to increase visibility of our diverse workforce and community. It is reviewed, updated and adopted annually by the DEI Council each year selecting from a multitude of national and local events to thoughtfully honor communities reflected in our County.

The DEI Office recognized over 32 significant DEI-related calendar events in 2022-2023 through partnerships with the DEI Council, the CEO Public Information Office, and other county agencies. Recognitions of DEI calendar events included social media, events, staff spotlights, and event sponsorships. We celebrated at a wide variety of community events.

### Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Calendar 2022-23

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council, through the DEI Calendar, honors and celebrates various identities, races/ethnicities, cultures and backgrounds of traditionally marginalized/underserved communities throughout the year.

| July   | August  | September  |
|--|---|--|
| Disability Independence Day (ADA Passage)  | Ventura County LGBTQ+ Pride<br>Women's Equality Day (Women gain the right to vote)        | <b>Latino Heritage Month</b><br>Guide Dog Month  |
| October  | November  | December   |
| <b>National Disability Employment Awareness Month</b><br>Indigenous People's Day   | <b>Native American Heritage Month</b><br>Día de Muertos<br>Transgender Day of Remembrance | World AIDS Day   |
| January  | February  | March  |
| <b>Martin Luther King Jr. Day</b><br>Lunar New Year<br>Ed Roberts Day<br>International Day in Memory of Victims of the Holocaust | <b>Black History Month</b><br>Rosa Parks Day  | <b>Women's History Month</b><br>Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month<br>International Women's Day<br>Cesar Chavez Day<br>Transgender Day of Visibility |
| April  | May   | June   |
| Autism Awareness Month<br>Dolores Huerta Day<br>Children's Day (Día del Niño)  | <b>Asian American Pacific Islanders Heritage Month</b><br>Older Americans Month           | <b>LGBTQ+ Pride Month</b><br>Autism Pride Day<br>Juneteenth  |



## HONORING OUR COMMUNITY



This year the Board of Supervisors recognized a record number of diverse cultures, backgrounds, and identities through various board proclamations and moments of inspiration. Each Supervisor joined in supporting Diversity Calendar-related items. The following items had not been previously recognized:

- Asian American Pacific Islanders Heritage Month
- National Disability Employment Awareness Month
- Disability Pride Month
- Lunar New Year
- Ed Roberts Day
- Women's Equality Day



The County Executive Office invested in our community through sponsorship and participation in many DEI-related events and related organizations. Some of these sponsorships include:

- Juneteenth Events
- Pride Events
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Events
- MICOP- Night in Oaxaca
- Rebozo Festival
- Cinco De Mayo - Santa Paula
- AAPI Heritage Festival
- Social Justice Fund- Arts & Film Fest
- Oxnard Performing Arts & Convention Center- Dia de Los Muertos Celebration
- Ventura County Asian American Bar Association- Scholarship Fund
- Walk Against Hate
- NAACP
- Ventura College Foundation
- United Way of Ventura County- Women United Education Awards
- Ventura Community Partners Foundation- Arroyo Verde Park Inclusive Playground
- El Concilio Family Services- Latino Leadership Awards
- Diversity Collective
- Santa Paula Latino Town Hall
- Ventura County Legal Aid

## DIVERSITY CALENDAR & EVENTS

### Asian American and Pacific Islanders Heritage Month Staff Panel

|   |   |
|---|---|
|  <p><b>David Yoshitomi</b><br/>Arts &amp; Culture Manager<br/>County Executive Office<br/><b>Moderator</b></p> |  <p><b>Rajima Danish-Engel</b><br/>Outreach and Development Manager<br/>Ventura County Family Justice Center</p> |
|  <p><b>Dr. Theresa Cho</b><br/>Chief Executive Officer,<br/>Ambulatory Care<br/>Health Care Agency</p>         |  <p><b>Raja Bamrungpong</b><br/>Assistant Chief<br/>Information Officer<br/>Information Technology Services</p>  |

### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION

No Cost Family-Friendly Event

Wednesday, March 8  
5:30 - 7:30 pm

Family Justice Center  
3170 Loma Vista Road  
Ventura, CA 93005



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8  
5:30 - 7:30 PM

FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER  
3170 LOMA VISTA ROAD  
VENTURA, CA 93005

COUNTY OF VENTURA  
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

The Office of DEI hosted virtual and community events, including an event for County employees celebrating Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month featuring diverse County leaders. Additionally, we partnered with the District Attorney's Family Justice Center in hosting a community event for International Women's Day, celebrating multiple local cultural groups with kickboxing world champion, Graciela Casillas.

## SOCIAL MEDIA EFFORTS

Public Information Officers (PIOs) play a key role in DEI efforts. We recognize the many PIOs at the County who help build trusted communication pathways with the community. Throughout each year, through a multitude of social media posts, they help us celebrate diversity while increasing visibility of historically underserved groups. PIOs often support language access efforts increasing community access to County services.





## STAFF SPOTLIGHTS

Throughout 2022-23, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council, in partnership with the CEO Public Information Office, created County staff spotlights for the County's social media pages.

The goals of the DEI Council spotlight program included highlighting the diversity of the staff of the County of Ventura through personal stories. The staff spotlights highlight staff and their connections to the items on the DEI calendar.

Below are a few examples of staff spotlights. Spotlights will continue in 2023-24.



**Itzel Torres, County Executive Office**

"I love celebrating my culture every day, but Latine Heritage Month is important to me because it serves as an invitation to continue learning and representing my community in my work with the County. Growing up in South Oxnard, my community has borne witness to many environmental impacts. The work that I do in the Sustainability Division is intentional and personal. It has allowed me to be a part of designing and implementing programs that support the livelihood and longevity of not only the planet but the people living on it."

**Tina Figurski, Resource Management Agency**

"National Disability Awareness Month is important to me because I feel it is crucial to inform people about disability etiquette and never assume what people with disabilities can or can't do. Last year, I sustained a head injury, and while I look fine on the outside, I have a temporary, nonapparent disability. Working at the Resource Management Agency has been a blessing. My team's awareness and support have been overwhelming. I hope Disability Awareness Month helps others feel less alone in the workplace."



**Gloria Martinez, County Executive Office**

"Hispanic Heritage Month is a celebration of the tremendous economic contributions of the Latino community. As an American of Mexican descent, I'm blessed to be able to assist entrepreneurs and small business owners, especially Spanish-speaking business owners, in accessing resources to scale their operations. Data shows that Latinos' economic output is fast growing, and they will be a major driver of the economic recovery in our region."

\*Some quotes have been edited for formatting.

## STAFF SPOTLIGHTS



**Rajima Danish-Engle, Ventura County District Attorney's Office**

"I was attracted to the opportunity to support the mission of the Family Justice Center – to reduce the incidents and impact of trauma. I see it as such a clear, honorable goal.

My parents taught me that the best way to spend my time is in service to others, and to use my skills to be helpful to others is a worthwhile calling. From project management to data analysis to community engagement - the breadth of work in this position is very gratifying. I'm grateful for a chance to contribute to this important work at a local level. For me, AAPI Heritage Month is an invitation to not just share about my heritage and how it intersects with other areas of my life and work, but a time to celebrate mine and other's cultural backgrounds."

**Karen Cruze, Ventura County Library**

"Being deaf, I'm very happy there is a month devoted to awareness of disability. People who are disabled are important members of our society and contribute a great deal. More importantly, I believe having a month devoted to disability is helpful for disabled individuals, giving us a time to share our experiences with others, and hopefully offering young people who are disabled a way of seeing themselves reflected in the world at large, giving them a sense of what they can do and be as a disabled person.

I like thinking about ways to help people with these issues - whether it's showing them how to use an enlarger for reading, making sure our collections are more accessible, or helping them use an accessible computer for persons with disabilities!"



**Lisa Okinaka Lyttikainen, District Attorney's Office**

"My dad encouraged me to pursue a law degree. He was very supportive of my need to give back to the community and find a way to contribute to public safety. When I was in college, I was the victim of a crime. Going through the criminal justice process was both extremely difficult and enlightening. In the end, I was inspired to roll up my sleeves, work hard, and find a way to help increase public safety. The District Attorney's Office felt like the perfect place to do so.

I am grateful that AAPI Heritage Month provides a dedicated time in which those who do not share the same heritage and culture have occasion to learn about Asian American traditions and values. It's a wonderful opportunity to highlight how differing Asian cultures continue to enrich our families, friendships, and communities. For me at my core is the strength of my value system, and without doubt, it comes directly from my father and our Japanese heritage."

\*Some quotes have been edited for formatting.

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION GROUPS



### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council (DEI Council)

DEI Council, formed in 2017, advances equity by connecting on DEI issues across the County of Ventura agencies, meeting monthly, and recommending policies, programs, and initiatives to County leadership.

### DEI Leadership Accountability Team (DEI-LAT)

DEI LAT, formed in 2021, meet quarterly with leaders and directors in County DEI efforts to provide direction to the DEI Council and also serve as champions for DEI priorities at the highest levels of their organizations and throughout the County.

### Public Safety Racial Equity Advisory Group (PSREAG)

PSREAG, formed in 2021, increases dialogue and reviews policy related to public safety and racial equity and includes community-based leaders and public safety leaders.

### Healthcare Equity Advisory Council (HEAC)

HEAC was formed in 2021 to enhance DEI in county healthcare services through collaboration between agency representatives and community members representing underserved communities.

### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Progress at the County of Ventura (2015 - 2023)

- 2015: The BOS adopts a Health in All Policies framework to ensure County leaders and decision-makers have the tools they need to view all decisions through a health equity lens when developing policies that impact population health outcomes
- 2017: Diversity & Inclusion Task Force forms
- 2018: Organization Development launches Mentorship Program
- 2020: Mandatory cultural competency training for all County employees implemented
- 2020: Hosts public and employee forums regarding race and law enforcement
- 2020: Board adopts Resolution declaring racism a public health crisis
- 2021: Diversity Equity and Inclusion Officer and DEI Office established (ODEI)
- 2021: DEI Task Force becomes the more permanent DEI Council
- 2021: Public Safety Racial Equity Advisory Group forms (PSREAG)
- 2021: Healthcare Equity Advisory Council (HEAC) forms
- 2022: Foundations of DEI Learning Series is launched
- 2022: DEI session is added to all LEAP cohort trainings for managers and executives
- 2023: Youth Equity Initiative launched with two additional dedicated DEI staff
- 2023: Consultant obtained for Equity Assessment & Action Plan project

## HEALTHCARE EQUITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (HEAC)



### HEAC MEMBERSHIP

#### Community Members:

- Kimberly Cofield, Vice Chair
- Emily Bridges
- Kimberly Kelley
- Liz Diaz-Querol
- Hugo Tapia
- Alejandra Valencia
- Juana Zaragoza

#### Agency Members:

- Barry Zimmerman, Chair
- Theresa Cho
- John Fankhauser
- Scott Gilman
- Kristina Swaim
- Rigoberto Vargas

### HEAC Purpose

The Healthcare Equity Advisory Council is comprised of healthcare subject matter experts and community stakeholders whose purpose is to advocate for equity for historically underserved communities. The Council convenes to evaluate the delivery of healthcare services for underserved populations, including allocation of resources and personnel practices, and recommend strategies for improvement when gaps are identified.

The implementation of the HEAC is one example of a direct-action item stemming from the Ventura County Board of Supervisors adopting a resolution in 2020, declaring racism a public health crisis and making a commitment to promote equity, inclusion, and diversity in housing, employment, economic development, public safety, and health care in the County of Ventura.

During 2022-23, the HEAC, along with the Health Care Agency leadership, have worked together to review data, receive input from the public and consumers, and have shared several initiatives that have been implemented throughout the Agency related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

After receiving public input and direction from HEAC, a DEI work plan has been developed with four focus areas targeting specific objectives and goals to improve, learn, and develop practices that will enhance the overall healthcare system's approach to DEI efforts.

### The HEAC focus areas include:

#### Communication:

Focused on language and cultural context to improve communication and understanding between the patient and health care providers.

#### Care Experience:

The delivery of health care meets the patient's expectations and creates a mutual understanding to satisfy the patient's care needs.

#### Disparate Treatment:

To achieve equitable health outcomes and equitable access to health resources, and to reduce any systemic variance or inequities in achieving health outcomes.

#### Care Delivery (Provider Focus):

Each provider will deliver care empathically and will create an environment of trust, connection, communication, and understanding.

Outcome goals and specific initiatives have been or are being created for each work plan focus area.



## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION COUNCIL



### DEI Council Vision:

The vision for the DEI Council is to develop and nurture an equitable community where everyone is able to reach their full potential.

### DEI Council Mission:

The mission of the DEI Council is to develop, sustain, recommend, and model equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racist practices in collaboration with the various County agencies we represent, as well as to embrace the valued perspectives and experiences that arise from diversity within our community. The work of the DEI Council will empower and share decision-making and accountability with all members of our community and the County workforce to remove barriers that may exist throughout the County agencies that are the results of social injustice, inequality, and racial trauma. The DEI Council is committed to engaging the voices of our community to promote equitable outcomes for all. The DEI Council commits to ensuring that the County provides resources that enable equal access and opportunity for all people to achieve a prosperous society, and we advocate for policies that secure diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racist practices within the County of Ventura.

### DEI Council Members 2022-2023

Selfa Saucedo, Chair  
Paul Nuñez, Vice Chair

|                |                   |                 |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Carlo Aldeguer | Vijay Bheemisetty | Brooke Hill     | Monique Nowlin    |
| Anitha Balan   | Lydia Collins     | Teresa Jimenez  | Jennifer Orozco   |
| Talia Barrera  | Dee Dinnie        | Ernie Moore     | Barry Parker      |
| Korinne Bell   | Donna Gillesby    | Leticia Morales | Jose Rivera       |
| Casey Beighley | Rob Harris        | Dave Nafie      | Michael Rodriguez |
| Nancy Beltran  | Renee Higgins     | Claudia Nevarez | Rebecca Willhite  |

CEO Staff Support: Kate English, Steven Auclair

### DEI Leadership Accountability Team

|                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| Jeff Burgh       | Melissa Livingston |
| Shawn Atin       | Marcus Mitchell    |
| Claudia Bautista | Keith Taylor       |

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION COUNCIL LEADERSHIP REFLECTION



Selfa Saucedo  
DEI Council Chair

This year, the DEI Council transitioned to new leadership under Chair Selfa Saucedo and Vice Chair Paul Nuñez. The DEI Council has representatives from across the County's many agencies dedicated to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion through interagency collaboration and through thoughtful partnership with the DEI Office and the DEI Leadership Accountability Team.

County agencies and divisions assign a representative to the DEI Council which supports the work of the County's DEI office in the following ways.

### DEI Council Representative Roles:

- Learn from their peers ways in which they can advance racial and social equity in their department
- Identify learning needs and work with the DEI office to bring resources or speakers to address the gaps
- Champion DEI priorities and themes in their respective agencies
- Engage in the planning and development of the DEI calendar and promote calendar-related events and DEI learning opportunities
- Community outreach and engagement
- Provide direction and input for agency DEI workgroups



Paul Nuñez  
DEI Council Vice-Chair

### 2022-2023 Accomplishments:

- Developed an Inclusive Workplace Culture statement to be considered by County agencies for their recruitments
- Served as pilot cohort and provided feedback for several DEI related trainings that will be further developed for the VC Learning Hub
- Developed the 22-23 DEI Calendar which was utilized across agencies to honor diversity through social media, cultural events, staff panels, and Board proclamations

The upcoming equity assessment and action plan will assist the DEI Council in developing the DEI Council's strategic plan for advancing racial and social equity throughout the County's agencies.

As DEI efforts grow across the County, we will need to continue to lean into uncomfortable and difficult conversations and data-informed decision-making. This work requires a variety of approaches. A race-informed approach to policy and practice focuses on the root causes of racial inequity and ultimately shapes an approach that not only closes racial equity gaps but improves systems for everyone in our county. What is harmful to one community is detrimental to us all. DEI-informed leaders recognize the need to openly acknowledge the existence of racism, its significant negative consequences, and that institutional changes must occur.

The DEI Council thanks the County Board of Supervisors and our County's CEO for their commitment to lead the needed change in becoming a more racially equitable and justice-oriented organization in service to all communities within our county. We also want to thank each DEI Council member for their time dedicated to DEI efforts.

Selfa Saucedo, DEI Council Chair, Public Health Division Manager  
Paul Nuñez, DEI Council Vice-Chair, Chief Deputy District Attorney



# PUBLIC SAFETY RACIAL EQUITY ADVISORY GROUP

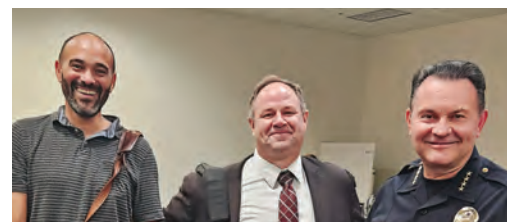


## Agency Members / County of Ventura and Public Safety Representatives:

- Ventura County Sheriff
- District Attorney
- Public Defender
- Ventura County Chief Probation Officer
- Municipal Law Enforcement Agency

## Community Group Members:

- Black Lawyers of Ventura County
- Ventura County NAACP
- Santa Paula Latino Town Hall
- Latinx Bar Association
- Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project
- Diversity Collective of Ventura County
- We Belong 805
- Future Leaders of America
- VC Asian American Bar Association
- Conejo Valley Interfaith Association



## Purpose

Public Safety Racial Equity Advisory Group (PSREAG) provides a monthly open forum where public safety and community stakeholders collaborate to improve communications and understanding amongst the parties and the greater public. The PSREAG works to identify potential solutions for improving public safety policies and procedures and diverse community engagement.

## Creation

The Ventura County Board of Supervisors (BOS) resolution adopted in 2020, declared racism a public health crisis and pledged to promote equity, inclusion, and diversity in housing, employment, economic development, health care, and public safety in the County of Ventura. The BOS envisioned an independent advisory group of public safety and community leaders who would collaborate to create greater understanding and identify strategies and proposals to improve institutional law enforcement practices.

# PUBLIC SAFETY RACIAL EQUITY ADVISORY GROUP LEADERSHIP REFLECTION



Claudia Y. Bautista  
PSREAG Co-Chair

PSREAG has made significant progress in improving group functioning, establishing actionable goals, and promoting psychological safety for cross-sector collaboration in Ventura County. With a focus on advancing racial equity in public safety, PSREAG worked closely with consultant Evolve Equity from February through April 2023, participating in three retreat sessions, and implementing various recommendations to enhance their effectiveness as a group.

During these retreat sessions, PSREAG reached a consensus on a problem statement, acknowledging the need to investigate existing public safety policies and practices that disproportionately impact racial and ethnic minorities, as well as other underserved communities.

The group committed to developing recommendations that would help mitigate these disparities and diminish their impact. To further enhance their understanding of best practices, the group formed an ad hoc subcommittee responsible for reviewing successful racial equity practices and models from other jurisdictions, including the California Racial and Identity Profiling Act (RIPA) Board.



David J. Olivas  
PSREAG Co-Chair

Throughout the year, PSREAG prioritized knowledge sharing and community education by hosting several virtual education sessions. These sessions were not only open to PSREAG members but also to the public to increase awareness and understanding of public safety issues. Additionally, these sessions served as an opportunity to highlight member organizations and the valuable services they provide to the community.

PSREAG adopted a research paper developed by the ad hoc subcommittee on Local Policing and Immigration Enforcement. The research paper explored the outcomes and benefits of limiting police contact with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to mandatory contacts under the law.

## 2022-2023 PSREAG Education Sessions

- Police Transparency Laws
- Juvenile Justice
- What is Use of Force?
- Family Justice Center
- Overview of MICOP
- Oxnard PD Complaint Process and Internal Affairs
- Overview of Future Leaders of America

The Policy & Practice ad hoc subcommittee has reviewed extensive Ventura County law enforcement data. The ad hoc presented to the PSREAG key areas of concern and trends. This data was first presented in March and continues to be a discussion item before the PSREAG. The Ventura County Sheriff's Office is working with the subcommittee to identify areas for further exploration.

PSREAG has demonstrated its commitment to improving group functioning, setting actionable goals, and creating a safe space for cross-sector collaboration. The group has laid a strong foundation for advancing racial equity in public safety within Ventura County. PSREAG aims to create meaningful change and contribute to a more equitable and inclusive public safety landscape through its education sessions, research, and policy recommendations.

~Claudia Y. Bautista, Co-Chair, Ventura County Public Defender  
~David J. Olivas, Co-Chair, Latinx Bar Association of Ventura County



## COUNTY AGENCY DEI EFFORTS



Agencies across the County have been engaged in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts. In addition to the CEO's DEI team, many agencies have dedicated DEI or Equity staff, such as Ventura County Medical Center, Ventura County Behavioral Health, and Ventura County Public Health. Some agencies have also formed their own internal DEI workgroups. This includes:

- District Attorney
- County Probation Agency
- Resource Management Agency
- Sheriff's Office
- Child Support Services
- General Services Agency

We are providing here a spotlight on just a few of the DEI-related County efforts at various agencies to demonstrate that DEI is an integrated lens through which the County examines its policies and practices. This work manifests in how we care for each other as County staff and bring our services to the community.



Ventura County Public Health is focused on strengthening DEI in our infrastructure and workforce in the following ways:

- Surveyed internal and external audiences for feedback on organizational strengths and opportunities for health equity from March 2023 to February 2024.
- Surveyed public health workforce and partner community-based organizations who have a contract with PH with Part 1 of a two-part health equity organizational assessment. We had a 79% respondent rate among workforce in April and a 40% response rate with the Community Partner Survey, in July.
- Identified Public Health equity infrastructure using a Baseline Organizational Assessment for Equity Infrastructure tool, a tool for assessing current equity infrastructure to inform planning.
- Built the 'My Health Equity Dashboard' on an internal SharePoint site to communicate health equity work efforts and training information to the public health workforce
- Offered an advanced learning series for Community Health Workers in Spanish to increase knowledge and capacity in emergency response.
- Created a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion class series for the Public Health Workforce for 2024.

## COUNTY AGENCY DEI EFFORTS COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

### Arts and Culture



David Yoshitomi



With the arrival of David Yoshitomi, the County's first Arts and Culture Manager, there was a natural alignment to advance DEI initiatives in the arts and culture sphere. This first year has included working with the Ventura County Arts Council to engage with BIPOC curators to exhibit artwork from underrepresented artists during cultural heritage months - giving emerging artists their first opportunity to display their work. The Offices of DEI and Arts and Culture were also honored to receive a \$140,000 grant from the California Arts Council - Central Coast Creative Corps to hire an artist for community engagement work in some of the County's most underserved communities.

David has also played an essential role in working with the Museum of Ventura County and community partners to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the County of Ventura. Through community events and programming, the year-long celebration has included significant recognition of the rich cultural history of Ventura County and the diverse leaders who have shaped our community.

### Disability Access



Dani Anderson



The DEI Office has been working closely with the County's Disability Access Manager, Dani Anderson, since she joined the CEO's Office late last year. Dani has been a welcome collaborative partner to the DEI Office, bringing the A for Accessibility into the mix.

With professional and lived disability experience, Dani has introduced initiatives to better position the County to understand and support our residents with disabilities through services, coordination, and a greater sense of belonging. One exciting example is the expansion of internship opportunities in an effort to increase diversity and disability inclusion within the County workforce in alignment with National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Ongoing project themes include accessibility reviews, service provision assessments, involvement with all County departments, disability culture, communication presentations and trainings, and Board of Supervisors collaboration.

The DEI Office is now able to increase its efforts around disability and aging topics with this additional resource to set new and exciting paths for the County of Ventura.



## COUNTY AGENCY DEI EFFORTS



VENTURA COUNTY  
HEALTH CARE AGENCY



### Health Care Agency

#### Ventura County Medical System Commitment

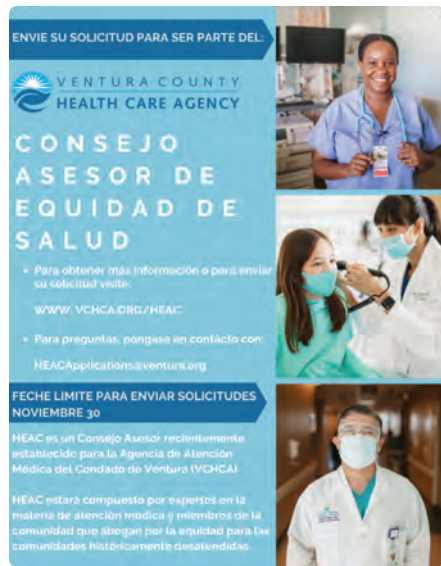
The Ventura County Medical System (VCMS) envisions a community where everyone can attain their full potential for health and well-being. We commit to providing equitable care to the communities we serve and investing in and celebrating a diverse and inclusive workforce. We commit to delivering health care that is culturally responsive, accessible, evidence-based, and high-quality in delivery and patient outcomes. We commit to the absence of unfair, avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically, or geographically or by other dimensions of inequality (e.g., sex, gender, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation). We commit to using data to measure outcomes, identify disparities, and design changes in our system protocols, practices, and customs, aimed at increasing health equity for our community.

#### VCMS DEI Health Equity Efforts

The VCMS Diversity Equity and Inclusion Advisory Group provides guidance to VCMS on how to best promote health equity in our community through reducing health disparities and improving equity in our care for historically and systemically oppressed or underserved populations.

#### Illustrative initiatives include:

- Using data, including patient outcomes, and patient experience data to identify needs, and engaging in CAPH Safety Net Institute Racial Equity Project 2022-23 to define and enhance racial equity efforts within the system.
- Increasing awareness of health disparities and clarify the urgency of health equity need through staff townhalls, training on Health Equity, Health Equity Grand Rounds, Staff Meetings, Continuing Medical Education, and the declaration of Racism as a Public Health Emergency.
- Designing interventions to address identified health disparities and inequity. The focus for 2023 -2024: Addressing disparities in obstetric outcomes reflected in national and local maternal outcomes data.
- Engaging in Health Equity Advisory Council and other forums for feedback to the medical system,
- and designing responses appropriate to drive change, including using patient feedback including tools such as NRC, Patient Complaints, HCAHPs, and seeking employee input and feedback.



## COUNTY AGENCY DEI EFFORTS



VENTURA COUNTY  
HEALTH CARE AGENCY

Last year, the hospitals and clinics hosted a first-ever Health Equity CME summit for physicians, and continued the innovation of Health Equity Grand Rounds reaching many of the licensed and support staff of the hospitals and clinics. The hospital and clinic team annually supports the pipeline programs of HOPE and Summer Scholars, increasing mentorship opportunities in the healthcare system from communities historically underrepresented.





## COUNTY AGENCY DEI EFFORTS



### Human Services Agency

#### Medi-Cal Health Enrollment Navigators

Given the importance of ensuring access to basic-needs services, HSA's Health Enrollment Navigators Project continued its work in partnership with Interface Children & Family Services and Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP) to help underserved communities secure and maintain health coverage. Target populations include young people of color, older adults, immigrants and families of mixed immigration status, persons with limited English proficiency, those with disabilities, and uninsured children and youth formerly enrolled in Medi-Cal. This past year, the Navigators Project finalized its "What is Medi-Cal?" informational videos offered in English, Spanish, Mixtec and Zapotec, as well as other countywide efforts designed to assist populations who may achieve more equitable service outcomes when they are afforded targeted assistance.



### Area Agency on Aging

#### LGBT Aging Coalition members:

- Expanded outreach to the community by tabling at five pride events. This included the distribution of branded materials such as pens, stickers, and postcards.
- Created an infographic to educate the public on the importance of providing affirming services to LGBT+ older adults.
- Launched a trans and non-binary medical survey.
- Formalized training for businesses that provide services to older adults and trained 4 organizations in the past year. Created outreach materials to expand the number of businesses trained.
- Build the website infrastructure to support requests for trainings as well as short videos explaining the training objectives.

## COUNTY AGENCY DEI EFFORTS



### Ventura County Library

The Ventura County Library (VCL) held and hosted a series of book discussion groups associated with the One County, One Book (OCOB) 2022 selection *Taste Makers* by Mayukh Sen. Complementary copies of the book were made available at all library locations for members of the community. Additionally, Ron Solórzano, Regional Librarian, led a book discussion for the County's DEI Council who were provided copies of the book by VCL.

VCL participated in the Ventura County Pride 2022 celebration, represented by Marisa Martinez, Library Technician.



### Ventura County Sheriff's Office

#### VCSO Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

The Ventura County Sheriff's Office DEI Committee members are selected for this collateral assignment by application and interest.

#### Current initiatives are:

- Sheriff's employee engagement, inclusion, and belonging for all staff
- Retention, work/life balance for all employees, especially working parents and those returning from leave
- Recruitment, improve staffing shortages, and reduce overtime
- Sheriff's employee/community engagement with the public we serve
- Provide DEI education to staff to include topics such as race, gender, mental health and wellness, and disabilities (physical, functional, and intellectual) with a special emphasis on reducing stigma around these topics and normalizing uncomfortable conversations



## COUNTY AGENCY DEI EFFORTS



### Department of Child Support Services

The Ventura County Department of Child Support Services (VDCSS) is committed to cultivating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce at all department levels. The VDCSS remained deeply committed to these efforts during the last fiscal year.

We developed a dedicated Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) library of resources in our department to educate, include, and serve all of our employees. This service is available both online and in-person for easy access. The resource library contains books, materials, and other sources of DEI information.

We also held learning sessions on equity with our Executive and Senior leadership teams. The workshops occurred over multiple days through a PBS program entitled "Race: The Power of Illusion." Surveys conducted within our department show these sessions were well received.

Further, the VDCSS actively participated in the DEI learning series and all county events, including the county-facilitated CSAC session on bias. We also observed important remembrance and celebratory months, including Black History Month and Pride, through all-staff emails and social media posts.

We look forward to even more work and participation in the upcoming year.



### Public Defender

Public Defender staff actively participate in a variety of advisory boards and groups promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. For example, Ventura County Public Defender Claudia Bautista co-chairs the Public Safety Racial Equity Advisory Group. Chief Deputy Public Defender Michael Rodriguez presently serves as Chair Emeritus of the Ventura County Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB), was a founding member of the BHAB's Disparities Reduction Committee and serves on the Ventura County Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Council. We continue to seek opportunities to grow our DEI initiatives and practices.

While the Ventura County Public Defender is in the process of establishing a formal DEI Committee, we have made significant progress in creating an environment that genuinely promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our staff consists of 60% women and 47% people of color. Additionally, since September 2020, we have increased by 58% the hiring and retention of attorneys of color, and people of color constitute 37% of our management team. We actively promote DEI training, wherein all participating staff are paid while attending.

## COUNTY AGENCY DEI EFFORTS



### Ventura County District Attorney

The Ventura County District Attorney's Office (VCDA) has begun its second year of operating the Diversity, Equity, Belonging, and Inclusion Committee (DEBI). DEBI aims to improve the office's retention, recruitment, training, and community outreach by improving the DEI lens of VCDA.

During 2022-23, DEBI has sponsored implicit bias training and mental health training for all its attorneys and staff to increase awareness of these important issues. DEBI has supported all hiring efforts, including representing the office at job fairs and visiting California law schools.

After a three-year COVID absence, DEBI has also restarted the Project LEAD program in county elementary schools. Project LEAD is an effective law-related education program established in 1993. The 20-week curriculum teaches fifth-grade students about the criminal justice system and the importance of making good decisions. VCDA attorneys, investigators, and staff teach students using detailed lesson plans incorporating active learning strategies, such as skits and field trips to the courthouse and the juvenile justice center. The program concludes with students performing a mock trial, putting into practice what they have learned about the criminal justice system. The program was a success and will restart in October, and we will look to expand the program into more area schools.



In early 2023, the Ventura County District Attorney's Office and the DEBI committee were awarded the State Bar of California's inaugural DEI Leadership Seal. VCDA is the state's only district attorney's office to receive this significant recognition.

With a goal to encourage public commitment to advance DEI in the legal profession, the State Bar launched the DEI Leadership Seal program. The DEI Leadership Seal recognizes legal employers with California attorneys who commit to and implement research-driven actions that further workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion.



The seal is available to all legal employers with California-licensed attorneys, including law firms of all sizes, in-house legal departments, legal academia, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies with attorney staff. A core component of the State Bar's mission is to promote diversity and inclusion in the legal system and legal profession. Having a diverse legal profession positively impacts the administration of justice, ensures fairness, and promotes the rule of law.



## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS & CONNECTIONS

To advance diversity, equity and inclusion goals within our County organizations and in the community, government must work in partnership locally and regionally across internal agencies, with the community, and with other community serving organizations. These collaborations are essential to creating significant impact on racial and social equity. In Ventura County, we are committed to building partnerships with the institutions and the communities as we recognize we cannot do this work alone and must lead the way.

Here are a few highlights from our partnerships in 2022-2023:

- Partnered with the District Attorney's Family Justice Center to offer a community event celebrating International Women's Day
- Partnered with the UCSB Blum Center and the Fund for Santa Barbara to help inform and promote the Central Coast Regional Equity Study
- Partnered with the Coalition for Family Harmony to help promote a survey and primary research in the medical field for gender-affirming care
- Participated in the County's quarterly convening of LGBTQ+ serving organizations and helped to build the network of LGBTQ+ providers
- Connected with DEI leaders locally, regionally, and nationally
- Participated on the LGBT+ Aging Coalition to provide education and advocacy to create an LGBTQ+ friendly Ventura County
- Partnered with Organizational Development to develop a new Nuts and Bolts elective training for managers on Community Engagement
- Partnered with the new Arts & Culture Manager, David Yoshitomi, to coordinate County art exhibits in relationship to diverse cultures
- Partnered with the Disability Access Manager, Dani Anderson on a staff panel for National Disability Employment Awareness Month
- Partnered with Management Council to expand the Foundations of DEI Learning Series to examine DEI themes such as local Asian American Pacific Islander history and Ageism
- Working to build connections and relationships with local Chumash elders and organizations such as Barbereño/Ventureño Band of Mission Indians



## MOVING FORWARD IN 2023-2024

For the 2023-2024 year, many exciting DEI efforts and initiatives are already underway.

- The Office of DEI has contracted with consultant, Equity Praxis Group, on an Equity Assessment project that will take place over 18 months and will result in a County Wide Equity Action Plan and customized training based on employee input
- The Youth Equity Initiative will work to create benchmarks for youth equity indicators and to connect youth-serving organizations
- The DEI Office will continue to offer DEI Conversations with panels that broaden the visibility of diversity
- County employees will begin receiving regular DEI All County Newsletters in their inbox keeping them posted on upcoming learning opportunities and cultural events
- The DEI Learning Series will be launching a new round of speakers on a variety of topics
- A new learning series developed by the DEI Office will be made available on VC Learning Hub with shorter 30-minute learning opportunities available to all County employees
- The DEI Office will continue to support several collaborative groups, including the DEI Council, Public Safety Racial Equity Advisory Group, and HEAC

In 2023-24, Ventura County will continue to explore racial and social equity in examining and strategically addressing gaps and inequities. Long-term work and commitment are needed to continue to build a Ventura County where truly everyone can thrive.







**COUNTY *of* VENTURA**

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