On behalf of the Board of Supervisors, I am pleased to recognize the work of the Human Services Agency employees and the services they provide to the residents of Ventura County. Due to the economic recession, this past year has brought unprecedented challenges to many in our community. The Human Services Agency has been a source of information and service for residents who have never had to seek public assistance in the past. I applaud the efforts of the agency to increase access to information by a stronger presence on the County’s website and a link to eligibility information.

This year saw more than 44,000 people seeking jobs, an increase of 71.6 percent since the previous year. Five cities in Ventura County are experiencing double-digit unemployment rates. Now, more than any time in recent history, the skills, compassion and links with tangible services Human Services Agency employees provide are critical to the welfare of our community.

This report includes summaries of the Human Services Agency’s programs and services and how those continue to help Ventura County residents develop the skills and necessary means to a productive life. With the partnership of many nonprofit organizations, the Human Services Agency will continue to provide County-wide services for foster children and families, the unemployed, homeless, dependent adults, veterans, and families in crisis.

The Board of Supervisors will continue to support the dedicated individuals and organizations that provide assistance to the most vulnerable in our community.

Steve Bennett, Chair, 2009
Supervisor, First District
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The Human Services Agency Overview

The Human Services Agency strives to strengthen Ventura County by administering programs that have a positive impact on key community concerns, including food insecurity, access to health care and insurance, child and elder abuse, unemployment and homelessness.

Human Services Agency Director Barry L. Zimmerman

Fiscal Year 2008-2009 Snapshots...

103,969
Assisted an average of 103,969 people per month receive health care through Medi-Cal benefits

42,400
Assisted an average of 42,400 clients each month supplement their diets with Food Stamp benefits

38,592
Provided employment assistance 38,592 adults and youth at Job & Career Centers

The Human Services Agency serves as a foundation for improved career paths and family lives and as a safety net for individuals facing temporary setbacks due to loss of employment, illness or other challenges.
Responded to 2,219 allegations of adult abuse or neglect

Facilitated adoptions for 110 children

Investigated 5,733 reports of suspected child abuse or neglect during Calendar Year 2008

Assisted an average of 3,543 clients receive In-Home Support Services monthly

Services available to those who qualify include:

- Financial assistance, low-cost health insurance, and housing assistance for families and others
- Supportive services for seniors and adults with disabilities
- Job training and placement for eligible youth and adults
- Career education services for job seekers
- Layoff aversion and workforce transition planning
- Child care assistance for working parents
- Veteran’s benefits and support services
- Emergency response to allegations of abuse and neglect
- Foster care placement, reunification of children with their parents, and adoption services
- Referrals to other County agencies and partner organizations
In the past year, the weak economic climate, high unemployment rate and escalating mortgage foreclosures have combined to cause caseloads and the demand for human services to rise to record levels. Caseloads and applications for Medi-Cal, Food Stamps, CalWORKs, and In-Home Support Services all rose, and those trends are projected to continue through Fiscal Year 2009-2010. During the past year, approximately 13 percent of Ventura County residents accessed services provided by the Human Services Agency.

The economic climate in California and the nation impacted many aspects of the quality of life in Ventura County. Ventura County’s unemployment rose to 10.3 percent in June of 2009. The last time that the unemployment rate exceeded 10 percent was in July of 1993. The estimated 44,100 residents out of work and seeking jobs at the end of the fiscal year was up 71.6 percent when compared to June 2008. As residents lost employment, they also lost healthcare insurance that was job-based. Studies indicate that over 129,000 County residents are uninsured. Housing foreclosures were prevalent, and even though the average cost of housing rentals declined slightly, the County still remains the fifth most expensive place to rent in California.

The State’s budget crisis further compounds the problems with California’s economy as program reductions passed by the legislature will reduce services and programs for populations who depend on them. Costs for counties to deliver human services programs on behalf of the State increase annually, but funding has remained flat since 2001, creating a nearly $1 billion annual funding gap. Budget solutions adopted by the legislature do not resolve the current State or County fiscal climate. It is anticipated that budget and funding shortfalls will persist for several more years.

*Programs include CalWORKs, Food Stamps, General Relief, Medi-Cal, CAPI, and Foster Care (duplicated, meaning that individuals may receive one or more service).
### Ventura County’s Cities: June 2009 Economic Climate and Human Services Profile

The table below captures a June 2009, city-by-city overview of economic factors such as unemployment, real estate foreclosures, homelessness, and poverty, as well as the number of residents receiving services and the dollar amount of those benefits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
<th>Number of Foreclosures</th>
<th>Poverty</th>
<th>Median Earnings per Person</th>
<th>Persons Receiving CalWORKs</th>
<th>CalWORKs Payments Issued</th>
<th>Persons Receiving Food Stamps</th>
<th>Food Stamp Payments Issued</th>
<th>Persons Receiving Medi-Cal</th>
<th>Medi-Cal Benefits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ventura County</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>1,888</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>$39,994</td>
<td>2,193</td>
<td>16,854</td>
<td>47,813</td>
<td>$6,384,829</td>
<td>108,274</td>
<td>$40,819,298</td>
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<tr>
<td>Santa Paula</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>$26,980</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>1,257</td>
<td>3,701</td>
<td>$495,207</td>
<td>8,008</td>
<td>$1,019,016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fillmore</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>$104,457</td>
<td>1,638</td>
<td>3,596</td>
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<td>Oxnard</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>$27,350</td>
<td>679</td>
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<td>22,145</td>
<td>53,389</td>
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<td>Ojai</td>
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<td>276</td>
<td>$59,481</td>
<td>766</td>
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<td>Port Hueneme</td>
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<td>79</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>$144,339</td>
<td>2,097</td>
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<td>Moorpark</td>
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<td>87</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>325</td>
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<td>1,147</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ventura</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
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<td>10.6%</td>
<td>$40,169</td>
<td>623</td>
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<td>$503,260</td>
<td>7,088</td>
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<td>Simi Valley</td>
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<td>323</td>
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<td>303</td>
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<td>$249,859</td>
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<td>8,586</td>
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<td>Thousand Oaks</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
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<td>147</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>$144,571</td>
<td>1,576</td>
<td>4,670</td>
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<td>Camarillo</td>
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<td>178</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>$105,847</td>
<td>1,608</td>
<td>4,050</td>
<td>$1,526,850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. 2009 Ventura County Homeless Count, Findings by Jurisdiction.
6. Public assistance data for June 2009. City totals do not sum to the Ventura County total because the Ventura County total includes cities, communities, and unincorporated areas.
7. Total aid payment by city for June 2009. City totals do not sum to the Ventura County total because the Ventura County total includes cities, communities, and unincorporated areas.
8. California Department of Health Care Services, FY 2008-09 Cost Per Eligible Based on November 2008 Estimate.
Meeting basic needs of the elderly, dependent adults, homeless and veteran residents is always challenging, and during the State’s economic downturn the Human Services Agency has seen a rise in caseloads and requests for assistance from all of these populations.

**In-Home Support Services**

In-Home Support Services help seniors, children and adults with disabilities receive care in their homes. Quality, cost-effective alternatives to institutionalized care are in high demand, as they help participants improve the quality of their daily lives while remaining in the comfort of their own homes. According to data from the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, the State pays over $59,000 per year for each Medi-Cal nursing home resident. In contrast, the cost per year for each In-Home Support Services participant is approximately $12,270.

According to the UCLA Center for Health and Policy Research, the cumulative impact of State budget cuts to multiple programs such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI/SSP), In-Home Support Services and Adult Day Health Care will exacerbate problems for the elderly and infirm. Statewide, thousands of seniors are likely to lose some or all of the assistance they rely on to stay in their homes: an estimated 8 percent of In-Home Support Services recipients of all ages will lose all benefits, and an additional 22 percent will have service hours reduced. Approximately 3,700 Ventura County residents are currently receiving In-Home Support Services. After State budget cuts and program reductions are implemented, around 1,650 of those recipients will be adversely impacted: 450 will lose services entirely and 1,200 will experience a significant reduction in service. Disabled older adults with low incomes will find it harder to access services and, ultimately, harder to live safely at home.

In Ventura County, caseloads have increased by 21 percent since FY 2005-2006, and with the County’s growing senior population, that trend is projected to continue. In Fiscal Year 2008-2009, caseloads for In-Home Support Services reached an all-time high of 3,704 in June 2009 and, over the course of the year, served an average of 3,543 clients each month.

**Adult Protective Services**

It is Ventura County’s responsibility to ensure that elder residents and dependent adults are protected from abuse and neglect. Some abuse occurs at the hands of relatives, friends, caregivers, and strangers who seek to take advantage of the vulnerable. Abuse can be physical, sexual, financial or psychological. The primary goals of Adult Protective Services are to respond rapidly to allegations of abuse or neglect.

The primary goal of Adult Protective Services is to respond rapidly to allegations of abuse or neglect.
allegations of abuse or neglect and to help make clients’ environments safer immediately, while implementing plans to reduce the risk of repeated abuse or neglect. Victims of abuse may receive short-term assistance services such as emergency shelter, meals, transportation, medical, and mental health services.

In Fiscal Year 2008-2009, the Human Services Agency responded to 2,219 allegations of adult abuse or neglect and served an average of 341 Adult Protective Services clients each month. Adult Protective Services cases reached an all-time high of 382 in June 2009.

**Homeless Services**
Ventura County is known for its safe communities and high home values, but not all residents have a place to call home. Current economic conditions have triggered an increase in unemployment and foreclosures that is accompanied by a rise in homelessness. Since the beginning of 2009, over 7,000 homes in Ventura County have fallen into foreclosure, and residents, most of whom never anticipated losing their homes, actually did.

The Homeless Services program helps clients achieve self-sufficiency by securing available health care benefits, employment services and stable housing. In Fiscal Year 2008-2009, the Human Services Agency served an average of 551 homeless clients each month, an increase of 48 percent from last year’s average. Additionally the Human Services Agency helped 155 people in 60 homeless households move into permanent housing.

During Fiscal Year 2008-2009, the Human Services Agency continued its operation of the RAIN Transitional Living Center, which provides transitional housing and assistance for families and single adults in Ventura County. Over the course of the past year, RAIN operated at 85 percent occupancy and provided stable housing for approximately 120 clients. In the Fall of 2009, the Human Services Agency will receive funds for the Homeless Prevention & Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) made available through the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). This program will provide short-term financial assistance and services to prevent people from becoming homeless and will help those who have become homeless to be quickly re-housed and stabilized.

**Veterans Services**
The Human Services Agency recognizes the courageous service of Ventura County veterans and works hard to help them access the benefits they have earned. The Veterans Services Office helps these men and women, as well as their families, gain access to financial assistance and medical treatment. In Fiscal Year 2008-2009, the Human Services Agency served an average of 276 veterans each month.
The Public Administrator and Public Guardian Join HSA

Effective March 1, 2009, the Public Administrator and the Public Guardian (PAPG) transitioned from the office of the Treasurer-Tax Collector to the Human Services Agency, where they are now part of the Agency’s Adult and Family Services programs. The Public Administrator and Public Guardian provide distinct and important services to residents during times of critical needs.

The Public Guardian oversees the care of people, usually the elderly, who are unable to care for themselves. The Public Guardian functions as the legally-appointed guardian or conservator of persons found by the Superior Court to be unable to properly care for themselves or their finances. Most referrals for investigations come from Adult Protective Services, local law enforcement agencies, or the Superior Court, ... Public Guardian. The Public Guardian oversees two types of conservatorships: Probate and Lanterman-Petris Short (LPS).

Probate conservatorships are for vulnerable adults with limited ability to make decisions due to a health condition which is not expected to improve.

LPS conservatorships are for people who are gravely disabled due to serious mental disorders or chronic substance abuse. Referrals to the LPS conservatorship program originate from the psychiatric hospital where a client is receiving treatment. In the past year, the Public Guardian managed 170 LPS conservatorships and 43 probate conservatorships.

The Public Administrator investigates and administers the estates of persons who die without a will or an appropriate person willing or able to act as the administrator. The Public Administrator’s functions include searching for existing family members, making burial arrangements, and arranging for the payment of debts, sale of personal and real property, and distribution of assets. In the past year, the Public Administrator managed 286 estates for decedents.

Progress, Performance & Accountability

In Fiscal Year 2008-2009, the Human Services Agency investigated 2,219 allegations of abuse and/or neglect of seniors and dependent adults, and responded to 3,458 requests from the public for information and referrals. One hundred percent of referrals were responded to within 3.6 days, significantly surpassing the State mandate of 10 days. In order to increase public awareness about elder abuse and to facilitate more effective service delivery, the Human Services Agency continued an aggressive outreach campaign, and participated on a number of councils committed to seniors’ issues. Human Services Agency data show that 99.7 percent of adults who experienced abuse/neglect remained safe during the following year.

Goals:

- Increase community partnerships to strengthen intervention and program services for vulnerable populations and veterans
- Maximize resources to deliver mandated, necessary and vital services that support the health, safety and self-sufficiency needs of vulnerable individuals, veterans and families
- Increase excellence in customer service by ensuring front line employees are knowledgeable about all services and resources and can address the needs of the caller on the first contact
**Spotlight**

**Public Authority Builds Community Alliances**

Over the past year the County of Ventura Public Authority engaged a cadre of community partners to better serve In-Home Support Services consumers and their care providers. The Alzheimer's Association, a long standing partner, trained care providers about the signs and symptoms of the disease, effective communication skills, and nutritional needs of the client with dementia. Homebound clients and those with mobility, hearing, and sight problems are at risk during emergencies and disasters. The Public Authority called upon a valuable partner, the American Red Cross, to train care providers about increasing home safety and developing emergency plans. With so many In-Home Support Services clients suffering from cognitive impairments, Ventura County Behavioral Health provided critical training to address communication techniques that will help foster better outcomes for the client and care provider. With the help of partners like Livingston Memorial, Ventura Adult and Continuing Education, Help Unlimited, Shield Supplies, Alicare, and SEIU LTCW Local 6434, the Human Services Agency was able to present vital information and resources at provider conferences.

**In-Home Support Services Quality Assurance Program**

The In-Home Support Services (IHSS) Quality Assurance Program ensures that the IHSS program meets the needs of its clients in a uniform manner consistent with State regulations and also focuses on early identification, prevention, and detection of fraud. In 2008-09, the Quality Assurance Program completed over 700 desk reviews and interviewed 50 clients in their homes. A key element in the review is the accurate authorization of hours based on client need in accordance with California Department of Social Services (CDSS) regulations. Of those cases reviewed, it was determined that 94 percent were assessed correctly.

The Human Services Agency uses all of the resources available under CDSS regulations to identify, prevent and detect fraud. An early indication of possible fraud is overpayment to a provider. Although most errors occur in time card reporting, without proper tracking and monitoring, an overpayment could become a fraudulent activity. When there is an instance of overpayment, the excess funds are returned to the County through a payment plan which is monitored for compliance. Forty-one percent of the overpayments identified this past year have been collected.

If fraud is suspected, the case is referred to the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), Investigative Branch. When fraud is detected, DHCS works with the Ventura County District Attorney. In the past year, 16 cases of suspected fraud were referred for further investigation with one case resulting in prosecution.
As California braces to weather an extended period of economic challenges and the State budget calls for cuts to programs serving vulnerable populations, counties are experiencing high unemployment and an unprecedented rise in demand for the same programs being reduced by the State. The economic decline has triggered an increase in the number of people applying for and receiving benefits from programs such as CalWORKs (California Work Opportunity & Responsibility to Kids), Food Stamps, and General Relief. As cuts to some safety net programs are implemented, thousands of Ventura County residents will be challenged to make ends meet.

The June 2009 unemployment rate in California was 11.6 percent, up from 7.1 percent in June 2008. California’s non-farm payrolls lost 66,500 jobs during the month with all industry sectors suffering job deficits. According to a report by the California Budget Project, just over one out of four unemployed Californians (28.2%) had been jobless for more than six months in July 2009 – the highest level ever recorded. Once the economic recovery begins, many economists predict that the labor market will rebound slowly because job growth following the recession is likely to be weak. Over the past fiscal year, Ventura County has experienced a sharp rise in unemployment to 10.3 percent, with five cities experiencing double-digit unemployment rates for June 2009: Santa Paula (16.8%), Fillmore (14.5%), Oxnard (13.9%), Ojai (13.4%) and Port Hueneme (11.2%).

Although many factors contribute to caseload growth and decline, the CalWORKs caseload and applications for assistance tends to rise as the unemployment rate increases.

During Fiscal Year 2008-2009, applications for CalWORKs rose by 17 percent and the number of individuals receiving services grew by approximately 13.5 percent.

The Human Services Agency operates five Job & Career Centers and two satellites in Ventura County. By aggressively connecting families to resources that include vocational training, transportation and childcare, the Human Services Agency is helping to remove barriers to employment.

Jobs available to less educated or trained workers, and to some immigrants with limited skills, however, are heavily concentrated in service positions (e.g., cashier, customer service representative, and receptionist), and in agriculture. These sectors typically offer low wages and few benefits, making the services and benefits offered by the Human Services Agency essential to the well-being of the community. The goals of the CalWORKs programs are to help clients identify their workplace strengths; understand the hard and soft skills required by local employers; develop or improve skills through

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>June 2008</th>
<th>June 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ventura County</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camarillo</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fillmore</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moorpark</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ojai</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxnard</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Hueneme</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Paula</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simi Valley</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thousand Oaks</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventura</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

June 2008/2009 Unemployment Rates by City
classroom and/or hands-on training; conduct successful job searches; and sustain meaningful employment at livable wages.

Still, some Ventura County families who have left the CalWORKs program remain vulnerable to economic factors, with research suggesting that they are more likely to return to aid when the unemployment rate increases. While return-to-aid rates in Ventura County were 16 percent for 2006 and 12 percent for 2007, return-to-aid rates for 2008 increased sharply to 30 percent.

**General Relief Program**
The General Relief program provides services to individuals who are struggling to find housing, employment or other revenue to sustain their economic independence. General Relief intake is conducted County-wide at eligibility offices accessible to clients. The aid consists of direct payments to landlords for housing, utilities and incidentals.

Prior to June 2008, the General Relief program typically served around 100 clients a month. Most of these clients were individuals whose struggles were related to limited education and employment history, chronic homelessness, and mental health or substance abuse issues. However, in the last year, the characteristics of clients receiving aid have changed significantly. Staff report that many General Relief applicants are educated individuals with strong work histories who have lost their employment and are challenged to maintain housing.

Over the past fiscal year, General Relief applications nearly tripled from 1,460 in Fiscal Year 2007-2008 to 4,107 in Fiscal Year 2008-2009. Monthly caseloads have grown from 136 in Fiscal Year 2007-2008 to 315 in Fiscal Year 2008-2009. In the past, clients utilized aid for an average of three months. During the past year, clients received aid for an average of six to 12 months.
Progress, Performance & Accountability

During Fiscal Year 2008-2009, the Human Services Agency provided employment and career services through the Job & Career Centers to more than 38,592 individuals, who accessed career center services more than 118,878 times. Nearly 3,000 job seekers attended one of 320 career services workshops that offered assistance with résumé writing, online job searches and interview skills. This past year, the Ventura County Library System placed the Virtual OneStop (VOS) system on all public library computers to expand public access to this web-based employment preparation and search tool.

As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), new funding through the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund (ECF) in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2009 and FFY 2010 will assist families and local communities with the financial impact of the economic downturn. The Human Services Agency will implement a Subsidized Employment program to provide participants with hands-on experience in a real work setting, through which they earn wages and learn new skills. Also, TANF ECF programs will help low-income families who need essential resources during a crisis situation or episode of need.

The Human Services Agency helped CalWORKs clients secure some 1,900 employment placements during Fiscal Year 2008-2009. Approximately 6,025 children in over 3,230 families received subsidized day care so that their parents could work or participate in work-related activities. In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2007 the Ventura County CalWORKs Work Participation Rate (WPR) for all families was 10.7 percent and the WPR average for the State of California was 22 percent. The 2006 Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) enacted by Congress dramatically modified the way CalWORKs is measured and how the WPR is calculated. Prior to FFY 2007, the State and the majority of counties met or exceeded the federal performance rate of 50 percent after receiving a significant Caseload Reduction Credit that counted towards meeting the federal WPR.

During Fiscal Year 2008-2009, efforts in Ventura County to increase the WPR centered on improving data collection and reporting, reducing non-participation by moving clients into activities sooner, re-engaging sanctioned clients, and utilizing structured activities that lead to employment and help clients meet federal WPR requirements. As a result, preliminary reconciliation reports for Federal Fiscal Year 2008 indicate that the County has improved to 20.8 percent and is currently at 23.8 percent.

Goals

- Expand vocational education partnerships to provide client skills training for emerging occupations
- Expand the network of community referrals and supports through programs funded by American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)
- Implement the seventh year of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program with the Financial Empowerment Initiative
- Continue to seek opportunities to provide program outreach and employment services through community storefronts
- Increase the number of clients participating in federally mandated, work-related activities that enable clients to move from welfare to work
Spotlight

Financial Empowerment Partnership Serves More than Ever

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is one of the most effective anti-poverty strategies ever developed, lifting nearly five million people nationwide including 2.5 million children above the poverty line each year. First enacted in 1975, and expanded four times since then, the federal tax credit enjoys bi-partisan support. It is intended to reduce the tax burden on low-income workers, supplement their wages and provide an incentive to work.

The EITC has become our nation’s largest anti-poverty program, offering an average of $1,700 per year to each of 20 million low-income working families. As part of the federal tax code, these credits provide a unique financial opportunity for the working poor and they make a substantial impact on the economies of their communities. The credits provide crucial income that hard-working families can use to reduce debt, fund savings, offset education costs, buy a car to get to work, or make the down payment on a home.

Since 2003, the Human Services Agency has administered the Financial Empowerment Partnership, which is a County-wide effort to increase families’ financial security and literacy by providing free tax preparation services and by promoting the use of the Earned Income Tax Credit. Commonly referred to as VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance), community volunteers are trained by the IRS to provide free tax preparation in English and Spanish at Job & Career Centers and other partner locations throughout the County from January to April.

Each year the VITA program continues to serve more families. For the 2008 tax year, 1,497 tax returns were filed from eight locations throughout the County, which represents a 180 percent increase from the 536 filings completed for the 2007 tax year. The increased numbers translate into $1,140,905 in refunds, including $470,576 from the EITC. Since 2003, the Financial Empowerment Partnership has prepared over 2,900 tax returns, resulting in $3,425,000 in refunds to County tax filers.
appointed by the Board of Supervisors, and according to federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and State requirements, the 36 members of the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) are representative of business, local educational institutions, labor organizations, community-based organizations, economic development agencies, government agencies and One-Stop partners in Ventura County.

To meet the challenges of the workforce needs for Ventura County, the WIB seeks the support of various agencies, community leaders, service organizations and businesses. This relationship is reciprocated by partners who look to the WIB for support of their own initiatives. With these partners, the WIB helps to leverage resources in the community to assure that job seekers have the opportunity for training and the best job opportunities available to them.

The WIB is responsible for planning, policy, and oversight for federally funded programs and services in Ventura County, in accordance with federal, State and County requirements. In addition, the WIB:

- Develops partnerships and supports alignment with leaders in business, economic development, education and government to strengthen the economic well-being of the community and address local workforce needs.
- Provides WIA policy oversight of a streamlined One-Stop Job & Career Center system that is market- and employee-demand driven, addresses the needs of large and small businesses in Ventura County, and offers training and other opportunities to meet the needs of adult and youth job seekers.
- Ensures that the One-Stop Job & Career Center system is guided by rigorous WIA standards of performance accountability, including customer satisfaction, rates of job placement, job retention and earnings.
- Establishes, promotes and coordinates youth development, education and training opportunities, especially for economically disadvantaged youth.
- Supports employer assistance with recruitment, training and education and business consulting to help avert layoffs and closures, assist with recovery and address issues relating to business start-up, relocation and expansion.

Progress, Performance & Accountability

The WIB continued to champion Workforce Investment Act (WIA) reauthorization, maintaining that ongoing support for workforce and business development is critical for the short-term vitality and the long-term growth and sustainability of Ventura County’s economy.

The One-Stop Job & Career Center System continued to provide services and programs that helped to strengthen job seeker readiness for local employment opportunities. Adults, youth, dislocated workers, and employers were able to access information and support online through the Virtual OneStop (VOS) system, and onsite at five Job & Career Centers and two satellite offices, located in six different cities across the County.

During the 2008-2009 program year, Workforce Investment Board programs:

- Served 36,374 customers with employment and career services through the Job & Career Centers system and in WIA-funded adult and dislocated worker programs.
- Served 2,218 youth (14-21 years old in-school and out-of-school adolescents) in WIA-funded programs and through access to employment and career services through the Job & Career Centers’ Internet-based employment services system, the Virtual OneStop (VOS).
• Exceeded WIB standards and achieved a higher-than-100 percent success rate for adults, dislocated workers and youth in all categories of WIA Common Measures performance.

• Provided Rapid Response consulting and other support for businesses reporting a total of more than 2,816 impacted employees. More than 1,302 of the impacted employees participated in Rapid Response programs and services. These individuals were referred to career transition assistance and Job & Career Center services.

• Provided funding and oversight for a special workforce-related project: the National Emergency Grant to help rebuild public infrastructure impacted by the wildfires.

• Provided oversight at the One-Stop Consortium, which includes the Human Services Agency Business & Employment Services Department (BESD), the Employment Development Department (EDD), and the County Superintendent of Schools Office, and operates the One-Stop Job & Career Centers. Services provided in 2008-2009:
  » Customer employment and career services through the Job & Career Centers system to 38,592 individuals, who accessed employment and career services a total of 118,878 times
  » Recruitment events attended by 1,221 job seekers at the Job & Career Centers, for more than 100 employers
  » Improved client access to internet job listings, career information and community resources by enhancing the technology infrastructure of the Job & Career Center system
  » Computer technology courses offered at no cost to clients at the Ventura Job & Career Center

• Delivered 320 employment services workshops (Career Shops), where 2,838 job seekers received assistance with resume writing, online job searches, interviewing skills, and computer skills, reflecting an 8 percent increase in Career Shops provided and a 90 percent increase in attendance above 2007-2008 numbers

• Provided access to employment services to more than 510 Veterans registered through the Job & Career Center system

Goals

During program year 2008-2009, the Workforce Investment Board of Ventura County continued to implement three major goals to address the ongoing challenges of workforce development in the local area. The goals comprise:

• Relevance: Job seeker readiness to respond to current and future employment opportunities in Ventura County

• Quality: Program content and service delivery to meet the needs and expectations of job seekers and employers in Ventura County

• Sustainability: Partnerships to secure ongoing support for workforce and business development in Ventura County
The Human Services Agency recognizes that the best way to ensure the safety and well-being of children is to assist their families with basic needs before conditions worsen and the potential for child abuse or neglect rises. When abuse or neglect does occur, however, social workers fulfill the Human Services Agency’s Federal and State mandates to protect children through services and programs based upon the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Family-to-Family philosophy. Family-to-Family reflects the well-founded belief that children develop best in families, and that they thrive when supported by their communities, including child welfare agencies.

During the past year, the Human Services Agency launched Pathways, a preventative approach to ensuring safety by expanding the ability of child welfare workers to respond to reports of possible child abuse and neglect. Every year, thousands of calls come into the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline. In the past, referrals that did not meet the legal definition of child abuse and/or neglect were screened out and received no face-to-face visit. Now, Pathways enables child welfare workers, in collaboration with the community, to address a family’s needs before problems escalate, and this may prevent a child’s eventual removal from his/her home. Pathways helps families stay together, grow stronger, and, ideally, prevents future involvement with the child welfare system. Pathways was implemented in the second six months of the fiscal year, and in that time period, 130 families were referred to the program. Analysis regarding the effectiveness of Pathways is currently underway.

During times of economic stress, the Human Services Agency is mindful that vulnerable populations, such as children, can be at risk. During the past year, calls to the Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline increased by over 16.3 percent. In 2008, the Human Services Agency investigated 5,733 reports of suspected abuse/neglect involving 5,755 children and, in CY 2008, achieved the second lowest rate of substantiated child abuse and/or neglect (3.7 per 1,000 children) among California’s 58 counties.

Notwithstanding the relatively low rate of child abuse/neglect, over 30 Ventura County children each month need a temporary home to ensure their physical and emotional well-being. Many of these children receive care from a relative or family friend, but almost half need a foster family who can provide love and understanding during a difficult time in the child’s life. Children in foster homes range in age from newborn to 18 years and are from diverse backgrounds. For Calendar Year 2008, 68 percent of foster children were
Whenever possible, the desired outcome for foster children is reunification with their biological parents.

under the age of 12, 16 percent were between the ages of 13 and 15, and 16 percent were between the ages of 16 and 21. These older youth participate in the Independent Living Program, which provides educational and vocational opportunities as well as life-skills training.

Whenever possible, the desired outcome for foster children is reunification with their biological parents. The Human Services Agency helped reunify 167 children with their parents during Calendar Year 2008. The Human Services Agency also facilitated 110 adoptions in Fiscal Year 2008-2009, an increase of 59 percent from the previous year.

Progress, Performance & Accountability

The California Legislature mandates that counties complete a systematic review process, the California Child and Family Services Review, every three years to address performance measures and outcomes in child welfare services. The process involves several components, including the completion of two assessments: a qualitatively focused Peer Quality Case Review and a quantitatively focused Self-Assessment. Both focus on strengths and needs within the county’s child welfare system. The results of these assessments are then used to support the development of a System Improvement Plan (SIP) that specifies measurable goals for system improvement and presents strategies for achieving those goals.

The Human Services Agency, as the lead agency, along with the Ventura County Probation Agency and other local agencies and stakeholders, recently completed the Peer Quality Case Review and the Self-Assessment portions of the process. A total of 62 performance measures – 21 Federal and 31 State – are evaluated in the process. Ventura County is performing at or above the standard in 15 of the 21 Federal measures and at or above the State performance level in 23 of 36 in which performance is measured.

Identified as strengths in Ventura County were: timely reunification of families within 12 months; completion of adoptions within 24 months; and two or fewer placements for children who were in foster care from 12 to 24 months. Areas needing improvement were identified as: the rate of recurrence of abuse...
or neglect; the number of children re-entering Foster Care after reunification; and the length of time that foster youth who are emancipated or turn 18 remain in care. The Human Services Agency plans to use Lean Six Sigma, among other strategies, to improve outcomes in these areas.

**Goals**

Improve safety, permanency and well-being for foster children by:

- Engaging families in community services and supports to prevent recurrence of abuse
- Establishing a system of after-care services for families to prevent re-entry
- Implementing an electronic record system to improve health outcomes for children in foster care

Decrease length of stay for all children who enter the child welfare system by:

- Commissioning a retrospective study to learn what factors affected the failure to achieve permanency for the current population of children in long-term foster care (defined as being in care for two years or more)
- Commissioning a prospective study of children in the child welfare system in order to better understand the decisions and processes that lead some – but not all – children to obtain permanency

Provide enhanced services to foster youth by:

- Increasing housing opportunities for emancipated youth
- Targeting recruitment in faith-based and community service organizations for transitional age youth
- Increasing the number of available foster homes by continually engaging the faith-based community and service organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children &amp; Family Services Activity and Outcomes</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotline calls received</td>
<td>13,840</td>
<td>16,106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals investigated</td>
<td>5,644</td>
<td>5,733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children removed</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantiated child abuse and/or neglect (per 1,000 children in Ventura County)</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster youth in care (monthly average)</td>
<td>871</td>
<td>852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster youth reunified</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoptions finalized</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption within 24 months</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two placements or less (in foster care 12-24 months)</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>64.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reentry to foster care after reunification</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foster Parent Recruitment

Recruiting and supporting foster and adoptive caregivers through training and skills development is a key element of the Family-to-Family philosophy. The goal of the Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Program is to increase the number of foster homes County-wide and to retain foster parents who are already caring for children.

During the past year, foster parent recruitment efforts have been strategically targeted throughout Ventura County. Outreach efforts have focused on the faith-based community. Simi Valley Cornerstone Church hosted their fourth annual recruitment event in February and followed up with an eight-week training series for foster parents. Ventura Missionary Church hosted their first recruitment event in May, followed by an eight-week training series.

Foster home recruitment efforts between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009 included 27 outreach events that were attended by 1,106 potential foster parents and resulted in 75 new foster homes. As of July 2009, the County Foster Home count reached 219.

The Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Program also conducted focus groups with foster parents to gain insight on program strengths, needs and opportunities for improvement. Focus groups were held in both English and Spanish. The information gleaned from input at the sessions will help refine and enhance support services offered by the Human Services Agency.
With the economic downturn and the cost of living in Ventura County remaining high, budgeting for necessities like food and health care can be difficult for families of modest means. The Food Stamp program, known nationally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP, helps qualified low-income families purchase nutritious food at neighborhood grocery stores by using Electronic Benefits Transfer cards. Medi-Cal provides low-cost health insurance to qualified children under 21, seniors over 65, persons with disabilities, pregnant women and other groups.

**Food Stamps**
While benefit levels for Food Stamps recipients have remained somewhat stagnant over past years, Federal stimulus funds have put more money into the hands of the poorest Americans by boosting monthly Food Stamp allocations. Starting in April 2009, a family of four on Food Stamps began receiving an average of $80 extra each month. Since June 2008, applications for Food Stamps have risen sharply, with the number of recipients increasing by 32 percent to 47,802. As of June 2009, the average size of Ventura County families receiving benefits was 2.23 persons with a monthly benefit of approximately $298.

Money from the Food Stamp program percolates quickly through the economy. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) calculates that for every $5 of Food Stamp spending, there is $9.20 of total economic activity, as grocers and farmers pay their employees and suppliers, who in turn shop and pay their bills. While other stimulus money has been slow to circulate, the USDA reports that the Food Stamp boost is almost immediate: 80 percent of benefits are redeemed within two weeks of receipt and 97 percent within a month. During Fiscal Year 2008-2009, recipients throughout the County received and spent over $60 million dollars of Food Stamp benefits. For the month of June, the total was $6,384,829.

The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 calls for policymakers to assess the results of programs, and one important measure of a program’s performance is its ability to reach targeted populations. The main purpose of the Food Stamp program is to permit low-income households to obtain a more nutritious diet by increasing their purchasing power. The Human Services Agency has focused efforts on ensuring that eligible residents living below the poverty rate are enrolled in Food Stamps. The enrollment rate has been steadily rising, and during Calendar Year 2008, on average 37,466 people in Ventura County received Food Stamp benefits each month.
representing 56.6 percent of the people in poverty identified in the 2008 American Community Survey.

**Medi-Cal**

Providing adequate health care coverage for all residents of Ventura County is challenging: according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2008 American Community Survey, about one in six people in Ventura County, or more than 129,000, do not have health insurance. While Ventura County’s overall percentage of uninsured is under the State average of almost 18 percent, Oxnard’s is among the highest in the State, where according to the data, almost 30 percent of residents are without insurance. In contrast, about 90 percent of Thousand Oaks residents are insured.

Medical costs and the cost of health insurance have been rising faster than wages, and many residents who are unemployed are no longer covered by workplace health insurance plans, making it difficult for many to afford routine medical care and preventative screenings. The Human Services Agency administers the Medi-Cal program, which implements the Federal Medicaid safety net health care program in California and provides low-cost health insurance to qualified residents. Services covered under Medi-Cal include regular doctor visits, hospitalization, immunizations and preventative care.

From June 2008 to June 2009, the number of individuals receiving Medi-Cal benefits through the Human Services Agency rose from 101,476 to 107,700—an increase of 6 percent. During the past year, Medi-Cal clients received approximately $444 million dollars worth of health care services.

The Human Services Agency partners with the County Health Care Agency to administer Health Care for Kids, which provides one-stop shopping for health insurance to families who may qualify for Medi-Cal, a State-sponsored program called Healthy Families, or other affordable insurance plans. Medi-Cal clients whose situations change and start to incur a Share of Cost (deductible) must be referred to determine if they qualify for the Healthy Families program. Healthy Families gives low-income clients the opportunity to continue benefits with no out-of-pocket cost. The Human Services Agency created a tracking
and reporting mechanism to increase the number of families referred and now consistently exceeds the State’s benchmarks surrounding this program mandate.

**Progress, Performance & Accountability**

As a result of the severe economic downturn, applications and caseloads rose, and staffing was frozen in anticipation of State budget cuts. During Fiscal Year 2008-2009, the Human Services Agency saw applications for Food Stamps rise by 31 percent and applications for Medi-Cal by 11 percent. In spite of these challenges, client service has remained consistent: applications were processed timely and accurately, wait times did not increase, and clients were able reach their workers when needed. Additionally, staff from the Transitional Assistance Department worked closely with Children & Family Services to make sure that all eligible emancipated foster youth apply for Food Stamps before exiting the Foster Care system. For those eligible, benefits are pre-approved and begin the day the foster youth becomes independent.

Ventura County’s Human Services and Health Care agencies are continuing their collaborative efforts to identify patients who have large unpaid bills and are making a special effort to enroll them in Medi-Cal or low-cost insurance programs. The two agencies are creating a shared web-based database through which patient billing information, application status and other vital information can be shared in real time. Between November 1, 2008 and October 31, 2009, the Health Care Agency was reimbursed more than $33.8 million from Medi-Cal for patients who had no insurance when they entered the hospital. This outcome is significant to both the patients, who know that their medical bills are covered, and for the County since it no longer absorbs the health care costs for these “self-pay” patients.

Ventura County’s bi-annual Food Stamp Management Evaluation focused on payment accuracy and access to programs, which are measured by a number of factors, including business hours, office locations, wait times and timeliness of application processing. Ventura County performed well on the evaluation, with auditors praising the low error rate, easy access to application forms and informational materials, and timely processing of applications.

Ventura County consistently maintains an outstanding Food Stamp accuracy rate and was recognized by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) for having the State’s highest Food Stamp accuracy rate – 99.14 percent – for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2008. By comparison, the national average was 95.25 percent, and the State average was 94.93 percent. Ventura County has achieved this award numerous times over the past few years, including FFY 2001, 2002, 2005, 2006, and 2008.

**Goals:**

- Continue to strengthen relationships with internal and external partners and increase availability of applications outside normal distribution points
- Increase access to programs by expanding training opportunities for partner organizations such as FOOD Share and the Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP) to assist clients with applications
- Continue creating opportunities to apply for, or recertify, benefits without in-person visits to Agency offices
FOOD Share Collaboration

The Human Services Agency has partnered with FOOD Share to increase the number of County residents receiving Food Stamps. FOOD Share, which operates the County’s largest food distribution network, received a grant to screen potentially eligible individuals and direct those who appear to qualify to the Human Services Agency. Agency staff worked with FOOD Share volunteers and staff, providing information and training to create a smooth handoff for the referred clients. Statistics on the number of applications taken as a result of the collaboration are being evaluated. The Human Services Agency will continue to work with FOOD Share on future projects because the missions of the two organizations complement each other so well – FOOD Share distributes emergency food to individuals in need and has a tremendous network of community-based partners, while the Human Services Agency administers the Food Stamps program, which can provide ongoing benefits for all who qualify.

Food Stamps Accuracy Rate Award

Ventura County consistently maintains an outstanding Food Stamps accuracy rate and was recognized by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) for having the State’s highest Food Stamp accuracy rate – 99.14 percent – for Federal Fiscal Year 2008. During that period, Ventura County issued approximately $46 million in Food Stamp benefits. By comparison, the national average was 95.25 percent, and the State average was 94.93 percent.

Dennis Stewart, Western Regional Director for the Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, attended a meeting of the Ventura County Board of Supervisors to acknowledge the achievement with a presentation of a perpetual trophy as well as a certificate from the United States Department of Agriculture. Additionally, Stewart announced Ventura County’s accuracy rate was among the top nationwide.

Ventura County has achieved this award numerous times over the past few years, including Federal Fiscal Years 2001, 2002, 2005, 2006 and 2008. In spite of rising caseloads and applications for benefits that have increased in response to the economic downturn, the Human Services Agency has continued to provide quality service to clients and maintained accurate payment rates.
The State Budget passed in the summer included major program and funding cuts to Health and Human Services. Unfortunately, reductions made by the legislature will not resolve the current or future financial conditions of the State and County. It is anticipated that the County will be dealing with budget issues and funding shortages for the next two to four years. The consequences of these budget issues and activities may ultimately mean that the Human Services Agency provides fewer services, and that critical needs will go unmet.

To better position the Agency to weather future cuts, the Human Services Agency has already begun to implement new streamlined processes, revamping current service models, and aligning existing resources strategically. The Human Services Agency recognizes that there are opportunities to create efficiencies which result in cost savings and/or resource maximization. Since July 2008, the Human Services Agency has utilized Lean Six Sigma methodologies to improve service systems in alignment with customer expectations and performance mandates. The Human Services Agency has conducted several rapid process improvement Kaizen events. The improvements generated through these Kaizen events are valued at over $500,000 per year. Additionally, the Human Services Agency has partnered with the County Executive Office to develop a strategic, cost-effective plan for facilities moves which will reduce annual costs by some $500,000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue Sources</th>
<th>Fiscal Year 2008-2009</th>
<th>Fiscal Year 2007-2008</th>
<th>Fiscal Year 2006-2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal and State Funds</td>
<td>183.8 million</td>
<td>174.9 million</td>
<td>170.8 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Funds</td>
<td>11.2 million</td>
<td>10.7 million</td>
<td>11 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>195 million</td>
<td>185.6 million</td>
<td>181.8 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff Salaries and Benefits</td>
<td>79.8 million</td>
<td>77.7 million</td>
<td>74 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct Client Assistance</td>
<td>79 million</td>
<td>72.1 million</td>
<td>72.9 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Services and Supplies</td>
<td>36.2 million</td>
<td>35.8 million</td>
<td>34.9 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expenditures</td>
<td>195 million</td>
<td>185.6 million</td>
<td>181.8 million</td>
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## Human Services Agency

### Locations & Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adoption Services</th>
<th>Adult Protective Services</th>
<th>CalWORKs</th>
<th>CAPI</th>
<th>Child Welfare Services</th>
<th>Employment Services</th>
<th>Food Stamps</th>
<th>Foster Care Services</th>
<th>General Relief</th>
<th>Health Care for Kids</th>
<th>In-Home Support Services</th>
<th>Homeless Services</th>
<th>IHSS Public Authority</th>
<th>PA &amp; PG</th>
<th>Veterans Services</th>
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### Camarillo Region
1. RAIN Transitional Living Center, 1732 S. Lewis Road, Camarillo (805) 385-1800

### East County Region
2. East County Adult, Children & Family Services Center, 970 Enchanted Way, Simi Valley (805) 955-2290
3. East County Intake & Eligibility Center, 2003 Royal Avenue, Simi Valley (805) 584-4842
4. East County Job & Career Center, 980 Enchanted Way, Simi Valley (805) 955-2282

### Oxnard Region
6. Oxnard College Job & Career Center, 4000 S. Rose Avenue, North Building, Oxnard (805) 986-7300
7. Oxnard Health Care for Kids, Centerpoint Mall, 2653 Saviors Road, Suite A, Oxnard (805) 385-3801
8. Oxnard Intake & Eligibility Center, 1400 Vanguard Drive, Oxnard (805) 385-9363
9. West Oxnard Job & Career Center, 635 S. Ventura Road, Oxnard (805) 382-6551

### Santa Clara Valley Region
10. Santa Clara Valley Intake & Eligibility Center, 725 E. Main Street, Santa Paula (805) 933-8300
   11. Santa Clara Valley Job & Career Center, 725 E. Main Street, Santa Paula (805) 933-8300

### Ventura Region
12. HSA Administrative Services Center, 855 Partridge Drive, Ventura (805) 477-5100
13. Public Administrator & Public Guardian (PA & PG), 1001 Partridge Drive, Suite 360, Ventura (805) 654-3141
14. Ventura Children & Family Services Center, 4245 Market Street, Suite 204, Ventura (805) 654-3409
15. Ventura Health Care for Kids, 3147 Loma Vista Road, Ventura (805) 652-3325 or (805) 652-3326
16. Ventura Intake & Eligibility Center, 4651 Telephone Road, Suite 100, Ventura (805) 658-4100

### Services Information
- Services for current clients only. Call for more information.
- Limited hours of service. Call for more information.
- Services available countywide. Call for more information.
MISSION
We strengthen families, support self-sufficiency and promote safety, health and well being.

VISION
All Human Services Agency program service areas operate and perform at the highest level to meet individual, family, and community needs by providing assistance, aid, protection, and help.

VALUES
Clients Come First
Employee Excellence
Cultural Competency
Collaboration
Service Integration
Owning Our Performance
Employee Development