

S E R V I N G C O M M U N I T I E S T O I M P R O V E L I V E S



Annual Report
2020/2021



Under the leadership and guidance of the Imperial County Board of Supervisors and County Executive Officer, the Imperial County Department of Social Services (ICDSS) administers Federal, State, and County social services programs that protect children and adults from abuse or neglect, enable the frail and disabled to remain in their homes, move eligible families from dependency to self-sufficiency and provide public assistance benefits for eligible recipients.



Jesus Eduardo Escobar

Supervisor District 1



Luis A. Plancarte

Supervisor District 2



Michael W. Kelley

Supervisor District 3
Chairman of the Board



Ryan E. Kelley

Supervisor District 4



Ray Castillo

Supervisor District 5



Tony Rouhotas Jr.

County Executive Officer

Director's Message

Welcome to the 2020/2021 Imperial County Department of Social Services (ICDSS) Annual Report. The report is a snapshot of what our people and programs accomplished over the past year with strong support from our community partners, Board of Supervisors, and Executive Office. 2020 was a year of national and local trauma marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, economic devastation, social unrest, and local fire disasters. These events resulted in significant need for the services and programs offered by ICDSS. At the beginning of April, in response to Imperial County's shelter in place order mandating all non-essential businesses to close, we implemented telework as a new business model. With approximately 70% of our staff teleworking and the remainder of employees working onsite to provide emergency and necessary clerical services to enable remote work, ICDSS was able to maintain full service offerings throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.



This annual report demonstrates how our programs support the mission adopted by the Board of Supervisors and how the Department aligned activities to the County's Strategic Plan goals and principles. In this report, you will find examples of how the Department of Social Services met these guiding principles and positively impacted the lives of families in our community. ICDSS is comprised of four divisions, which serve to ensure our county's residents who are most in need become healthy and productive members of the community. In each division, you will find how we accomplished these goals and will serve as evidence of our great work and the imprint ICDSS has on the community of Imperial County.

Moving forward, ICDSS is working to develop innovative ideas that creatively address how we might further enhance and integrate services across our programs, aligning with other County departments and service partners to allow for a more holistic and impactful client experience. As you review this report, you will see our Department's accomplishments and the level of service that our agency provides to the residents of our great county.

I want to thank the ICDSS employees that make up the fabric of our Department. They are the professional workforce in the areas of social work, program eligibility, employment services and administrative services. They tirelessly responded to households affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and delivered support to individuals and families struggling with abuse, poverty, and homelessness. We do not do this work alone, but with the support of numerous government and community partners who share our commitment to improving the safety, health and wellbeing of the residents who call Imperial County home.

Veronica E. Rodriguez

Director, Imperial County Department of Social Services



Leadership Team: Javier Duran, Brenda Pebley, Laura Carrillo, Veronica Rodriguez, Paula Llanas, Claudia De Leon, Iris Montes

The Imperial County Department of Social Services is the second largest County agency comprised of 512 staff members across the Imperial Valley. ICDSS operates under the policy direction of the Imperial County Board of Supervisors, the California Department of Social Services, and California Department of Health Care Services. ICDSS is responsible for planning, implementing, operating and monitoring social services programs that protect children and adults from abuse or neglect, enable the frail and disabled to remain in their homes, move eligible individuals and families from dependency to self-sufficiency and provide public assistance benefits for eligible recipients. Funding for programs comes from Federal, State and County sources. ICDSS assists approximately 60% of Imperial County residents, from newborns to the elderly and was backed by the resources of a \$132 million annual budget for FY 2020-2021.

Aging and Disability Services (ADS) Division

ADS provides protective, in home and nutrition support for older adults and disabled individuals.

Children and Family Services (CFS) Division

CFS provides protection for abused children, facilitation of adoptions, Foster Family home licensing, and the independent living program for emancipating youth.

Transitional Services Division (TSD)

TSD provides CalWORKs, Medi-Cal, CalFresh, Foster Care, and General Relief assistance for low income families and supports self-sufficiency by providing employment services and child care.

Administrative Services Division (ASD)

ASD supports the work of all ICDSS Divisions by providing administrative/fiscal support, information and technology support, staff development, personnel, policy development, and program support.

Imperial Valley Continuum of Care (IVCCC)

Administrative Entity

ICDSS serves as the administrative branch of the Imperial County and IVCCC partnership. The partnership provides leadership in creating a comprehensive countywide network of service delivery to homeless individuals and families, and those at-risk of becoming homeless.

Aging and Disability Services Division



Brenda Pebley

ADS Deputy Director

Aging and Disability Services (ADS) Division strives to support the safety and well-being of vulnerable individuals, elderly/disabled adults and children, through the provision of adult abuse prevention services, intervention and protective services, and support to ensure program recipients can remain safely at home. ADS oversees the following programs:

- **Adult Protective Services**
- **Family Justice Center**
- **In-Home Supportive Services**
- **IHSS Public Authority**

Adult Protective Services (APS)

Provides 24-hour coverage to respond to reports of Elder and/or Dependent Adult Abuse. During this year, APS successfully:

- Investigated an elder abuse case, which resulted in the arrest and prosecution of the perpetrators
- Initiated APS mandated reporter training for local law enforcement agencies
- Established an agreement with local law enforcement regarding the practice for emergency protection orders for dependent adults and elders who are victims of abuse or neglect, and provided training to law enforcement personnel regarding the agreement.
- Completed 1,032 COVID-19 wellness calls.

As an Adult Protective Social Worker, I investigate elderly and dependent adult abuse on a daily basis. I have saved lives in assisting clients with stopping abuse and by advocating for the proper resources that will keep them safe and provide the client a better way of life, while also respecting their right to self-determination. To know that the client is no longer at risk, no longer in fear, and receiving the services needed to be safe is what means a lot to me. Seeing the smiles on their faces and they are being treated with dignity, truly is the most WONDERFUL feeling!



Lisa Gutierrez
APS Social Worker III

Highlights FY 20/21

423

• Preventive Information Referrals Completed

612

• Elder/Dependent Adult Abuse Investigations Completed

1035

• APS Calls Received

4,492

• Masks Distributed to IHSS Recipients

6,894

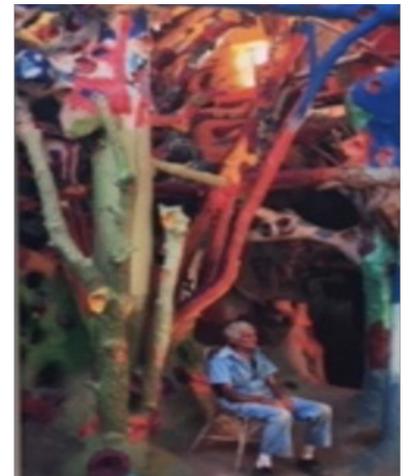
• Masks Distributed to Providers

18,472

• Gloves Distributed to IHSS Recipients

28,168

• Gloves Distributed to Providers



Salvation Mountain
Painting by ADS Client

In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)

IHSS serves 6,322 IHSS recipients and supports 6,388 Providers in partnership with the Public Authority (PA). During this fiscal year, the pandemic has impacted many programs closing and reducing services to the community. IHSS regulations continued to mandate face-to-face assessment for initial applicants. ADS opted to conduct the majority of the visits via telephone, reducing the time spent in an applicant's home to assess safety and obtain signatures. This year, IHSS:

- Social Workers completed e-learning IHSS 101 refresher training provided by the IHSS Training Academy.
- Implemented telephonic IHSS renewal assessments in lieu of in-person assessments.
- Enrolled all 12,710 recipients/providers in the mandated Electronic Visitation Verification/ Telephonic Timesheet System.
- Partnered with Public Health to ensure IHSS recipients and providers received the COVID-19 vaccine.

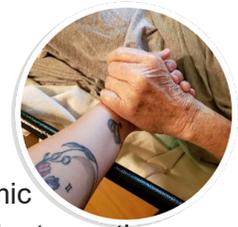
Family Justice Center (FJC)

Family Justice Center (FJC) is a welcoming center that empowers and supports survivors of all ages and their families through comprehensive, holistic services that focus on the whole person. FJC in collaboration with multi-agency services to provide assistance to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, elder abuse, dependent adult abuse and their families. This year, the FJC:

- Acquired equipment and supplies to support a solid infrastructure for the FJC.
- Developed an action plan to expand the number of staff to provide services.

(IHSS) Public Authority

Like the world in 2020, the Public Authority had a different year this FY 20/21. The COVID-19 pandemic required many adjustments in order to continue serving Imperial County IHSS recipients and providers. Recognition and appreciation should be noted for the amazing work done by the independent providers who care for IHSS recipients in Imperial County each and every day. This year IHSS Public Authority:



- Continued mandated Provider enrollment orientations through COVID. The PA team created the required information, normally viewed and discussed in person, and provided these materials via US Mail.
- Mailed 926 packets to new providers.
- Distributed Emergency Protective Gear (EPG) to IHSS Recipients and Providers two times per week. In coordination with United Domestic Workers (UDW), gloves and masks were also distributed in the outlying areas of the County.
- Implemented an Emergency Back-up Provider System, a resource available in the event an IHSS provider is unable to report to work due to COVID exposure.



Goals for Next Year

- Use technology for APS Social Workers with online one-done streamlined services to clients.
- Training for staff to enhance engagement skills with clients and service providers.
- Implement outreach campaign to expand outreach to victims of Domestic Violence and Elder Abuse.
- Streamline IHSS provider orientations using an online or web based system.
- Expand and build a more robust registry of IHSS providers.

Children and Family Services

Children and Family Services (CFS) provides intervention and support services to families and children when allegations of child abuse or neglect are investigated. CFS is committed to protecting the welfare of children, and improving the health and strength of families in Imperial County. CFS collaborates with partners including education, law enforcement and the Health System to provide integrated care and services for at-risk youth. CFS interventions include:

- **Child Abuse Hotline and Emergency Response**
- **Resource Family Approval**
- **Court Intervention & Continuing Services**
- **Betty Jo McNeece Receiving Home**



Iris Montes

CFS Deputy Director

Child Abuse Hotline and Emergency Response

The Child Abuse Hotline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The hotline screens all suspected child abuse reports via telephone or in person. Social Workers answer the calls and determine if the child abuse reports meet the state criteria for investigation. The Emergency Response (ER) Units are responsible for investigating suspected child abuse reports which encompass general neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and commercial sexual exploitation.

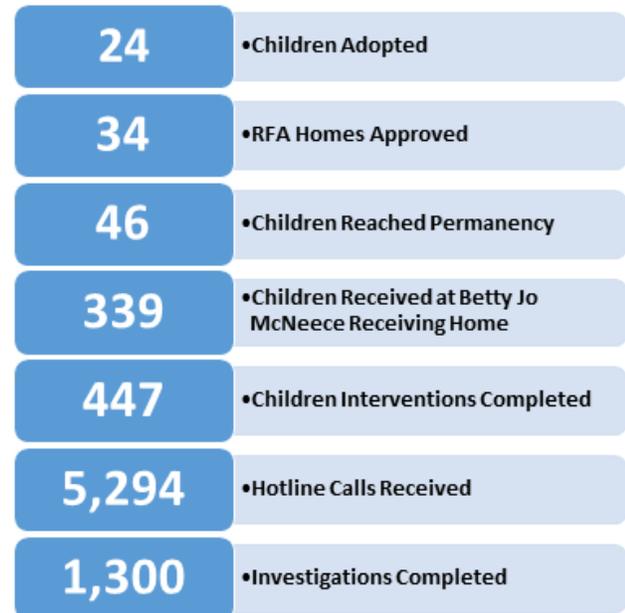
During FY 2020-2021:

- Social Workers adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic and continued conducting in-person child abuse investigations.
- Conducted pandemic outreach in the community regarding child abuse awareness.
- Conducted mandated reported trainings through Zoom virtual classes.

Court Intervention & Continuing Services

Court Intervention and Continuing Services makes contact with every child in their placement home, files court reports timely, responds to and stabilizes crises, testifies in contested hearings, and ascertains all families continue to have access to services, as well as visits with their children via virtual methods. Overall, staff continued to work diligently to provide reasonable services to families, achieve permanency for children, and ascertain the safety of children through the following interventions: **Family Maintenance, Family Reunification, and Permanency.**

Highlights FY 20/21



Resource Family Approval

The preferred placement of children who require out-of-home care is with relatives. Under the Continuum of Care, Resource Family Approvals (RFA) is a child-centered caregiver approval process that combines elements of the current foster parent licensing, relative approval, and approvals for adoption/guardianship processes. Masters level Social Workers conduct the RFA for homes that care for children through reunification with parent caregivers or up to adoption.

Betty Jo McNeece Receiving Home

Betty Jo McNeece Receiving Home (BJMRH) is a 24-hour facility developed by community members over 25 years ago. The facility is a 10-Day Temporary Shelter Care Facility (TSCF) under oversight of the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Community Care Licensing Division. The goal of the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) is to limit the amount of time that children spend in care, especially within group homes or congregate care. ICDSS Employees assigned to BJMRH work under the direction of the Facility Administrator to perform duties related to the day-to-day care and safety of minors placed in the facility; assure that youth's emotional health, developmental and educational needs are met through assessments and referrals appropriate to their needs.



Goals for Next Year

- Utilize data to support CFS Supervisors and Managers in identifying and promoting practices that work well and identifying areas of opportunity.
- Maximize the use of Child and Family Team (CFTs) meetings in engaging families early and increasing permanency by decreasing the number of children removed from their homes and facilitating their quick and safe return home when possible.



Claudia De Leon
TSD Deputy Director
Healthcare and Nutrition

Transitional Services Division

One of County of Imperial’s most significant priorities is to have a healthy community. Overall quality of life increases dramatically when people have access to preventative health care. Not only does their physical health improve, their mental health is boosted, and they have a greater ability to contribute to the local economy through work and educational achievement. The Transitional Services Division (TSD) ensures that eligible vulnerable adults, children and families in need apply for, receive and maintain health care, food and cash benefits to facilitate stability, self-sufficiency and independent living. Programs include:

Healthcare and Nutrition Programs

- Medi-Cal
- CalFresh

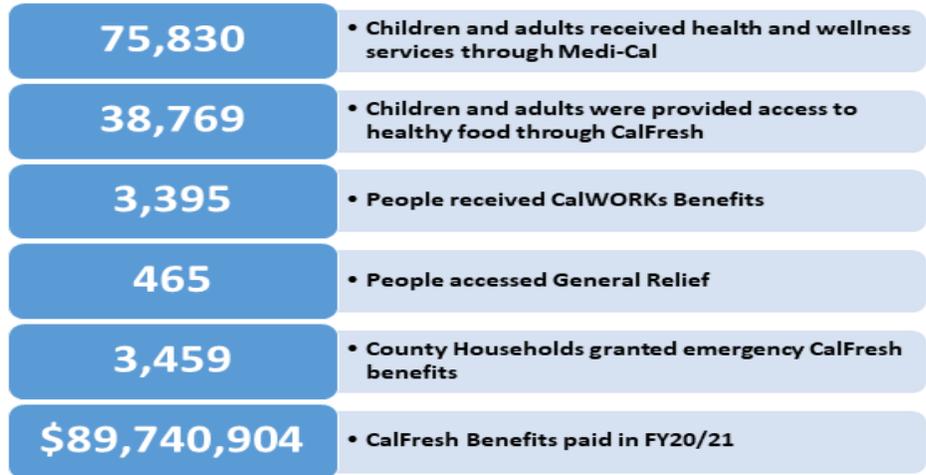
Employment and Financial Assistance

- CalWORKs
- Employment Services



Javier Duran
TSD Deputy Director
Employment and Financial Assistance

Highlights FY 20/21

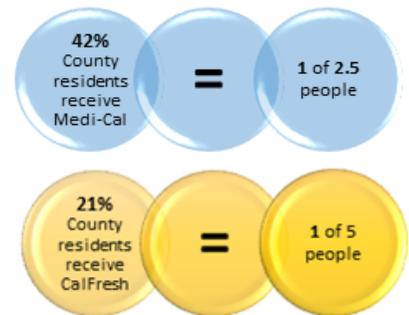


Healthcare and Nutrition

Medi-Cal and CalFresh make up the largest entitlement programs in Imperial County. Medi-Cal is a public health insurance program that provides health care services for low-income individuals including families with children, seniors, persons with disabilities, foster care, pregnant women, and others with special medical needs. CalFresh, assists low-income households by adding to their food budget to help put healthy and nutritious food on the table.

Through the administration of Medi-Cal, eligible community members receive comprehensive medical services. The numbers reflect how Medi-Cal is an essential foundation of the County’s healthcare delivery system.

The CalFresh program is Imperial County’s best defense in the fight against hunger because benefits are long-term and provided directly to the recipient.



My job gives me the opportunity to serve and educate our clients on all of our programs and services, as well as various other resources available in Imperial County. I really enjoy casework, and everything it comes with.



Mary Gonzalez

Employment and Financial Assistance

One of the Department's most important tasks is to provide clients with an income safety net through the CalWORKs program. Through CalWORKs, clients are exposed to employment and educational opportunities and prepares them to capitalize on these chances. Clients in the CalWORKs, CalFresh, and General Assistance programs receive access to ICDSS core employment resources: training and mentorship, job readiness and career enhancement workshops, and work opportunities in a variety of fields.

Welfare-to-Work (WTW) is an employment services program for all adults receiving CalWORKs. The objective of Welfare-to-Work is to help participants become ready for work and maintain work through multiple different programs which leads to economic self-sufficiency. CalWORKs WTW program includes the following services:

- Child Care
- Training and education
- Unsubsidized/subsidized employment
- Housing Support Program
- Supportive services: Behavioral Health, Alcohol/Drug Treatment, Domestic Violence, Counseling, Family Stabilization

The General Relief (GR) program is a stronghold of support for many of whom are homeless and seeking assistance with the basics of daily living. Through the GR program, eligible clients may receive a monthly cash grant for housing, utilities, food, clothing and their personal needs. Just as importantly as providing a cash grant, the GR program helps clients get back on their feet by offering Vocational Services for those who can work and SSI Advocacy referrals for the disabled.

Hello, I participated in Universal Engagement, WEX and Project Work. Thinking back I never realized how valuable these services really are but now I see myself and it is truly amazing how far it can take people who are motivated on chasing their goals. These services helped me gain the knowledge and tools I needed to have a successful career, it helped me awaken the passion that I have for serving the community. Having these services was life changing for me it gave me the experience I needed to be successful. I am thankful for these services and also for the wonderful people I met. I appreciate you all. I won't stop here, I will continue chasing my goals. Thank you!

K. Hernandez



I was able to improve my computer skills and learn programs that I did not know. Excel was one of the programs that I learned and I use this program in my job today more than any other program. I also was able to sharpen my resume writing and complete a strong resume in job club. In Project WORK, I worked in an office setting and was able to learn how to adapt to a lot of different people, situations, experience and will make it an asset for me for future employment. These services meant a lot to me by me being able to refresh my skills and help me to obtain employment and become self-sufficient. I took advantage of the services that they offered to me such as mileage reimbursement for all my WTW activities that I attended. Family Stabilization services helped me with my vehicle repair and new tires. I feel that I came away from the program with the tools and services that the program offered me. Welfare to Work program staff were there when I was going through a bad time in my life.

M. Barraza



Goals for Next Year

- Increase Employment Services and support to outlying communities of the County.
- Promote online access to services and eligibility case management.

Administrative Services Division



Laura Carrillo

ASD Deputy Director

The Administrative Services Division (ASD) is dedicated to assisting all other ICDSS divisions in the delivery of services by providing support in the areas of budget and finance, day to day operations, facilities management, and the coordination of essential resources. ASD employs ethical, knowledgeable, and professional individuals, committed to helping Department staff reach their goals and provide the best customer service to the population served.

Personnel

Responsible for handling all departmental personnel needs for over 500 employees. This unit is in charge of processing payroll and managing all internal personnel processes and documentation.

Issuance and Recovery

Responsible for providing customer assistance with issuance of Electronic Benefit Transaction (EBT) cards. Additionally, this unit is responsible for the recovery and collection of overpayments and submission of State reports.

Clerical Support and MEDS

These units provide support to the operations of the Department and all public assistance programs. Mass quantity of work is generated through these units in an effort to maintain continuity of services delivered to the residents of Imperial County.

System Support

Responsible for providing business and technology solutions to improve the work processes of the Department. This unit provides technical expertise to all eligibility programs. Additionally, they coordinate and manage facility issues.

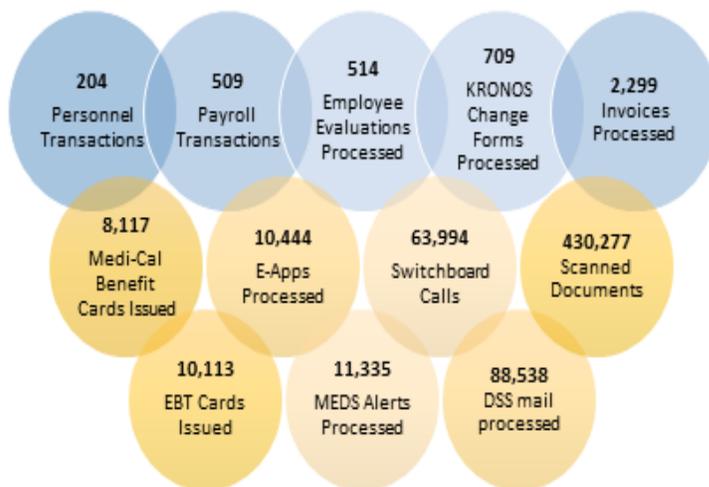
Financial and Accounting Services

Responsible for submitting cost data to the State, which is the mechanism for the County to receive Federal and State funds, to administer all social services programs to County residents.

Program Support

Responsible for delivery of a variety of essential supportive services to all Divisions of the Department. Program Support services range from training, policy interpretation and development, program subject matter expertise, and compliance.

Highlights FY 20/21



The ASD Team at work in FY 20/21:

During fiscal year 20/21, the Administrative Services Division (ASD) was restructured to build a team able to streamline functions. The ASD team :

- Coordinated the reorganization of the Department of Social Services into Divisions
- Procured and established a new learning management system
- Implemented the MyTech tool to coordinate and manage on-line ticket submission for facility work
- Managed the Department of Social Services budget
- In addition, the Program Support unit accomplished the following:



Goals for Next Year

- Modernize and restructure Division processes to streamline workload.
- Launch a modernized Department internet and intranet Website.
- Release the online learning management system training program.
- Develop and Establish Policy and Procedure Unit.
- Procure a time study tracking and an inventory system.
- Migration to new statewide eligibility system (CalSAWS).

IVCCC – Homeless Continuum of Care



Paula Llanas
Assistant Director

Imperial County’s Continuum of Care (CoC) engages organizations in a community-based process that works to end homelessness for all individuals and families throughout the region, to address the underlying causes of homelessness and to lessen the negative impact of homelessness on individuals, families, and communities. The ultimate goal is for homelessness in Imperial County to be rare, brief and non-recurring. Fiscal Year 2020/2021 has been a year of growth for the IVCCC and the County in the homelessness arena. ICDSS contribution includes: **Operating the Homeless Taskforce, Building Staffing Support for the Administrative Entity, and Providing Housing Support for Imperial Valley Community.**

Highlights FY 20/21

- 25** • Housing and food projects supported for the homeless
- 1,700** • Housing services provided for people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless
- \$12,000,000** • In Funds Administers to provide housing and other services to homeless individuals and families

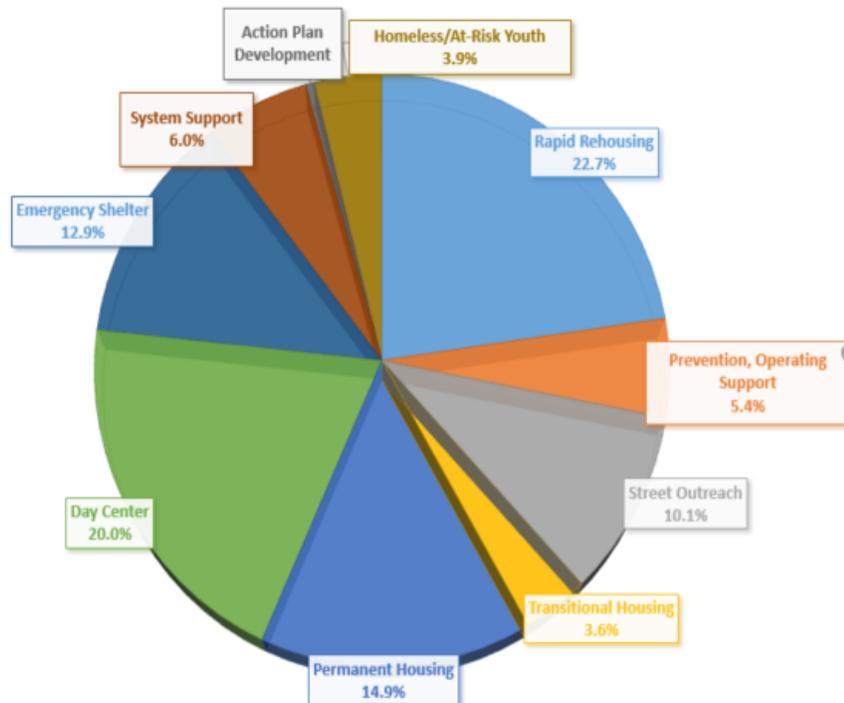


Homeless Taskforce at the ICDSS Assessment Center: Staffed by Behavioral Health Services, ICDSS, and Public Health employees.

Homeless Taskforce

This team implemented and operated the Assessment Center and Project Roomkey during the COVID-19 pandemic. They provided non-congregate shelter options, such as hotels or self-contained trailers, for people experiencing homelessness, and in need of space to isolate, quarantine or practice safe social distancing. Services offered by the Homeless Taskforce have the the goal of protecting human life, and minimizing the strain on health care system capacity.

DESIGNATED GRANTS BY CATEGORY



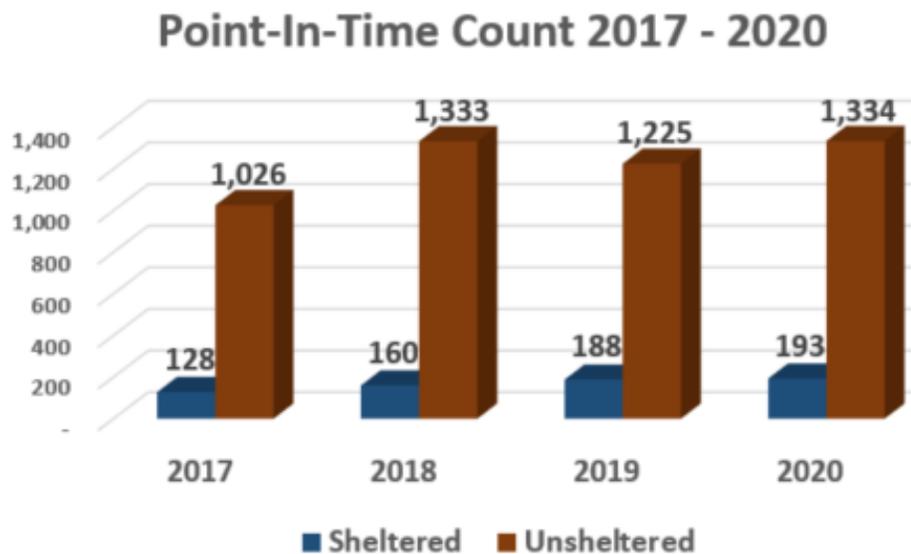
Built a staffing support team for the Administrative Entity

Dedicated team developed and implemented internal procedures that reduced administrative time, which has subsequently been refocused on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of delivery of services. Increase in IVCCC membership participation from organizations within the community. Monthly meeting attendance has improved, which has allowed for invaluable input for existing or future program design.

Housing Support to the Imperial Valley Community

- A total of \$500,000 of funding provided to the Imperial Valley College for the first of its kind tiny homes off-campus neighborhood. This community of twenty-six (26) 170-square-foot homes is dedicated to students experiencing housing insecurity.
- Over \$2,500,000 of funding provided to Catholic Charities for Apagando Las Calles, the remodeling of a building which included adding the following: a modular bathroom for men (at least 2 toilets and 2 urinals), a modular bathroom for women (at least 4 toilets), shower stalls for men and women (at least four) which will be alternated between the two genders on a given day and a laundry area. Additionally, a new commercial kitchen was built in a vacant space near existing building.

Population Impacted by Program Funding



Goals for Next Year

- Update the County Homeless Strategic Plan
- Revamp the Coordinated Entry System and implement an electronic platform to improve effectiveness and continuum of services.
- Increase the number of day centers available through-out Imperial County to expand service.
- Develop Mental Health & Addiction Focused Program for individuals suffering from mental health and/or addiction



Annual Report 2020/2021

Prepared by:

Veronica E. Rodriguez

Director, Imperial County Department of Social Services