

 $\mathsf{Respect} \cdot \mathsf{Compassion} \cdot \mathsf{Fairness} \cdot \mathsf{Courtesy} \cdot \mathsf{Diversity} \cdot \mathsf{Creativity} \cdot \mathsf{Initiative} \cdot \mathsf{Efficiency} \cdot \mathsf{Integrity} \cdot \mathsf{Teamwork} \cdot \mathsf{Thoroughness}$

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

By: Debra Baetz

Dear SSA,

Here we are, well over a month into spring and we are seeing the signs of the season: longer days, blooming flowers and warmer weather. Everywhere we look, it is evident that we are in a season known for renewal and new beginnings.

In looking back at my message to you last year at this time, SSA, the County and the world were faced with an onslaught of challenges and difficulties posed by the



COVID-19 pandemic along with ever-changing federal, state and county health orders. Last April, we lived with a high degree of uncertainty and fear, and yet we were still able to envision and implement what would become amazing, out-of-the-box operational changes and enhancements to ensure the community continues to receive accessible and reliable services. Strength, creativity, resiliency, teamwork and initiative are some themes that resonated as I witnessed your remarkable responses.

This year, those same themes still ring true, but in a different light. Health orders are loosening due to the community's compliance with safety guidance — the wearing of face masks and social distancing — combined with the rapid efforts of the County to vaccinate residents and workers to achieve herd immunity. As a result of these efforts over time, we have subtly transitioned from the lens of a reactive emergency response to one in which we are proactively planning. We have taken all we have learned over the past year to help us reimagine what service delivery may look like as we consider SSA's reopening with full functionality, as well as our future ahead.

CONITENITS

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Many of you are already working on more forward-thinking initiatives, with an eye towards streamlining processes, integrating efforts across divisional and departmental lines and collaborating with our community partners to serve clients more holistically. Some projects are focused on enhancing the client experience in our public lobbies, while others seek to analyze where gaps may exist between eligible recipient populations and those currently served, looking for ways we can close that gap. And yet other teams will collaborate with consultants to look for strategic opportunities that optimize service delivery at both the agency and divisional levels. In looking ahead, that same strength, creativity, resiliency, teamwork and initiative will be required to deliver innovative services to Orange County residents.

You will hear more about these initiatives and projects in the coming weeks and months as further progress is made. As with the season, our possibilities are limitless.

I want to close with what I said last year at this time that I believe still applies today. As an Agency family, we have faced challenges before, and we will face challenges again. What will not change is the fact that as an Agency and a family, we will overcome whatever comes our way together. Our recent history has demonstrated that, and I am confident that as long as we are moving in alignment towards common goals and objectives, we will continue to accomplish amazing things.

On behalf of the SSA Executive Team, we thank you for your dedication, compassion and the lasting impact you make in the lives of your colleagues and all those we serve. Be well and happy spring!

Debra J. Baetz SSA Director



SSA SPOTLIGHT: EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE

IN-HOME SUPPORTIVE SERVICES APPLICATION UNIT

By: Kimberly Karpan, Eligibility Supervisor and Julie Rosales, Social Services Supervisor II

As an Agency, we at SSA are continuously searching for ways to enact our core values and make a difference in the lives of those we serve. Teamwork and efficiency are values that were collaboratively put into action in December 2020, when ten highly experienced Eligibility Technicians and an Eligibility Supervisor from SSA's Assistance Programs (AP) division were transferred to the Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services (FSS & AS) division's In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program. The goal was to form a specialized Application Unit that processes applications for both IHSS and Medi-Cal programs to better serve Orange County's aged, disabled adults and minor recipients. The creation of this specialized IHSS unit has been a multifaceted, joint effort to bridge the gap across divisions and provide outstanding customer service to the diverse populations we serve.

Taking on this ambitious project has required an "all-hands-on-deck" approach. From December 2020 through April 2021, various trainings have been provided to ensure the successful implementation of the new IHSS Application Unit. This team effort included support from the Santa Ana Regional Center, Training and Career Development (TCD), IHSS program and California Department of Social Services State trainings. Several teams came together to develop operational procedures to make the creation of this new unit possible, including: FSS Divisional Operations, AP Operations and Policy Team, Orange's Call Processing Center, FSS Date Entry Technician Hub and the IHSS management team. Additional support was provided by Garden Grove Regional Center, Anaheim Regional Center and Santa Ana Regional Center staff to identify various Medi-Cal processes and liaison duties that can be used to optimally assist IHSS clients.

Effective March 1, 2021, an IHSS applicant can now apply for both IHSS and Medi-Cal services simultaneously, as applicable. This ensures quicker processing times and an overall streamlined path to critical services for those who qualify. The partnership between the divisions demonstrates the Agency's ongoing commitment to excellence and providing quality services to our community.



Top Row (left to right): Julie Rosales, Kimberly Karpan, Lidia Sanchez, Loan English, Daisy Ramirez, Ellen Park and Jami Nguyen

Bottom (left to right): Jeremie Matsuda, Marisol Cervantez, My Tu Nguyen, Nancy Camargo, Dulce Padilla, Roger Media and Sousan Lotfian

Congratulations to the IHSS Application Unit on being selected as the SSA Spotlight for the month of April 2021! This achievement could not have been possible without the flexibility, open-mindedness and dedication to success of all who participated in this initiative.

MEET SSA'S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Name: Howard Thomas

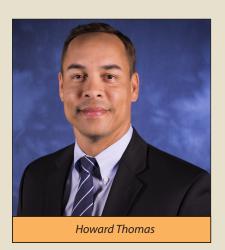
Title: SSA Accounting Manager (Administrative Manager III)

Areas covered in your position: Collections & Accounts Receivable, Claims, District

Accounting, Payroll and General Accounting

Years of service with the County of Orange: 22 years

Divisions worked/previous experience: Prior to coming to SSA, I was the OC Public Works Accounting Manager for eight years. I have also worked at HCA Accounting as the Claims and Financial Reporting Manager. Several years ago, I was with the SSA Accounting Department as a Senior Accountant and was involved in the implementation of VTI for SSA. If you were around here in 2002-2003 you may remember me.



Fun facts about you (hobby, favorite food, movie, sports team, etc.): I enjoy playing baseball with my three sons and help coach their little league teams. I have also performed two marriage ceremonies and delivered a baby. I hope I don't have to do either of those things again.

Professional development tips for staff: Once you determine where you want to end up, understand as much about that position as you can before you go for it. Being great in your current position is typically not enough to get promoted. There are often different skill sets needed as you advance in your career. Understand what those skill sets are and work on them, so you are ready when it is time for that all-important interview. It's a lot easier to promote someone who is already demonstrating the desired qualities.

2021 FACT ANNUAL CONFERENCE

You are invited to attend the 2021 FaCT Annual Conference on May 19-20, 2021 via Zoom. Please join the FaCT team in learning about strategies and resources that focus on strengthening families in Orange County. For more information about the event, please refer to the adjacent flyer. Participation in this event requires manager/supervisor approval.

To register, please visit: www.factoc.org/ <u>factconference/</u>. Staff interested in attending may use the discount code: **SSASTAFF21** for \$10 off. The FaCT Annual Conference also qualifies under the Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program. Staff who attend this event can upload their certificate of completion to their Eureka transcript.

For questions regarding the 2021 FaCT Annual Conference, please email info@factoc.org.

We are excited to host our Annual Conference, the first on a virtual platform. We are committed to sharing engaging and relevant virtual offerings. Let's continue to work together to identify more ways to strengthen families in Orange County.

- . Transitioning and Supporting Your Staff, Organization and Mission As We Move
- Supporting the Development Resilience of Trans* Youth
- Reimagining Father Engagement
- . Renewing Our Investment In Trust by Building Resilient Leaders
- . Renewing Commitment To Gratitude, Family, and Mental Health
- Supporting and Advocating for BIPOC (Black Indigenous People Of Color) Youth
- Securing Resources Today and Beyond

Professional Speake



Attorney | News Anchor | CEO | Professor Thinker | Agent of Change

Registration Fee*

Use Promo Code: SSASTAFF21 for \$10 off!



*Registration Fee Includes Both Days

For questions regarding the 2021 FaCT Annual Conference, registration, or sponsorship please send an email to info@factoc.org

Sponsored by:



CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH 2021 RECAP

At SSA, we work diligently to support children and families because we deeply believe that every child should have the opportunity to live in a loving, safe home environment where they can thrive. While this year, we were unable to attend inperson events to commemorate Child Abuse Prevention Month in April, SSA and our Orange County community came together virtually in a number of ways to raise awareness of child abuse and neglect and promote child abuse prevention efforts:



- The 27th Annual Blue Ribbon Month Kickoff Ceremony, themed "SPEAK UP...Save a Child!" was hosted by the Orange County Child Abuse Prevention Council (OC CAPC). This countywide event livestreamed on March 30, and was emceed by NBC4 News reporter, Vikki Vargas. Highlights include a tribute in memory and support of children, recognition of adults and youth who advocate for child safety and dedication of a Pinwheels for Prevention® Garden. Orange County Supervisor, Chairman Andrew Do delivered County remarks, our very own Children and Family Services Deputy Director, Scott Burdick, provided an SSA Agency update and one of our amazing resource parents, Vanessa Acosta, shared her very personal journey to foster and foster-to-adopt. To view the replay, go to: http://theraisefoundation.org/blue-ribbon-2021/
- The Orange County Board of Supervisors, County Executive Office and SSA recognized April 13 as Wear Blue Day for OC Kids. On this day, the community wore blue in solidarity to promote awareness about the prevention of abuse and neglect in our community.
- In California, the fourth Friday in April is known as Children's Memorial Day, where all 58 California Counties remember the children who have lost their lives to abuse or neglect in the past year. This year on April 24, SSA distributed a 2021 Children's Memorial Flag video in tribute to our Orange County children.
- Blue Ribbon Virtual Candlelight Vigil, April 29. Through the candlelight vigil and moment of silence, the OC CAPC paid tribute to the memory of the eight children who died from abuse and neglect in the past year and celebrated a collective commitment to the well-being of the 715,000 children residing in Orange County.

This campaign was truly a representation of the collaborative efforts to protect Orange County's children from abuse and neglect.

CALWORKS EAST REGION ADMIN TEAM #GOBLUEFOROCKIDS!







SSA SUPPORTS CITY OF SANTA ANA RESOURCE FAIR FOR THE HOMELESS

By: Perlita Flores, Eligibility Supervisor, Juan Plascencia, Social Services Supervisor I, Melinda Martinez, Social Services Supervisor II and Catherine Garrett, Administrative Manager I



When SSA in-person outreach events were sidelined due to COVID-19 and local/state stay-at-home orders, the Agency pivoted to participate in virtual events that educate the public and Orange County community-based organizations about critical public assistance benefits programs and services. After 13 long months, SSA staff and the Mobile Response Vehicle (MRV) were once again mobilized to serve Orange County's homeless population with direct services and support.

This first outreach event took place on April 7, 2021, at the request of the City of Santa Ana. In an effort to provide housing services and supports for the residents of a homeless encampment on Ross Street, City officials partnered with local non-profit El Centro Cultural de Mexico to organize a Resource Fair at the site of the encampment to address residents' needs. Other participating agencies included CalOptima, City Net, OC Health Care Agency, the OC Poverty Coalition, Project Kingship, Veterans Community Resource and Referral Center along with other community service providers, who offered information and resources to the residents. A second resource event took place on April 19, 2021 at the same location.

In true SSA fashion, a strong collaboration across the Agency ensued, bringing together SSA eligibility staff, Community and Government Relations team members, and representatives from OC Information Technology (OCIT), Centralized Operations (Ops) and Assistance Programs (AP) Staffing and Strategic Planning to support the event. Collectively, the team set up mobile satellite workstations, canopies, tables, laptops, printers and other equipment to support outreach activities. And, to ensure the safety of staff and clients alike, the team followed CDC guidelines by using personal protective equipment, equipping tables with plexiglass partitions, sanitizing workstations and work areas after each client interaction and ensuring social distancing.

When AP sent out the initial solicitation for volunteers, staff excitement was evident by the high volume of emails received from interested volunteers; all were eager to return to the community and assist our homeless clientele.

Staff from various regions were selected to provide information and help clients complete applications for General Relief, CalFresh and Medi-Cal programs. Information was also provided about other community resources, such as OC211, local food banks and open shelters. Staff deployed to work the events consisted of five Data Entry Technicians, 11 Eligibility Technicians, one Eligibility Supervisor and one Social Services Supervisor I who provided administrative oversight. The team worked together onsite to monitor the flow of traffic, answer questions and help clients feel welcomed. Both outreach events resulted in nearly one hundred face-to-face inquiries with clients. With the Electronic Benefit Transaction (EBT) card embosser aboard the MRV, EBT cards were printed and provided to clients onsite, allowing them to access their benefits on the spot. For clients who deferred

obtaining services, information about SSA's alternate access points (the My Benefits CalWIN online portal and SSA Call Center) was provided.

We extend our sincere appreciation to all SSA staff who supported these two outreach events. Thank you for demonstrating the SSA core values of courtesy, teamwork and compassion to deliver quality client services to this vulnerable population. You are the Heart of SSA!



STORIES FROM THE FIELD: EMPOWERING A CLIENT'S VOICE

By: Quatana Hodges, Senior Social Worker

I was assigned a case regarding a woman who was approximately 75-years-old and wheelchair bound. The report recorded alleged financial and emotional abuse by a relative. I went to meet the client who allowed relatives to live with her in her home. She was very warm and receptive, and opened up right away about the problems she was having with this current living arrangement. She spoke of how she felt she was being taken advantage of and disrespected in her own home. She was once threatened when she attempted to enforce her house rules. The client didn't feel confident enough to assert herself since she was in a wheelchair. I was deeply saddened that she felt as if she had no control in her own home and lived in fear.

My goal by the end of the visit was to make her feel empowered. We spoke about her rights as the owner of the





home. I gave her information on agencies that can help advocate for her – such as Human Options, Safe Options for Seniors, Community Legal Aid SoCal and Orange County Family Justice Center. We discussed strategies to address the situation in her home, including eviction and protective orders. I reminded the client that she deserves to live peacefully and be shown respect in her own home. The client thanked me for coming to see her and taking the time to speak with her. It turned out that she had been very active in the community prior to her retirement and knew of some of the resources we discussed. The client touched my hand and said, "Deep down, I've known what to do for a while but think it took someone like you to come along and give me some encouragement."

I called the client a few weeks later to follow-up with her. She said that things were much better in her home. Prior to my visit, her relatives were unaware of Adult Protective Services but since my visit, it sent a message that their behavior was unacceptable and that elder abuse is a serious

matter. She said that they were getting along much better and she now has the resources and motivation to address the situation should things get out of hand again.

From this experience, I learned that actively listening to and encouraging our clients can be all that is needed to change their situations. This client was very smart and capable, but due to the abuse she suffered she no longer felt she was strong enough to change the way she was living. My visit seemed to remind her that she has the right to peace in her home and has access to the necessary tools when and if she needs them.

YOUR MONTHLY MICRO-MINDFUL MOMENT

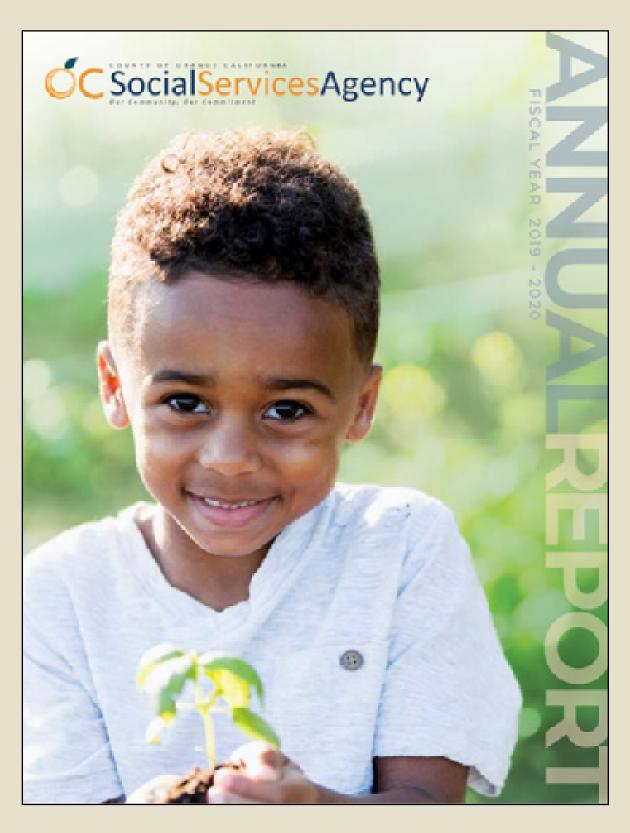
Start your day off on the right foot by reading some devotionals, inspirational quotes and words of wisdom; reflect on the meaning they have for you.



NOW AVAILABLE - SSA FY 2019 - 2020 ANNUAL REPORT!

The <u>SSA Annual Report</u> for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-20 is now available. SSA serves our community's most vulnerable populations and in FY 2019-20, we served over one in four Orange County residents. The Annual Report highlights our Agency's accomplishments and initiatives, and contains a special section on how the Agency pivoted operations to ensure accessible and responsive services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you have any questions or would like to share your feedback about this report, please email the SSAComm inbox at: SSAComm@ssa.ocgov.com.



BEYOND THE CALL: EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE IN ACTION

SUSAN CARRION, Senior Social Worker (SSW)/ Children & Family Services:

SSW Susan Carrion of the Specialized Family Services Continuing & Court Officers Program was recently recognized as the CFS Employee of the Month for March 2021 and received the following words of appreciation from her fellow colleagues:

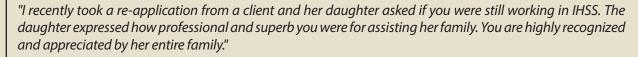
"Susan Carrion has been a faithful staff member on the Teen Court team as a Court Officer. Susan has been the lead Court Officer for many years and works tirelessly to manage all the concerns relating to this specialty court. Susan is a highly dedicated worker who embodies SSA's core value of teamwork. She works diligently and collaboratively with all members of the Teen Court team and communicates well with the bench officers, court staff and attorneys to ensure all paperwork is completed correctly. She is truly an excellent worker.

Susan sets a great example of superior teamwork. She is always willing to lend a hand to assist others. When we are short-staffed or someone calls out ill, she always jumps right in to help her co-workers. Without being asked, Susan will take on extra work and tasks to lighten the load of others. Susan works hard each day and is always an incredible team player.

Susan is a lead Court Officer who embodies the spirit of teamwork. She competently handles her workload and is always willing to assist her co-workers. She has trained employees and can work in any courtroom, including our specialty courts. She has earned the respect of her peers, attorneys, judges and other court personnel. We all appreciate the quality of her work and her high level of dedication. She is an outstanding employee."

ROSABEL OCHOA, Social Worker II (SWII) / Family Self- Sufficiency & Adult Services

Rosabel "Rosie" Ochoa from the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program received the following words of appreciation from a client as shared by her coworker:





Gabriel Esquivel, Hugo Melendez, Laura Pelayo, Kristine Ngo, Phong Nguyen, Monica Kim and Mitra Behboudi, Social Services Supervisor (SSS) I and Nikki Nguyen (SSS) II / Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services

Gabriel Esquivel, Hugo Melendez, Laura Pelayo, Kristine Ngo, Phong Nguyen, Monica Kim, Mitra Behboudi and Nikki Nguyen of FSS & AS Policy & Quality Assurance (PQA)/ Divisional Operations were recently selected as March's Core Value Champions for Courtesy, as shared by a coworker:

"Lately, PQA's translators have been bombarded with translation requests due to unprecedented changes in the Agency. These requests have been coming in with urgent deadlines. Yet without complaint, the certified translators in PQA collaborate and seamlessly work together to translate documents with speed, accuracy and timeliness. It is no surprise to see the multilingual translators continuously demonstrate their talent, professional demeanor and ability to integrate urgent requests into daily workloads so efficiently. Our translators not only help the Agency in meeting daily objectives, but they also perform a great service for our clients. Collectively, they are truly Core Value Champions for Courtesy."



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BEYOND THE CALL: EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE IN ACTION

ALBERT LAVENANT, Eligibility Technician (ET)/ Assitance Programs

Albert Lavenant of Orange's Call and Processing Center received the following words of appreciation from a client as shared by a supervisor:

"The customer wanted to share his appreciation for Albert, who was very patient in explaining the information in a way the customer could understand, as English is his second language. The customer shared that he was able to upload the required verifications with Albert's help. Thank you, Albert!"



SSA PROMOTIONS

EMPLOYEE NAME	CLASSIFICATION	DIVISION
ABARCA, MISHELL	ELIGIBILITY SUPERVISOR	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
CARRASCO, MARIA J	SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR II	FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & ADULT SERVICES
CEJA, ANA LUZ	ELIGIBILITY TECHNICIAN	FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & ADULT SERVICES
CERVANTES, YVETTE A	INFORMATION PROCESSING TECHNICIAN	CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES
CUTFORTH, JENNIFER	SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR I	FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & ADULT SERVICES
DELGADO, ELVA YVETTE	SR. SOCIAL WORKER	CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES
HOLLAND, KIMBERLY M	SR. SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR	FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & ADULT SERVICES
HOSFELD, LAURA LYNN	SOCIAL WORKER I	CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES
LARA, MARITZA	SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR II	FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & ADULT SERVICES
MARTINEZ, MELINDA CORTEZ	SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR II	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
NGUYEN, THAN HAI	ELIGIBILITY SUPERVISOR	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
NGUYEN, THAO	SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR I	FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & ADULT SERVICES
NGUYEN, TINA	SR. SOCIAL WORKER	CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES
NUNEZ, BENERANDA	SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR II	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
PORTILLO, TAMMY MARIE	ELIGIBILITY SUPERVISOR	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
RODRIGUEZ, VIRGINIA	SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR I	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
RUIZ, DANIEL ACOSTA	SR. SOCIAL WORKER	CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES
SALAZAR, CAROL JAZMIN	SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR I	FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & ADULT SERVICES
SANCHEZ, DENISE YVONNE	ELIGIBILITY SUPERVISOR	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
TORRES, RITA ESTHER	STAFF SPECIALIST	ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
TRAN, PHUNG	STAFF SPECIALIST	ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
TRAN, STEPHANIE	ELIGIBILITY SUPERVISOR	ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
ZAMORA-CHAVEZ, VERONICA	SR. SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR	ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Nothing is impossible. The word itself says

'I'm possible!'

Audrey Hepburn

LOOKING TO PROMOTE?



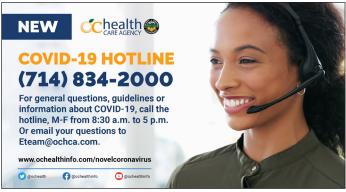
County of Orange Careers

Be sure to stay up-to-date on current job opportunities here at SSA and throughout the County! To view current recruitments, sign up for job alerts and/or apply, click here. For Frequently Asked Questions about the County job application process including links to practice online assessments, click here.

COVID-19 RESOURCES

The Orange County Health Care Agency (HCA) has developed several helpful resources for the community to address concerns regarding COVID-19. For the latest updates and information on COVID-19, please visit HCA's website at <u>occovid19.ochealthinfo.com</u>. For questions, call HCA's Health Referral Line at (800) 564-8448. For a repository of all SSA communications related to COVID-19, visit the Community and Government Relations Sharepoint page by clicking <u>here</u>.









CONNECT WITH US!

SSA Today is published monthly by SSA's Community and Government Relations team in collaboration with the SSA Today Newsletter Committee. For information on how to submit content for the SSA Today newsletter, please contact one of the committee representatives below or send an e-mail to SSAToday@ssa.ocgov.com. To contact the SSA Executive Team with your questions, comments or suggestions, please e-mail directorscorner@ssa.ocgov.com.

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