

FEBRUARY 2010 E-NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the first issue of "EHSD E-News." This monthly e-newsletter will provide Contra Costa residents and service providers with timely news and information regarding employment and human service issues and opportunities. This first issue highlights how the Governor's budget proposal will negatively impact our ability to provide services to those most vulnerable in our community.

The attention of the health and human services community is focused on the budget right now. The Governor has proposed drastic cuts to the safety net which will create hardships for thousands of Contra Costa residents. An analysis of the specific impacts of the Governor's proposals on Contra Costa County residents has been posted on our [website](#). In the meantime, the demand for social and health services continues to rise, swamping both county agencies as well as community based organizations. At the direction of the Board of Supervisors (BoS) and County Administrator, EHSD is pursuing two strategic objectives to cope with this crisis: 1) increased use of technology to improve service access, and 2) building on community partnerships. The BoS has emphasized the importance of community partnerships and each Supervisor is personally involved in supporting innovative community-based service strategies in their own districts. In spite of dwindling budgets, EHSD staff have committed themselves to nurturing and expanding these partnerships.

On the technology side, county social service departments are making creative use of federal stimulus funds to "modernize" the face of public social services. Specifically, we're designing a "web portal" that will allow Contra Costa residents to submit applications for assistance electronically. We're also designing an automated phone system that will allow them to automatically check on the status of their applications and benefits.

Community-based organizations will be provided assistance upon request on how to use these new electronic forms of access to assist their own clients. We've already launched the first phase of this new electronic interface by making available on our [website](#) a "Self-Screening Tool" that allows anyone with access to a computer to determine for themselves if they would be potentially eligible for Food Stamps or Cash Assistance. This website also includes a link to our new "Forms On-Line" feature that will allow clients to access and fill out on line many of the common forms they have to complete. These forms can then be brought with them to an appointment or mailed to one of our offices.

During this time of severe economic crisis, it's our hope that *E-News* will nurture our connections with our many community partners as we work together to help the thousands that have been affected by the economic recession. We also hope that it will be of interest to all community residents alerting them to events and resources that could be of value to them. I'd like to hear from you about what kinds of information you would like us to share in *EHSD E-News*. Send us your thoughts by clicking on the "Contact Us" link below.

Joe Valentine, EHSD Director

Governor's Budget Impacts Thousands in Contra Costa County

The Governor touts the creation of "jobs, jobs, jobs," in the message he released with his budget, but that budget would drastically undercut his job creation goal by eliminating thousands of jobs in our county. Further, the budget would shred safety net programs and services that our families need to get back to work.

Last year, the Governor used his veto pen to reduce funding for Child Protective Services by 10% - over 400 child protective workers were eliminated statewide. Now the Governor is proposing to continue this reduction putting thousands of

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abused and neglected children at risk of continued victimization. Last year's state budget also reduced child care and employment supports for CalWORKS parents who wish to work - almost \$2 million in support was eliminated in our county alone. Now the Governor is proposing to cut CalWORKS grants by 15.7%. This would be on top of last year's 4% cut, and would leave families having to feed their children at 1989 prices.

The Governor also proposes to make significant reductions in the "In Home Supportive Services Program" [IHSS]. In Contra Costa County alone, almost 6,500 frail seniors and people with disabilities would lose services and 6,000 jobs for local in-home service providers would be lost.

As if these cuts were not bad enough, the Governor is also proposing a number of draconian "trigger cuts" if the state is unsuccessful in securing \$6.9 billion in additional federal funding. These trigger cuts would include the total elimination of CalWORKS, IHSS, and Transitional Housing Support for Foster Youth.

The Governor has called a Special Session of the Legislature to discuss these proposals. This provides an opportunity for Contra Costa residents to let their views be known by contacting their State Senator and Assemblymember.

Parent Partner Program Receives National Award!

Our Parent Partner Program has been selected to receive the *Parent Leadership Program Award* at the Parent Leadership Conference at the end of February in Ontario, California. The Contra Costa Parent Partner Program was selected for its exceptional work in engaging Parent Leaders in the planning, implementation and evaluation of its program. The Parent Partner Program has been recognized for the effectiveness of its one-on-one support and mentoring model for parents. This recognition will be posted on the California Parent Engagement Web Site at caparentengagement.org.

Department Participates in Distribution of School Totes

Utilizing TANF ECF (Emergency Contingency Funds), EHSD is working with the East Bay Community Scholarship Fund (EBCSF) to distribute school supply totes to low-income children (K-12) who are in the reduced or free lunch programs with various local school districts. A kick-off event is planned for February 16 in Richmond and several members of our Board of Supervisors will be participating.

Furlough Days

Just a reminder that EHSD offices are part of the countywide *mandatory closures* on Friday, February 12, and Wednesday, March 31. Monday, February 15, is President's Day, and our offices will reopen for business on Tuesday, February 16. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

Medi-Cal Performance Review

EHSD passed its recent Medi-Cal Performance Review with a score of 96%. An accuracy rate of 90% had to be met in order to avoid future corrective action. Our staff worked very hard to ensure this high degree of compliance in spite of the significant increases in their workload.

Low Food Stamp Error Rate Award

The State has awarded a plaque to Contra Costa County for contributing to California's Low Food Stamp Program error rate of 5.77% for Fiscal Year 2008. The national average is 5.01%. Contra Costa has one of the lowest error rates in the state, which is important for the avoidance of federal fiscal sanctions.

This is our inaugural issue. We'd love to hear from you as to what you think. Please feel free to forward this on to your colleagues or better yet, tell us who they are and we will add them to our e-mail list.

If you would like to *unsubscribe*, please click on the "Contact Us" link below, and we will remove your name from the mailing list.