Employees in Mental Health and across DHHS spent months working on a recent California Department of Health Care Services’ audit, and all that work paid off. In preliminary results from the auditors, Mental Health achieved a 100 percent compliance rate in seven categories, along with two 96 percents and one 90.

Audit review areas included:
- Required programs and variety of support programs
- Availability of services to the public
- Authorization
- Our practices that support and protect our clients’ safety
- Funding, Reporting and Contracting Requirements
- How our Outpatient Services is working with Primary Care Providers
- Psychiatrists’ and clinicians’ relations with clients

In addition to scoring high on the technical aspects, Paul Bugnacki, senior program manager and Mental Health compliance officer, said the auditors were impressed with the way staff worked with patients and partners. “Our auditors repeatedly commented on how evident it was that our employees have a real passion and care about the work they are doing with the people in our communities.”

“These are just a few of the dozens of staff members who worked for months on the audit. Back row from left: Paul Bugnacki, Glen Guidry, Annie Beckett, Gabe Bennett, Elvira Schwarz and Wanda Hansen. Front row from left: Cassidy McCrane, Michelle Thomas, Scott B. Irvin, Scott A. Harris, Jeff Hitchcock and Whitney Williamson. Center: Dr. Ruby Bayan.”
Many of the county’s most at-risk youth are getting improved treatment thanks to an approach called Wraparound, which increases support for children and adolescents dealing with emotional and behavioral health challenges. The progress is made possible through both listening to and advising the people closest to them—their family.

The goal is to allow young people to remain in their homes and communities. Wraparound brings together multiple programs to collaborate on treatment strategies. Children’s Mental Health, Child Welfare Services and the Humboldt Wraparound develops family strengths for at-risk youth.
he didn’t know he’d entered. Instead, several advocates from throughout the state had nominated him for his work. “I was shocked,” the 20-year-old said.

The West Coast non-profit Young Minds Advocacy runs the award. Young Minds addresses what it sees as the number one health issue facing young people and their families—unmet mental health needs. “We will be honoring youth and adult leaders who have inspired us with their work and who have made a difference in the lives of youth with mental health needs,” Young Minds Advocacy said about the award element.

The organization’s goals line up with Severns’. After connecting with the Humboldt County Transition-Age Youth Collaboration (HCTAYC) and joining its Youth Advisory Board (YAB), the Yurok youth started reaching out to his peers struggling with mental health issues.

Severns has been leading trainings and talks regularly and helps with HCTAYC Wellness Week coordination. He also participated in lobbying state representatives on Assembly Bill 1067. Now passed, the bill specifies protections from psychiatric medication abuse of foster children.

HCTAYC Social Worker I Calla Peltier-Olson noted that the Severns award pointed to his hard work as well as what HCTAYC does right. “This award demonstrates the ability of our organization to empower youth with lived experience. It shows our process is effective in preparing young people to participate at this level,” Peltier-Olson said. “It also speaks to Severns’ ability to mentor other YAB leaders,” noting that since he joined, the YAB has grown in participation and enthusiasm.

“It’s an affirmation that there’s real value in the program... that our county values young people that are capable of advancing on a system level. I think it’s a big deal,” said HCTAYC Social Worker III Leah Lamattina.

“I’d like to be able to communicate for native youth on a national level,” Severns said about career goals.

Severns isn’t resting on his laurels. He recently completed the new video “Trans-Generational Trauma on Indian Country.” It will be presented along with other submissions during the Directing Change Red Carpet & Art Show at the Eureka Theater on May 6.

May is Mental Health Matters Month planning is underway

► A full month of stigma-fighting events kicks off with May is Mental Health Matters Month, the biggest of which is the Mental Health Walk on Tuesday, May 9.

Participants will gather at the main Mental Health building at 720 Wood St. in Eureka at noon and march to the courthouse in support of behavioral health. Wear green to show support. Even if you can’t make it that day, you can help at the sign-making party on Thursday, May 4, at the St. Joseph Health Burre Room (General Hospital Campus, 2200 Harrison St., Eureka.) Everyone is invited to the Friday, May 26, Hope Center barbecue at Carson Park (corner of H and Buhne streets in Eureka) for food and fun.

One in every four Americans experiences some form of mental illness, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. Mental health issues affect people regardless of gender, race, age, sexual orientation, social or economic status. The month focused on Mental Health awareness was created to help increase people’s understanding of the complexity of mental illness as well as expel myths and show support for the many people affected by mental health challenges who are working to improve their lives.

“\[quote\]I’d like to be able to communicate for native youth on a national level.\[quote\]

- Tristin Severns
Social Services team recognized for efficiency

Social Services is being celebrated by state officials for its speed and efficiency in processing local client CalFresh requests. Staff was presented with the Recognition of Excellence award from Kim McCoy-Wade, chief of the CalFresh Branch of the California Department of Social Services. The team was recorded at a 30-day application processing timeliness rate of 99.6 percent for Federal Fiscal Year 2015. This rate is made more impressive as CalFresh caseload counts increased more than 37 percent from December 2013 to December 2015. The award was presented to CalFresh Analyst Paris Bauer at the February County Welfare Directors Association of California meeting.

Social Workers praised by Supervisors

Social Workers are being celebrated and received a proclamation of support from the Board of Supervisors naming March as Social Worker Appreciation Month. “We do this work to help children and families,” said DHHS Social Worker IV Chryste Johnson. “We genuinely love the work we do.”

Social workers’ were thanked for their efforts protecting children, the elderly and other dependent adults from abuse and neglect. Their assistance to families and individuals moving into self-sufficiency and health was also acknowledged. “You don’t do it for the proclamations. It’s a calling,” said Second District Supervisor Estelle Fennell.

Fifth District Supervisor Ryan Sundberg added, “It’s one of those jobs that’s very difficult but very rewarding.”

Help Wanted

DHHS is currently recruiting qualified applicants for a variety of positions. For a list of job opportunities, visit humboldtgov.org/hr and click Job Opportunities, or contact Employee Services at 707-441-5510.
Twenty-five law enforcement officers from agencies across the county gathered in late January for a four-day Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training designed to help police and other law enforcement officials respond to situations where mental health issues are a concern.

CIT is an internationally recognized program of law enforcement training that focuses on helping police officers and other law enforcement officials identify major mental health disorders and other disabilities so that they can de-escalate potential crises in the field.

“This CIT training truly represents the best efforts of a team of leaders from multiple community agencies who see the importance of providing our law enforcement with training in responding to mental health issues,” said Mark Lamers, DHHS Mental Health branch senior program manager. “As has been found across the nation and internationally, in communities where cooperation and collaboration exist between mental health services and law enforcement, officer safety is enhanced and consumers of mental health services benefit from support to enter services that are dedicated to their recovery.”

Since Humboldt County’s CIT trainings began in 2007, nearly 400 have completed the training, including representatives from law enforcement agencies, parks systems, ambulance services, DHHS, tribes, the Probation Department and medical facilities.\>
Volunteers aid in 2017 Point-In-Time count

- The biennial Point-in-Time homeless count is a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development requirement. Information gathered during this count is used by local planning departments and by county nonprofit agencies in applications for grant funding and planning.

Volunteers at work:

DHHS Community Health Outreach Worker Colin Bettis conducts a client survey at Mobile Outreach’s boardwalk location.

HHHC volunteers Keivan Branson, Jimento Aikhuele, John McManus (executive director of Alcohol Drug Care Services, Inc.), Ellie Bustin, Hollie Klingel and Jake Rada get ready for homeless visitors at the Serenity Inn station.

Stephanie Sanchez and Jill Hansen, volunteers from Ming Tree Realty, brave the rain at Fourth and Q streets.

Volunteers and the purpose:

The biennial Point-in-Time homeless count is a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development requirement. Information gathered during this count is used by local planning departments and by county nonprofit agencies in applications for grant funding and planning.

PIT COUNT

February 2017

McKinleyville

garberville

Weitchpec

Orleans

Hoopa

Willow Creek

Arcata

Eureka

Fortuna

9 hubs

more than
70 volunteers

continued from “Audit,” page 1

Whitney Williamson, assistant director of Psychiatric Nursing, and PK Hawk, senior program manager for the PEER and Comprehensive Community Treatment programs, echoed his sentiments.

“Establishing and maintaining relationships with community providers in order to ensure mutual clients receive the best care possible is a top priority for the medication support staff,” Williamson said. “Staff found it rewarding to be acknowledged for our diligence in coordinating care with the physical health care providers.”

“This was my first audit with Humboldt County Mental Health, and I was impressed with the knowledge, professionalism and support demonstrated by everyone I worked with,” Hawk said. “I’m not surprised that we did such a great job.”

Mental Health Interim Director Donna Wheeler said she is pleased with the results of the audit. “I’m excited to see the auditors’ mention of the teamwork, dedication and passion staff displayed during this audit. The collaboration and professionalism staff showed throughout this process has been exemplary.”

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County Probation Department staff meet regularly to discuss individualized recovery plans, share updates, and assess progress. Simultaneously, family members are provided the tools to fully participate in those behavioral therapy plans.

“Wraparound has helped system partners team up with one another and develop coordinated plans of care for children and families,” said Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services Deputy Director of Children’s Mental Health Emi Botzler-Rodgers. “It’s also challenging our system to include more natural supports as we serve youth and families, empowering communities to be actively involved in improving health and well-being.”

Beginning in April 2016, Children & Family Services staff started training as Wraparound coordinators and coaches. In September, eight employees attended the National Wraparound Implementation Academy in Washington D.C. The conference provided intensive training specific to implementing high-quality Wraparound care coordination and was followed by a National Wraparound Implementation Center training in October in Humboldt.

As the Wraparound process evolves, youth are encouraged to become active participants in their own assessment and treatment. They learn that they’re not being blamed for anything. Wraparound teaches them what they need to work on, not simply to avoid punishment, but so their lives are easier. Currently, there are 42 young people participating in the Wraparound program which has the ability to accommodate up to 100.

The program is working. In an ongoing case, a teen was able to return to his family after multiple failed placements in group homes. The Wraparound care coordinator initially started the Wraparound process during the youth’s move from a local group home to an out-of-state supervised residence, and built a relationship with the family. When the new group home placement failed, the care coordinator pulled together meetings while completing a crisis plan built on the family’s strengths. Armed with new tools, the teen is back with the family and showing improved behavior.

“The beauty of Wraparound is that it has positive effects in the most challenging situations and helps youth and families literally feel ‘wrapped around’ with support and opportunity to heal and grow,” said Botzler-Rodgers.
DHHS BOWLS FOR KIDS’ SAKE...

One of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the North Coast’s biggest Bowl for Kids’ Sake fundraising events to date was bolstered by the efforts of DHHS staff. The two-day event brought nearly 100 teams to Harbor Lanes in Eureka for masquerade-themed fun. Sponsored DHHS bowlers collected more than $2,095 during an event that raised more than $110,000.

Big Brothers Big Sisters connects children ages 6 to 16 in need of a positive role model with volunteer mentors. The program helps broaden children’s horizons and improve self-esteem. Kids who have been matched with a mentor for 18 months or more are less likely to begin using illegal drugs or skip school.

AND TAKES THE PLUNGE!

DHHS’s team continued its years-long tradition jumping into the Humboldt Bay in mid-February to help raise money for the Redwood Discovery Museum’s 16th annual Perilous Plunge. Team “Having Fun in the Sun!” raised nearly $750 for the museum’s biggest fundraiser of the year. All proceeds benefit the museum’s programs and camps.

...AND TAKES THE PLUNGE!

County’s challenges highlighted in state health survey

In March, Public Health held a discussion about the local implications of the statewide Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community study. More than 70 stores in Humboldt were surveyed for the availability and marketing of tobacco products, alcohol, condoms and healthy and unhealthy food options. The results were not favorable, pointing to many challenges for the county. For instance, 62 percent of stores that sell alcohol placed alcohol ads at “kid-level” or near kid-friendly items such as candy or toys. None of the sampled stores advertised healthy products on their storefronts, but 61 percent of the storefronts advertised unhealthy products, including 67 percent of stores near schools.

Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community is a statewide campaign formed by tobacco prevention, nutrition, alcohol abuse prevention and STD prevention partners collaborating to improve the health of Californians by informing them about the impact of unhealthy product availability and marketing in the retail environment.

For more Humboldt County results and information on Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community, visit healthystoreshealthycommunity.com.
St. Joseph Hospital’s annual Health, Wellness and Resource Fair brought hundreds of residents to the Bayshore Mall on Feb. 4. DHHS staff participated with several outreach and education tables.

The **Smile Humboldt** booth had free tooth care kits and teeth checks thanks to the participation of Public Health staff, Growing Smiles Pediatric Dentistry and Dr. George Epperson’s office.

From left: Carla Avila, Catherine DeSantis, Emily Hill, Dr. George Epperson, Eva Adams, Michele Johnson, Kathy Caterby and Leigh Pierre-Oetker.

Sandy Earl was on hand to talk nutrition.

Eva Adams and Emily Hill apply a fluoride varnish to a young attendee.

Sarah Nelson chats with an attendee about Public Health’s family violence prevention program.

DHHS’s Oral Health Consultant Leigh Pierre-Oetker, center, talks to booth visitors about Smile Humboldt programs.