



June 3, 2020

Dear Community Partners & EHSD Staff Members:

The Coronavirus emergency compelled all of us as individuals, and as organizations, to rise up rapidly to meet a challenge we could not have envisioned even a few short months ago. While our county immediately focused on securing the health of our community with the March 16 Shelter-in-Place Order, the resulting job losses and subsequent need for social services followed quickly.

I have been both saddened and encouraged by the impacts of this pandemic – saddened by the disproportionate burden carried by lower income families and children, and encouraged by the resilience and dedication of our community to “get through this together.”

We now find ourselves pushing through yet another layer of adversity as we grapple with the tragic and unjust death of George Floyd. Leading and responding with meaningful change is a heavy burden we all share, yet I know with our collective resolve, it is possible for us to move toward healing and a successful recovery.

The **Employment & Human Services Department (EHSD)**, in collaboration with community partners like you, engaged in a wide range of initiatives to address the hardships brought about by COVID-19 and its economic and social repercussions. Those in need include our already-vulnerable populations *as well as* individuals and families who have not previously required our services. We deliver the County’s human services to support *all* community members, and recommit to our value of respecting diversity and honoring individual differences as we do so.

EHSD’s [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) illustrates the emerging social service needs in Contra Costa and the ways we are working to meet them through the dedicated work of EHSD staff, community organizations, and many collaborative partnerships. We would like to acknowledge the contribution of our partners who provided data for the dashboard, which we will revise periodically as more data and analysis become available.

The current pandemic is leading to dramatic increases in the demand for essential social services. You will see that the Unemployment Rate in the county rose from 3.1 percent in February to 14.5 percent in April (just two months). This dramatic shift in unemployment is one of the drivers for many hardships that may follow, including food insecurity, financial need and the concerning trends in reporting child abuse, elder abuse and interpersonal violence during shelter-in-place.

In our view, the dashboard is a snapshot of early days with respect to the “social services demand curve.” Contra Costa’s COVID-19 response has allowed us to be better equipped to address the pandemic at the moment, thanks to Contra Costa Health Services’ (CCHS) skillful guidance and county residents’ careful observance. Yet we anticipate the need for social services will endure, with the economic impact of job losses lasting – and perhaps even growing – well into the future. Building capacity to meet demand will be a critical part of our forward path.

Our services have continued without interruption since Shelter-In-Place began, with some physical location adjustments based on the Health Order. We have been nimble in innovating over the past two months by implementing program flexibilities the county and the state are offering; partnering to stand up Emergency Child Care for children of essential workers; launching a Small Business Call Center; sustaining a Social Services Rapid Response Team to provide immediate access to services; developing resources for people experiencing abuse during shelter in place; and contributing our expertise and perspective to community teams that are addressing food distribution and the nutrition needs of seniors. We will continue on this path in the days ahead.

We are venturing into unknown territory, but helping people through challenging times is what we do. To shift towards community resilience and economic recovery, we persist in strengthening our coordination across diverse sectors, affirming our mission of partnering with the community to deliver quality services to ensure access to resources that support, protect and empower individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency.

We sincerely appreciate your dedication, as well as that of our staff, for rising up to help Contra Costa community members in these challenging times.

My best regards,

Kathy Gallagher

Kathy Gallagher, Director
Contra Costa County
Employment and Human Services Department

[Click for COVID-19 Dashboard](#)

[Contra Costa County Social Service Impact & Response to the COVID-19 Crisis \(March – May, 2020\)](#)

