

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



**ITEM: 19.1  
(ID # 28244)**

**MEETING DATE:**  
Tuesday, July 29, 2025

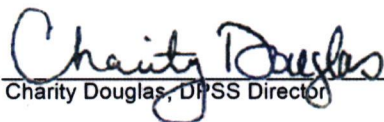
**FROM :** PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

**SUBJECT:** HARMONY HAVEN CHILDREN AND YOUTH CENTER: Submittal of the Harmony Haven Children and Youth Center Annual Report; All Districts. [\$0]

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:** That the Governing Board:

1. Receive and file the Harmony Haven Children and Youth Center Annual Report providing an overview of the facility's operation, activities and census.

**ACTION:Consent**

  
Charity Douglas, DPSS Director

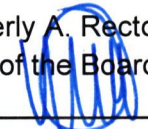
7/14/2025

---

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

On motion of Supervisor Gutierrez, seconded by Supervisor Medina and duly carried by unanimous vote, IT WAS ORDERED that the above matter is received and filed as recommended.

Ayes: Medina, Spiegel, Washington, Perez and Gutierrez  
Nays: None  
Absent: None  
Date: July 29, 2025  
xc: DPSS

Kimberly A. Rector  
Clerk of the Board  
By:   
Deputy

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE,  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

<b>FINANCIAL DATA</b>	<b>Current Fiscal Year:</b>	<b>Next Fiscal Year:</b>	<b>Total Cost:</b>	<b>Ongoing Cost</b>
<b>COST</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>NET COUNTY COST</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>SOURCE OF FUNDS: N/A</b>			<b>Budget Adjustment:</b>	<b>N/A</b>
			<b>For Fiscal Year:</b>	24/25

**C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION:** Approve

**BACKGROUND:**

**Summary**

The Harmony Haven Children and Youth Center Annual Report provides a glimpse of the first year of Riverside County’s Transitional Shelter Care Facility, providing stability and support for foster youth awaiting placement, from infancy to age 17. The successes outlined in the report demonstrate the commitment of numerous partners including the Riverside County Board of Supervisors, the County Executive Office, Riverside County Superintendent of Schools, the Riverside University Health System – Behavioral Health (RUHS-BH), Harmony Haven staff, volunteers and many more.

Since gaining state licensure in March 2024, Harmony Haven has expanded onsite services tailored to each child’s unique journey. Services and milestones highlighted in the report include:

- A total of 1,310 Youth served; average daily population - 41.
- RUHS-BH secured a \$149.7 million state grant to fund services at Harmony Haven.
- Onsite behavioral health staff provide individual and group therapy sessions, counseling and guidance tailored to the needs of each youth.
- Friday Night Live, hosted by RUHS-BH in the campus gym, fosters social interaction and teamwork while providing a space unwind and build relationships.
- Legislative advocates work to strengthen support for child welfare agencies serving youth with severe behavioral health needs, many of whom have experienced abuse, exploitation and neglect.
- Beaumont Unified School District (BUSD) will bring a teacher and aide to the campus in coming months. Curriculum will be supported by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Independent Study program.
- Increased community involvement provides youth with support and resources. A summer fun day in July 2024 featured pickleball, a catered lunch, Kona ice truck and more than \$400 in donated gift cards to local eateries and coffee shops.
- Onsite activities promote physical fitness, strengthen peer relations.
- Off-site excursions including trampoline jumping, rock climbing and bowling provide participants with exciting ways to challenge themselves and develop coordination.
- Peer coaches from DPSS’ Office of Health and Wellness provide team-building exercises and support to Harmony Haven staff to build resilience.

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE,  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

- Facility improvements are breathing new life into the campus including cottage sidewalk restoration and roadway repaving, bed upgrades, gym kitchen modernization, network infrastructure and intake center renovation.

**Impact on Residents and Businesses**

Harmony Haven serves as a vital short-term bridge in the county's foster care continuum, ensuring youth awaiting placement in a nurturing home receive stability, guidance, and emotional support.

**ATTACHMENT:**

**ATTACHMENT A. Harmony Haven Children and Youth Center Annual Report**



# ANNUAL REPORT

March 2024 to March 2025



**Riverside County Harmony Haven Children and Youth Center**

A Licensed 72-Hour Transitional Shelter Care Facility

---



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DPSS Director’s Message ..... 2-3

Strategies and Goals..... 4-5

Who We Served..... 6-7

HHCYC Overview ..... 8-9

Challenges and Solutions ..... 10-19

Partnerships and Activities..... 20-25

Staff Highlights..... 26-29

Facility Improvements..... 30-33

Budget Overview ..... 34

HHCYC Leadership ..... 35

Riverside County Leadership ..... 36

”

Through collaborative problem-solving, we strive to safeguard each young person’s fundamental rights and independence while prioritizing their emotional and physical well-being.



Charity Douglas

## Director’s Message

I am honored to recognize key milestones from Harmony Haven Children and Youth Center’s (HHCYC) first year as Riverside County’s only state-licensed Transitional Shelter Care Facility, providing stability and support for youth from infancy to age 17. Foster youth face uncertainty, frequent moves, and the lasting impact of trauma caused by abuse, neglect, and family separation. Our priority is to keep children safely within their families and communities whenever possible, preserving connections and reducing upheaval.

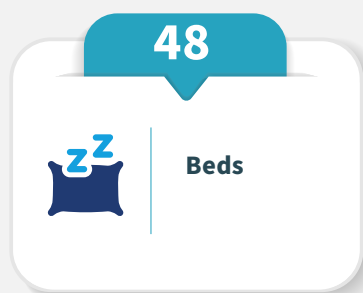
When needed, Harmony Haven serves as a vital short-term bridge in the county’s foster care continuum, ensuring youth awaiting placement in a nurturing home receive stability, guidance, and emotional support. Since

gaining state licensure in March 2024, we have expanded onsite services tailored to each child’s unique journey. Peer specialists and clinicians from Riverside University Health System— Behavioral Health work alongside HHCYC staff to help youth build resilience, develop coping skills, and navigate their emotions. Programs like Friday Night Live foster community engagement and substance abuse prevention, while recreation specialists provide enriching activities to promote normalcy and belonging.

Behavioral health and social services on Harmony Haven’s campus will continue expanding support for Riverside County youth. By summer 2028, new inpatient and outpatient facilities for substance use and mental health treatment will open to provide comprehensive

wraparound services and a holistic and individualized approach to foster youth care.

While we celebrate progress, challenges remain in balancing youth autonomy with safety and well-being. Foster youth deserve independence and the ability to shape their own futures, yet our role is to provide structure, protection, and support. In partnership with county and statewide leaders, we are committed to advocating and collaborating for practical legislative and policy solutions that ensure every foster youth receives the support they deserve to thrive. We understand the journey of each youth in care is unique and requires individualized attention and support.



HHCYC's mission and work reflect the invaluable contributions of many public and private partners. HHCYC maintains transparent communication with the California Department of Social Services to address challenges faced by at-risk youth with complex needs. Through collaborative problem-solving, we strive to safeguard each young person's fundamental rights and independence while prioritizing their emotional and physical well-being.

Our success is empowered by the steadfast commitment of the Riverside County Board of Supervisors, the County Executive Office, Riverside County Office of Education, Harmony Haven staff, and many others. Their commitment will continue to shape the future of foster care services as we adapt strategies to evolving needs. Riverside County is committed to creating a safer, more supportive environment for children and families. While

enhancing and expanding resources for those in foster care we are also taking proactive steps to prevent abuse before it happens. Through a broad community-based approach, we are equipping at-risk families with the tools and support they need to build resilience and thrive in safe, nurturing homes.

We appreciate you taking the time to celebrate Harmony Haven's milestones with us and acknowledging the dedication of the many partners who support Riverside County's most vulnerable youth. Your recognition reinforces the power of collaboration in creating brighter futures for our local youth and communities.

**Charity Douglas**  
DPSS Director

## Partnerships Help Youth Thrive

The care of the entire community is needed to help vulnerable children and youth reach their full potential. Our collaboration with public and community-based partners helps ensure children and youth at HHCYC receive coordinated supports to enhance their experiences and successfully transition to a nurturing home-based setting. We work closely with birth families, kinship and resource families, support networks, juvenile justice, education, health partners and many others to cultivate healing, growth and safety for every child and youth who comes through our doors.

## Our Vision

Through individualized, trauma-informed support, we empower young lives during their most vulnerable moments—building resilience, nurturing hope, and creating boundless opportunities for a brighter future.

## Our Purpose

We are dedicated to stabilizing foster youth with complex care needs, offering unwavering support and guidance as they navigate a critical transition toward permanent, loving homes.

# Transforming Challenges to Success in 2025



**W**e are committed to strengthening services, ensuring every young person receives the support and opportunities they deserve. By improving facility safety and accessibility, enhancing processes and continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts, we aim to create a more secure and effective environment for safety and growth. Through workforce accountability and satisfaction, as well as the development of a transparent fiscal plan, we will continue enhancing a system that empowers both youth and those who serve them. Midway through 2025, we are well on the way to meeting our goals!

## Goals



## Strategies

**Strengthen Youth Services** – Expand onsite medical and behavioral health services, launch an education program, strengthen Probation Department collaboration, implement a reward system, and formalize an off-site activities policy.

**Improve Facility Safety and Accessibility** – Transform Administrative Cottage into a welcoming shared space, open the Intake Center, increase security with outdoor cameras and lighting, optimize cottage organization, provide dedicated offices for health professionals, and establish Wi-Fi controls.

**Enhance Processes and CQI Efforts** – Strengthen reporting accuracy and timeliness, improve incident documentation, reduce youth stays to 72 hours for 90% of cases, and refine scheduling processes.

**Develop an Accountable Fiscal Plan** – Audit purchasing practices, contract services to expedite purchasing, leverage grant and fundraising opportunities, review staffing and reduce overtime.

**Workforce Accountability and Satisfaction** – Improve recruitment and training, assess roles and staffing requirements, enhance policy adherence, expand skills development, and foster communication and staff involvement

# FROM NEWBORNS TO TEENS:

HHCYC Provides Compassion  
and Trauma-Informed Support

*March 2024 to March 2025*

HHCYC Served

**1310 Youth**

Average Daily Population – 41 Youth

Average Length of Stay – 10 Days

Longest Length of Stay – 295 Days



## When Transitional Shelter Care is Needed HHCYC is Here

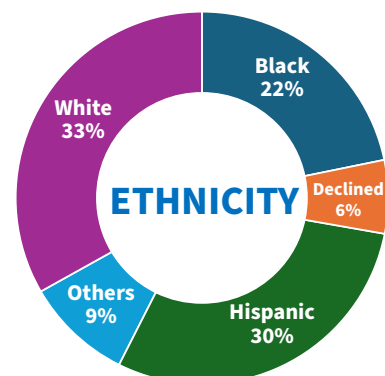
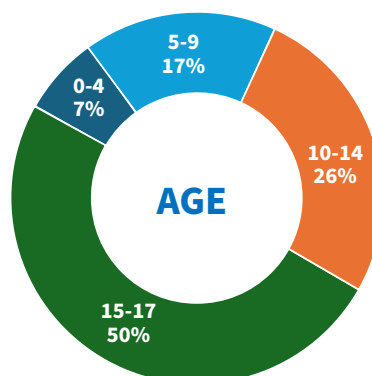
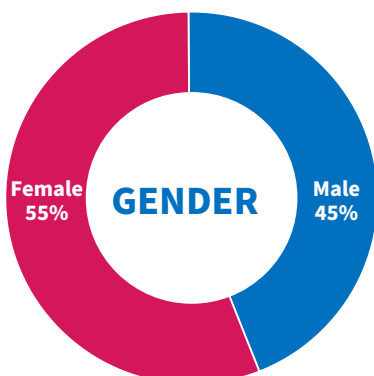
HHCYC serves children and youth from all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds in Riverside County. Whether it's with parents, siblings, grandparents or kin, we recognize the love and stability of a family is the best foundation for a child's happiness and development. When there is a delay in finding a foster home, HHCYC offers culturally appropriate, trauma-informed services to create a safe and supportive environment where young people can maintain their cultural identity and community connections. We strive to improve their overall well-being and success

by building trust, so they know they are seen, heard and understood.

### Preferred Placement Progression

1. Remain with parents/guardians when safe
2. Non-offending parent
3. Relative/Family friend (kin)
4. Home-based care
5. Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program

## Who We Served at HHCYC





# Harmony Haven Children and Youth Center: Where Hope is a Promise

In a major milestone for Children’s Services, Riverside County closed escrow in Fiscal Year 2023/24 on the former Childhelp, USA campus in Beaumont. The transaction marked the beginning of the county’s first Transitional Shelter Care Facility for foster children between ages 0 and 17 years. In March 2024, the State of California licensed Harmony Haven Children and Youth Center as a 72-hour shelter.

“We are committed to providing a safe and stabilizing environment during critical moments of uncertainty, when children are experiencing disruptions in their placement,” says HHCYC’s Deputy Director, Dana Young. “HHCYC is designed to be a sanctuary of care and healing.”

Nestled within a sprawling 120-acre campus with massive olive trees and rolling foothills, HHCYC’s footprint includes four cottages with a total of 48 beds, bathrooms, living areas, kitchens, and flexibility to accommodate the evolving needs of youth and staff. The larger campus includes a gymnasium, playground and ball fields, an educational space, and a range of administrative facilities which are being modernized to accommodate new services.

Currently, only about 37% of the county’s foster youth

are placed with family members after being removed from their parents. The goal is to see at least 75% of Riverside County’s foster youth placed with family. The remaining majority of youth are in foster homes or Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Treatment Programs (formerly called group homes). Advocates say more support is needed for children and teens in crisis.

Nicole Ford, Administrative Services Manager at HHCYC, says the goal is to find youth a stable home within 72 hours of their arrival, but a few with complex needs often relating to behaviors linked to abuse and neglect can remain onsite for weeks or months while an appropriate home environment is identified.

“Our kids arrive with complex needs. They’ve experienced trauma, abuse, and neglect. These kids are hurting. Some struggle to regulate their emotions and behaviors or form meaningful connections.

“We need foster homes, adoptive families, and the community to rally around these children. These kids deserve and need our support,” Ford says.

Shortages in qualified foster homes is a challenge nationwide. The challenges are heightened by a

reduction in congregate settings, new laws that restrict out-of-state placements, and very few secure facilities and supportive services equipped to meet the needs of youth who require a higher level of care, and who are not prepared for a traditional home environment.

HHCYC and its partners are addressing the challenges through a multi-pronged approach that includes stabilizing at-risk families to prevent them from ever entering into the child welfare system, recruiting more qualified homes, preferably extended family or kin, and working tirelessly to support existing caregivers in an effort to increase the success rate of youth thriving in their homes.

Collaboration between RUHS Behavioral Health, Beaumont Unified School District, the Department of Child Support Services, Riverside County Probation, Riverside County Office of Education and others is making the transformative work possible at HHCYC.

“It’s exciting to see that we are changing the trajectory of young lives,” Ford says. “Here at Harmony Haven, we are making every effort to equip them with resources, care and opportunities. Healing is not immediate or simple, but it is possible,” Ford says. “Hope is not a concept here. It’s a commitment we make to our kids every day.”



## Continuous Quality Improvement to Reduce Length of Stay

Staff and stakeholders held a Rapid Improvement Event (RIE) in March 2025 aimed at reducing the days of stay for youth at HHCYC. This effort resulted in a streamlined process, says HHCYC Deputy Director Dana Young.

“This initiative highlights our commitment to quality improvement and the delivery of compassionate and effective youth-centered services,” Young says. “The RIE is a model for how we problem-solve our key issues and move forward on a pathway of success.”

An RIE takes a team-based approach to evaluating and implementing improvements in processes and activities. The next phase will involve implementation and monitoring of key outcomes, including a reduction in days of stay and improved communications. The results will be assessed and refined to ensure progress is maintained over time.



## New Services for Children and Youth to Fill Critical Gap in Behavioral Health Continuum of Care

As a short-term transitional shelter, the Harmony Haven Children and Youth Center is part of a much broader plan by Riverside County to transform the surrounding 120-acre campus and facilities into a vibrant hub of integrated behavioral health and wellness services for children and youth.

In May 2025, Riverside University Health System—Behavioral Health secured a \$149.7 million state grant to fund services at the Harmony Haven Children and Youth Wellness Center. The project will feature services for children and adolescents, including psychiatric residential treatment, adolescent substance use disorder services, behavioral health urgent care, and outpatient programming with varying levels of intensity. The project is slated for completion sometime in spring/summer of 2028.

“Many youth at HHCYC struggle with behavioral health and substance-use disorders rooted in their traumatic life experiences,” says Bridgette Hernandez, Assistant Director of DPSS Children’s Services, which operates HHCYC. “Because there have historically been few local services, we’ve had to send some of our most vulnerable youth to neighboring counties for inpatient treatment, delaying their care and distancing them from their communities.”

The buildings to house the new services will occupy about 120,000 square feet on the 120-acre campus. Funding for the project was included in awards for launch-ready projects from the Proposition 1 Bond Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program, approved by California voters in 2024.



guests and staff. The coming campus will meet youth where they are developmentally and emotionally, whether in shared spaces, individual support settings, or through integrated behavioral health care.

“Bringing accessible high-quality services will be a game changer for local youth and families,” says Hernandez, praising the collaborative effort to close longstanding gaps in behavioral health services for children and teens. “This campus will positively impact generations of youth and families. It’s definitely a new day in Riverside County.”



“We’re delivering our biggest win yet,” Gov. Gavin Newsom said in a news release. “Whether it’s crisis stabilization, inpatient services, or long-term treatment, we’re ensuring that individuals can access the right care at the right time.”

Since acquiring the former Childhelp USA site in June 2023, multiple county partners including Riverside University Health System, Department of Public Social Services, County Executive Office, Housing and Workforce Solutions, Probation, and First 5 Riverside County, have collaborated on a plan for the location, to help address critical and longstanding gaps in services for vulnerable youth. The property makes a perfect landscape for opportunity.

The Harmony Haven Children and Youth Center 72-hour shelter with four cottages and an intake center occupies just seven of the 120 acres. The coming behavioral health center will incorporate trauma-informed principles that foster connections to nature,

# From Fentanyl to Sexual Exploitation: Youth in Foster Care Navigate Deep Trauma and Complex Challenges

**F**inding safe, qualified homes for foster youth—especially teens—can be a challenge. As a Regional Manager for the Youth and Community Resources Region, Emilee Tran helps lead efforts to place hundreds of Riverside County children and teens each year, from medically fragile infants needing specialized care to teenagers transitioning into adulthood. Despite decreasing numbers of youth in foster care locally and nationally, foster homes are disappearing even faster, making placements more difficult than before.

In Riverside County, social workers sometimes place hundreds—if not thousands—of calls to secure just one placement, particularly for older youth. “Many foster families prefer younger children,” Tran explains. “Infants and toddlers don’t come with as many emotional and behavioral challenges. That leaves teenagers with fewer options, increasing their vulnerability to instability, exploitation, and substance abuse.”

“Teenagers in foster care carry deep emotional wounds and trauma,” Tran says. “To suppress it, they can resort to self-destructive behaviors.” Running away (AWOLing), substance abuse, and involvement in Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) often stem from their unresolved pain and isolation.

They start thinking, ‘Nobody wants me anyway, so why not?’”

Substance abuse poses a challenge for all walks of life, but youth in foster care face multiple challenges that place them at increased risk, according to the Child Welfare Information Gateway. “We’re seeing more and more fentanyl,” Tran says. “When youth return from AWOLing, drug tests usually show fentanyl—often mixed with cocaine, marijuana or other drugs. We don’t know where it comes from, but it’s there.”



Currently, few local treatment facilities in Riverside County accept minors who present with a combination of substance use and assaultive, aggressive and dangerous behaviors. “We have kids so deep in their addiction that we’re constantly on edge worrying about their safety,” Tran says. Many receive outpatient support from RUHS Behavioral Health clinicians and peer support experts.

A January 2024 article from the online “UCLA Health,” reported that a weekly average of 22 adolescents between 14 to 18 years of age died from drug overdoses nationwide, mostly driven by fentanyl in counterfeit pills. Riverside County and neighboring San Bernardino County were among 19 hotspots researchers identified in the United States.

Riverside County has convened a multidisciplinary committee of Behavioral Health, Emergency Management, Probation, Public Health, Social Service and law enforcement partners to take a multipronged approach to addressing the fentanyl and opioid crisis. New services are coming online in the county and prosecutors are seeking stiff penalties for dealers and traffickers.

A \$149.7 million grant to RUHS Behavioral Health will continue expanding local access to programs. When it opens by summer of 2028, services at the new Harmony Haven Children and Youth Wellness Center will offer critical inpatient and outpatient mental health and substance use treatment to Riverside County children and youth. The facilities and new programs will be directly adjacent to the 72-hour Harmony Haven Children and Youth Center transitional shelter.

Youth in foster care are also at higher risk than their teen counterparts for commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC). Many arrive as victims, with some eventually serving as recruiters, luring others into the same dangerous cycle.

“The recruiter is a victim themselves, and that makes it very difficult for the justice system,” Tran says. At least five to six youth each month at HHCYC are victims of commercial sexual exploitation, and Tran estimates approximately 15% of the teens in YCR have



fallen victim to commercial exploitation. Screening helps identify victims, who are referred for specialized trauma-informed services. But Tran says the allure of false love and independence can make it difficult for youth to want to remain in a stabilizing environment long enough to get the help they need.

Struggles can intensify for teenagers nearing adulthood. By age 16 or 17, reunification with family becomes rarer, and many teens have limited permanent family connections to turn to. The Extended Foster Care (EFC) program extends services to young adults (ages 18–21), allowing them to remain in care in order to receive additional support to youth graduate high school, learn financial management, and gain independent living skills, but many still struggle



without targeted programs addressing trauma and addiction.

“We work with them so that when they’re 21, they’re not a statistic; homeless, incarcerated, or worse,” Tran says.

With more than 3,500 foster children and youth in Riverside County, public agencies and community-based partners are developing a robust integrated system of services to coordinate care and trauma-informed interventions. Intensive new focus is also being put on abuse prevention that identifies at-risk families and gets them the support and help they need to stabilize and stay out of the child welfare system.

“Solutions and children are not cookie cutters,” Tran

emphasizes. “Each one has their own history, their own trauma, and their own way of coping. In Riverside County, we are creating individualized supports through a safety net system that is responsive to their unique needs.”

Without a holistic approach—including expanded treatment options, trauma-informed care, and placement stability—foster youth will continue to struggle against overwhelming odds. “As a community, we must invest in strengthening families to minimize the risk of youth entering foster care,” Tran says. “Each foster youth needs our collective commitment to provide the stability and care they deserve: to heal, thrive, and build a future beyond their trauma.”



# Advocates Urge Stronger Supports (and Legislative Change) for At-Risk Youth

**R**iverside County legislative advocates are working to strengthen support for child welfare agencies serving youth with severe behavioral health needs, many of whom have experienced abuse, exploitation, and neglect.

Leah Sams, Government Affairs Officer for the Department of Public Social Services, says provisions under the law known as California Welfare and Institutions Code Foster Youth Bill of Rights (FYBR) can unintentionally limit the agency's ability to act in the best interests of high-risk foster youth.

For example, some youth in transitional programs like HHCYC – especially those with complex behavioral health needs or cognitive deficits -- frequently elope or go AWOL, complicating efforts to ensure their safety and stability. In many instances, the FYBR restricts staff from interfering with a youth's departure, other than reporting the departure to law enforcement and

appropriate child welfare agencies.

As a result, dependent youth who elope are at risk of becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation. HHCYC cares for at least five to six victims of commercial sex trafficking each month, most of them girls. Sams, a former social worker, notes it's widely recognized within the field that traffickers exploit vulnerable youth through grooming tactics, using deception and coercion to assert control over them.

"This grooming process often causes victims to distrust authority figures and resist interventions," Sams says. "Addressing these issues requires trauma-informed care and strong support systems, but also policies that recognize the complexities of exploitation and recovery and necessitate creative solutions."

Similarly, foster youth with mental health diagnoses have the right to refuse their prescribed psychotropic



”

**It takes bold, dedicated leaders** not just to recognize the inherent care gap here, but **to advocate for creative solutions** to some of these longstanding policy barriers.

medications, which can result in worsening symptoms, relapse, and other dangers. Sams says stakeholders value and understand that the FYBR upholds trauma-informed principles to ensure foster youth receive support in the least restrictive environments possible. However, additional safeguards should be considered for the highest-risk group within this population.

Advocates are not looking to eliminate the provisions in FYBR, which California lawmakers adopted in 2001 and expanded in 2020 to include dozens of specific rights for foster youth; rather, administrators like Sams say adjustments are needed to help our most vulnerable dependent youth whose complex behaviors can dramatically impact their decision-making and well-being. Sams recently joined policy leaders from the Riverside County Executive Office to raise awareness and explore solutions with Sacramento lawmakers.

“It’s a balancing act and we simply want to strike a better balance to safeguard the most at-risk group of kids,” she says.

Growing partnerships with regional and statewide associations are also helping advance policy priorities for Children’s Services in Riverside County and across Southern California. Sams is also leading efforts through bimonthly legislative meetings with internal stakeholders at DPSS and the Executive Office, refining proposals and aligning messaging to strengthen advocacy efforts.

“Our legislative priorities have a direct human impact,” Sams says. “We’re talking about people’s lives, and in this case, the lives of our most vulnerable children who fell into their circumstances. It takes bold, dedicated leaders not just to recognize the inherent care gap here, but to advocate for creative solutions to some of these longstanding policy barriers.”



## Service Integration: A Holistic Approach to Strengthening Families in Riverside County

Preventing child abuse and neglect requires a broad, integrated community approach that prioritizes the well-being of children and families before they fall into crises. Riverside County is leading the way with a comprehensive approach that connects families and children with vital resources, ensuring they receive the support they need to build resilience and thrive.

The recently established Riverside County Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) within the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) is spearheading efforts to create strong partnerships with health plans, care providers, community-based organizations, school districts, and others. By working collectively, these groups can provide at-risk families with essential tools and services that promote stability, resilience, and prevent involvement in the child welfare system.

Another key initiative within DPSS is the Linkages program, a collaboration between CalWORKs and Child Welfare that provides wraparound case management for at-risk families with child welfare involvement. This innovative program not only promotes child safety and family well-being but also helps parents achieve financial self-sufficiency. By addressing economic challenges alongside child welfare concerns, Linkages fosters long-term stability for families and reduces foster-care entry.

Additionally, multiple public agencies have joined together through RivCoONE, a shared platform that helps families identify their needs and connect them to a broad range of services, including mental health and medical care, substance use treatment, housing, job training and economic support. An integrated approach ensures that families receive timely, coordinated help, reducing barriers to access and strengthening communities from within.

By forging a strong foundation of support for children and families, Riverside County is creating a future where fewer children experience the trauma of abuse, neglect, or family separation. Through collaboration, resource-sharing, and strategic intervention, county and community partners are forging a pathway for child welfare that prioritizes prevention and empowers family safety and success.



# Partnerships and Activities: Building Blocks for Positive Experiences



## Beaumont Unified Lays Groundwork for Onsite Education

Maintaining stability and community connections in a time of uncertainty is important for youth in care and can significantly impact their well-being and academic outcomes. The California Education Code ensures foster youth have the ability to remain in their school of origin unless it is determined that transferring is in their best interest. Staff at HHCYC work closely with youth and their districts of origin to ensure academic goals are met and supported, although some youth choose not to remain in their schools of origin.

HHCYC is coordinating with Beaumont Unified School District to bring a teacher and aide to the

HHCYC campus in coming months. Curriculum will be supported by the 21st Century Independent Study program. All youth can participate in the onsite program with approval from their educational rights holder, unless court orders require youth to attend their school of origin.

“Making sure our youth are provided every opportunity to succeed at school, achieve graduation and follow the path of their dreams is an extremely important part of our role,” says Dana Young, Deputy Director at HHCYC. “We are committed to helping each youth achieve their full potential.”



## Recreational Activities Promote Fitness and Confidence

Our youth recreational and sporting programs provides dynamic and engaging opportunities for physical activity and team building. Off-site excursions include trampoline jumping, rock climbing, and bowling, providing participants with exciting ways to challenge themselves and develop coordination. On-site, HHCYC hosts a variety of sports such as basketball, football, volleyball, and jump rope, fostering teamwork and sportsmanship. These activities promote physical fitness, strengthen peer relationships and build self-confidence. The program will continue to expand to bring new experiences and resources to HHCYC youth and support continued growth and enthusiasm.



## Youth Find Joy in Art

The youth arts and crafts program at HHCYC is thriving, fostering creativity and self-expression. Through tie-dye projects, DIY crafts, and canvas painting, participants explore various artistic mediums while developing their skills and confidence. During the holidays, seasonal crafts are incorporated, celebrating festivities with themed creations that bring joy and cultural awareness. The program enriches artistic talent and community bonds. The program will continue to expand its offerings and introduce new techniques to support growth and engagement for HHCYC's young artists.

# Friday Night Live Brings Good Fun and Helps Builds Relationships

Friday Night Live, a youth-adult partnership sponsored by RUHS Behavioral Health, continues to be a cornerstone of youth engagement with a special focus on support for substance use prevention. The program brings the community together twice a month for an evening of fun and connection. Hosted in the campus gym, Friday Night Live events foster social interaction and teamwork while providing a safe space for young

people to unwind and build relationships. With a lively DJ, fresh popcorn, and a variety of activities, Friday Night Live offers a dynamic experience. Activities have incorporated inflatables, tricycles, and Big Jenga, ensuring accessibility for all participants. New elements will be added to the program to keep the experiences fresh and engaging for youth.





## Onsite Behavioral Health Support Creates Rapport and Empowers Resilience

The HHCYC behavioral health initiative has been instrumental in supporting the well-being of youth, with behavioral health staff now onsite full time providing individual and group therapy sessions. Through individualized check-ins, clinicians build strong rapport with participants, offering counseling and guidance tailored to the needs of each youth. The presence of trained clinicians generates a safe

and supportive environment, allowing youth to openly discuss challenges and practice valuable coping strategies. Additionally, clinicians collaborate with staff, ensuring a holistic approach to mental health and wellness. Services will continue to expand, strengthening our commitment to youth empowerment and resilience.

# Increased Community Support Contributes to Well-Being of Youth at HHCYC



*Satti Brown, Senior Services Manager at KB Home Inland and Lisa Walcker, Regional Manager at DPSS, at the Summer Fun Day in July.*

**A**s they become connected to opportunities to help, Inland business leaders are rallying to provide youth in care with support and resources. Advocates like DPSS Regional Manager Lisa Walcker say the community has a heart for children whose lives have been upended by abuse and neglect. Many people want to do more, she says.

Walcker also serves as a development director raising support for foster youth through an agreement with Riverside University Health System—Foundation. “We are just at the beginning of our efforts to create a sustainable pathway for our community to provide greater support to our kids,” Walcker says.

“Providing normal activities, outings and resources helps them feel a sense of belonging and stability, to experience their childhood in a way that is positive and reinforcing to their self-esteem.”

With sponsorship from KB Home, Inland Empire Division, public health leaders from Loma Linda University Health, Walcker spearheaded HHCYC’s first Summer Fun Day in July. More than 20 youth joined in hours of pickleball with staff from the university. The day included a catered Italian lunch, Kona Ice truck and

more than \$400 in gift cards to local eateries and coffee shops. In HHCYC’s first year of licensure, community members and business organizations contributed tens of thousands of dollars and donations to meet the needs and enrich the experiences of its youth.

“Our youth engaged in positive behaviors,” Walcker said. “They laughed, played and genuinely enjoyed themselves. One initially sullen participant ended up playing all afternoon and concluded her day on a very positive note.”

Over the Christmas holidays, staff from the Department of Child Support Services created personalized gifts for each youth and, on another occasion, Riverside Sheriff’s Department hosted an onsite barbecue for youth and staff.

Solomon Shapiro, a former foster dad who helped support a recent fundraising event for Riverside County Foster Youth, said supporting vulnerable children is imperative. “Being able to raise money to make sure they have what they need is very important to me,” Shapiro says. “You can have an influence on someone’s life for the rest of their life. You could be their last foster home and that would be a beautiful thing.”



# Social Services Staff the Heartbeat of Harmony Haven



## Induction Training Empowers Success

HHCYC held its first induction graduation in February. Curriculum tailored specifically for the HHCYC environment was developed by Regional Manager Brian Satterfield and Staff Development Officer Ashley Castro. Together, Satterfield and Castro led the program with a focus on equipping staff with essential skills, knowledge and best practices. About a dozen staff completed the training.

Induction for Residential Care staff is a structured onboarding process that introduces staff to their roles, organizational values, and workplace expectations. By ensuring staff receive the support and knowledge they

need, HHCYC and its partners are empowering staff for success and enhancing outcomes for youth.

“This program lays the foundation for new staff to deliver exceptional care to youth from the start,” says Staff Development Manager Robin Myers. “The collaboration between Staff Development Services and HHCYC leadership exemplifies our commitment to continuous learning and staff retention. This first cohort is only the beginning. We are on a mission to cultivate a vibrant culture of learning, engagement and excellence at Harmony Haven.”



**HHCYC Staff of the Year, L-R:** *Regional Manager Michelle Carrillo, Social Services Supervisor of the Year Kristin Arrington, Administrative Services Staff of the Year Brenda Caporaso, Social Services Practitioner of the Year Brittany Ledbetter, Support Staff of the Year Wendy Abarca, Regional Manager Heidi Lombardi, Deputy Director Dana Young.*

## Staff Maintain 24/7 Safe Haven for Youth Awaiting Homes

HHCYC provides a vital bridge in Riverside County’s continuum of foster care services, linking youth to a safe space where they can stabilize and have their immediate needs addressed while waiting for placement in a caring home.

The team of 110 Residential Care staff, supervisors, managers, and support staff at HHCYC are specially trained to deliver trauma-informed services and help youth navigate the emotional challenges stemming from their experiences. For many, their work at HHCYC is a mission to help vulnerable youth build resilience and hope. Recognizing the profound impact of child abuse and neglect on a youth’s physical and emotional development, staff are committed to creating a healing environment rooted in trust while keeping youth connected to their families, communities and kin.

Brittany Ledbetter, HHCYC’s 2024 Social Services Practitioner of the Year, has always aspired to be a voice for youth, ensuring they know they have someone who believes in their ability to thrive. In her role as a social services practitioner, Ledbetter has positively impacted the lives of many youths, each with their own unique story to tell.

“While they are at Harmony Haven, we work to ensure our youth have a supportive environment where they can grow until they transition to a home environment,” says Ledbetter. She began her career at HHCYC more than two years ago and has volunteered for six years as a mentor through Big Brothers, Big Sisters. “I am incredibly grateful to be part of such an amazing program that does everything possible to help youth discover and reach their full potential.”

Deputy Director Dana Young emphasizes the collective impact HHCYC staff have on the well-being and future success of the youth they serve. “Every staff member plays a crucial role in supporting positive outcomes for our youth. Each contribution is essential to the greater mission. This is why we are here.”





## Pro-ACT Training Promotes Safety

HHCYC staff undergo 20 hours of crisis communication and de-escalation training every two years, with refresher classes in between, to help them manage youth who are demonstrating aggressive, assaultive or self-injurious behaviors.

The training helps staff recognize the impending signs of danger and to intervene as quickly as possible before a situation becomes volatile, says Regional Manager Brian Satterfield. All staff who engage with

youth are required to undergo the training. Each youth's specific baseline behaviors and emotional 'triggers' are outlined in their services and care plans, which are carefully reviewed in advance, so staff are aware of their individual needs and behaviors.

"Emergency interventions are deployed on a continuum with the safety and well-being of both the youth and staff being our first priority," Satterfield says.



OHW coaches Rebekah Taylor and Lonetta Richardson Bryan with DPSS staff during a recess break.

# Office of Health and Wellness Offers Onsite Peer and Team Support

HHCYC is a 24/7 refuge for youth in foster care facing placement disruptions, offering immediate, compassionate support to those in crisis. Whether seasoned social workers or new staff, every team member is committed to guiding youth through grief, uncertainty, and emotional turmoil.

To strengthen staff resilience in this complex environment, peer coaches from the DPSS Office of Health and Wellness (OHW) provide confidential coaching, team-building exercises, and post-critical incident support. Clinical therapist and OHW peer

coach Rebekah Taylor underscores HHCYC’s vital role in supporting Children’s Services across the county: “Thankfully, we now have a centralized campus where staff can meet the unique needs of youth in crisis.”

OHW coaches also support HHCYC staff in helping youth process grief and other emotions that arise. “I understand the challenges of social work firsthand, and it’s a privilege to support Harmony Haven’s dedicated team through the Office of Health and Wellness,” says Taylor, herself a former social worker.



**THRIVE! IN SOCIAL SERVICES**

ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF EVENTS/DAYS	PARTICIPANTS ENGAGED
Coach Stationed at HHCYC	14	145
Individual Peer Coaching	15	15
Recess	7	149
Post Critical Incident Response	2	2
Group Coaching	3	16

# Facility Improvements Breathe New Life Into Campus for Youth and Families



**M**any shuttered buildings and recreational areas on the former Child Help USA campus were more than 60 years old and in need of modernization when Riverside County closed escrow in Fiscal Year 2023/24. Since then, teams from DPSS Facilities have been working to prioritize repairs and create warm, inviting spaces for children and youth, staff and guests at the Harmony Haven Children and Youth Center. Additionally, multiple stakeholders are providing input into a master plan with an eye on future permanent onsite medical, behavioral health, education, recreational and social services, including supports for transitional age foster youth. In coming years, the campus is expected to grow into a regional hub of resources and supports for Riverside County's youth and families.

# Completed Projects Align with 2025 Goals

## Cottage Sidewalk Restoration

- The pathways between cottages were previously riddled with cracks and tripping hazards. These sidewalks have been resurfaced, significantly improving safety and accessibility for residents and staff.

## Cottage Roadway Repaving

- The main roadway surrounding the cottages required extensive resurfacing due to potholes, surface erosion, and tree root intrusion. Repairs span from the Founder's Lounge to the dead-end near Cottage Two.

## Fire Truck Turnaround Construction

- To enhance emergency response capabilities, a designated fire truck turnaround has been built behind

Cottage Three, allowing first responders to navigate and exit efficiently during fire or medical emergencies.

## Intake Center Renovation *(Below)*

- Previously serving as a chapel for non-specific spiritual gatherings, the building has been transformed into the Harmony Haven Intake Center, now serving as a welcoming space for incoming youth.
  - o The newly renovated facility provides:
    - o A comfortable environment for orientation and onboarding.
    - o A safe space for new residents to settle in upon arrival.
    - o A structured intake process ensuring smooth transitions into the cottages.



**Before**



**After**

# Completed Projects Align with 2025 Goals

## **Cottage Bed Upgrades**

- At the time the property was purchased, items were outdated and needed replacement. After carefully evaluating options, single-piece bed frames were selected for their durability, ease of maintenance, and modern aesthetic, ensuring a comfortable and long-lasting sleeping arrangement for residents.

## **Gym Kitchen Modernization** *(Right)*

- With 48 youth staying in Harmony Haven, it became clear that a dedicated cooking facility was essential to meet daily meal demands.
- Upgrades included the installation of a state-of-the-art, fully electric six-burner stove and range, providing the capacity to prepare large-scale meals efficiently.

## **Network Infrastructure Upgrade**

- The campus network has been upgraded to 1-gigabyte service through Frontier, enhancing connectivity and digital access.
- Each cottage now features four advanced ARUBA wireless access points, ensuring seamless, high-speed internet coverage for all users.



## ONGOING PROJECTS

### Cottage Perimeter Fencing

- An 8-foot steel perimeter fence is being installed to encompass all four cottages, significantly enhancing security and safety.
- Multiple pedestrian exits will be strategically placed in compliance with California fire code to ensure safe evacuation routes. Each cottage will also feature a manual maintenance gate, allowing authorized service vehicles access for upkeep and landscaping.
- The fence will serve as a preventative safety measure, ensuring that only authorized individuals have access to the youth residing within Harmony Haven Cottages.

### Safety and Security Enhancements

- An outdoor campus-wide camera system is being upgraded.
- To further increase security within the cottages, access control readers and badge authentication will

be installed. This system will eliminate the need for physical keys, ensuring that only authorized personnel can enter restricted areas, minimizing security risks.

### Lighting Installation

- The sidewalk pathways between cottages will receive 60 post-mounted lights designed to improve nighttime visibility.
- The upgraded lighting system will enhance safety for both staff and youth, ensuring clear passage along all walkways during evening hours.

### Cottage Renovations and ADA Upgrades

- Each cottage will be getting internal and exterior upgrades. Cottages will receive new doors, water bottle filling stations, upgraded ventilation for the kitchen stoves, and access control integration.
- Additionally, Cottages 2 & 3 will receive ADA upgrades to their restrooms and kitchens.



# Fiscal Years 2024/25 and 2025/26



LINE ITEM	FY 24/25	FY 25/26 SUBMITTED	INCREASE/ (DECREASE)	NOTES
Facility	\$794,120	\$904,998	\$110,878	Increase in facility costs, ISFs
Essentials	\$466,925	\$554,600	\$87,675	Increase in food, training, and toiletries costs
Contracted Services	\$1,896,459	\$1,896,459	\$-	No MOU was approved
Staffing	\$14,858,545	\$15,399,233	\$540,687	Increase in staffing costs
Overtime	\$1,748,346	\$1,620,000	\$(128,346)	Decrease in shift differential costs
Contracted Security	\$3,321,580	\$3,321,580	\$-	No change
RSO Contract	\$735,000	\$770,000	\$35,000	Estimated increase to the RSO contact
Ancillary	\$111,144	\$241,600	\$130,456	Increase in transportation costs
Tenant Improvements (Annual Improvements)	\$500,000	\$-	\$(500,000)	Decrease of the one-time improvement funding
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$24,432,120</b>	<b>\$24,708,470</b>	<b>\$276,350</b>	

# Department of Public Social Services HHCYC Leadership



**CHARITY DOUGLAS**  
DPSS Director



**BRIDGETTE HERNANDEZ**  
Assistant Director Children's Services



**ALLISON GONZALEZ**  
Assistant Director



**DANA YOUNG**  
Deputy Director



**MICHELLE CARRILLO**  
Regional Manager



**NICOLE FORD**  
Administrative Services Manager II



**LETICIA POP**  
Regional Manager



**BRIAN SATTERFIELD**  
Regional Manager

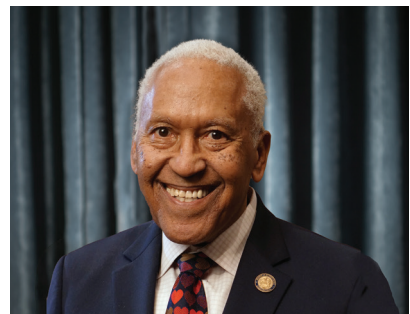
# Riverside County Leadership



**JOSE MEDINA**  
First District Supervisor



**KAREN SPIEGEL**  
Second District Supervisor



**CHUCK WASHINGTON**  
Third District Supervisor



**V. MANUEL PEREZ**  
Fourth District Supervisor



**YXSTIAN GUTIERREZ**  
Fifth District Supervisor



**JEFF VAN WAGENEN**  
County Executive Officer



**JUAN PEREZ**  
Chief Operating Officer



**KIMBERLY BRITT**  
Assistant County Executive Officer





**RIVERSIDE COUNTY**  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES



Riverside County Department of Public Social Services  
**Harmony Haven Children and Youth Center | Children's Services Division**

10281 Kidd Street, Second Floor  
Riverside, California 92503  
[www.rivcodpss.org](http://www.rivcodpss.org)



@RivCoDPSS



@RivCoDPSS



@RivCoDPSS



Riverside County DPSS