



Director's Message



As we enter the holiday season I want to thank you for all the hard work, dedication and commitment you bring each and every day to serve the people of Orange County (OC). It's been my pleasure to serve with you and I am hopeful of better days ahead in the New Year.

Hope is on the horizon as work moves forward on COVID-19 vaccines. I believe to overcome this pandemic that it will take a vaccine, along with following the public health guidance that we know works. In the spirit of encouragement, I hope to clear up any confusion around the idea of herd immunity. The following article addresses the idea of herd immunity compared to the need for a vaccine. This article is a collaboration by myself and our colleague **Dr. Casey Dorman** along with Dr. Bernadette Boden-Ablala and Dr. Dan M. Cooper, both of the University of California, Irvine. Thank you for reading it.

Sincerely,



Dr. Clayton Chau
HCA Director
County Health Officer

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Peer-to-Peer **Cecile Truong** A Public Health Nurse Through and Through



Peer-to-Peer recipient **Cecile Truong** began her career as a Public Health Nurse at the OC Health Care Agency (HCA) in 1988. She has worked in the Communicable Disease Control Division, Epidemiology, Tuberculosis Prevention, Refugee Health Services, Foster Care Public Health, and is currently the Supervising Public Health Nurse and Program Coordinator for the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (CLPPP). With all that experience, it's no wonder the HCA asked her to assist with COVID-19 response in February and she accepted the challenge.

Cecile describes herself as a “public health nurse who has served and is serving the community in various fields – from prevention and control of communicable diseases, to lead poisoning prevention, to disaster response.”

Cecile found her love of nursing early. She was born in South Vietnam and arrived as a refugee at Camp Pendleton in May of 1975. Upon arrival she fondly remembers being welcomed by many kind and open-minded Americans. She attributes her and her family's success in the United States to working hard and being fortunate to receive opportunities.

“I am proud of fulfilling my career dream of becoming a public health nurse. When I was in the refugee camp, I saw what nurses did in the camp to help newly arrived refugees. And when I arrived in Maryland for resettlement, my siblings and I sought service at the county health department's health centers to get our physical exam and immunization for school. I was impressed by those nurses and wanted to do what they did when I grew up,” said Cecile.

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Herd Immunity is Only Possible with a Vaccine

There has been much debate around the concept of herd immunity since the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a public health term, the idea of herd immunity is that if enough people are protected against an infection because they have been exposed and developed antibodies, transmission of the infection slows and ultimately new outbreaks are halted because much of the population is no longer susceptible. Some people suggest that COVID-19 can best be controlled by allowing the virus to run its course and achieve enough numbers of infected persons to reach herd immunity. We suggest that there is some confusion about the use of this term and that there are strong reasons for not pursuing that approach.

In modern times, herd immunity has never been achieved by allowing a disease to run through the population unfettered. It has only been achieved by mass vaccination programs. Measles, rubella, diphtheria, mumps, pertussis, polio, chickenpox have all been controlled through vaccination, and herd immunity to these diseases has been achieved in many places in the world. The devastating smallpox virus was eradicated by achieving worldwide herd immunity through vaccination.

Without a vaccine, current knowledge suggests that about 70% of our residents would need to be infected before we reach herd immunity. A recent UCI/Orange County Health Care Agency study found that about 11-12% of our population has already been infected. If we allowed everyone to become infected until we reached the herd immunity "threshold" of 70%, about 2,240,000 Orange County residents would need to become infected. Given an estimated infection fatality rate of between 0.25% and 0.35%, between 5,600 and 7,840 would die. Another 1,344,000 would get sick

with COVID-19 symptoms, and 4%, or 89,600 people, would need hospitalization. Additionally, there is accumulating evidence that there are significant post-viral syndromes which may occur in some people even after the virus has passed. A "run its course" strategy will significantly affect the entire health care system not only for COVID-19 patients but for all patients, creating shortages, putting stress on resources, and limiting access to health providers and staff. If we allowed the virus to spread, unimpeded, we would add thousands more deaths, overflow our hospitals, lose millions of work-days, and expose thousands of people to the long-term chronic conditions that affect many survivors of severe COVID-19, before we ever achieve herd immunity.

The best approach to taking control of COVID-19 is to build immunity through vaccination. Recent, promising results have indicated that the first vaccines to be approved are 90 - 94% effective. The rollout will likely occur in limited supply, by the end of the year. Next year in winter/early spring 2021, as the supply of vaccine increases, eventually everyone will be able to be vaccinated.

If we learned anything from the previous reopening in late May, it is that we need to be cautious and maintain social distancing, limit group activities, and wear face coverings as much as possible, so we don't return to the soaring number of cases we experienced before. If a vaccine is available by the end of the year or soon after, herd immunity can be achieved relatively painlessly so long as a sufficient proportion of our fellow citizens avail themselves of it. This is vastly preferable to a gigantic increase in the number of our fellow citizens dying and completely overwhelming our health care system.

**Bernadette Boden-Ablala,
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Clayton Chau, MD, PhD

Agency Director
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Casey Dorman, PhD

Consultant
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**The OC Health Care Agency (HCA) warmly
welcomes **Torhon Barnes** as our new Chief
of Staff/Assistant to the Director**



Torhon — or Mr. T, as he prefers to be called — is a social work professional with more than 16 years of diverse management experience and knowledge of health care, county administration and provisions for special populations and underserved communities.

Most recently, Mr. T worked at L.A. Care Health Plan, where he managed the expansion of behavioral health services and led a 5-year, \$155 million strategic plan to address the local workforce shortage and increase diversity.

He has worked closely with contracted physician and health networks to ensure timely access to care, especially for vulnerable populations. Mr. T shares that his purpose in life is to assist individuals in turning their tragedies into triumphs, a professional mission shared by many here at the HCA. Welcome to the HCA team!

Peer-to-Peer
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Cecile truly believes in the work she and her colleagues do at the HCA. “Our public health work does make an impact. We sometimes cannot measure everything we do in numbers but the verbal feedback we get from clients makes everything worthwhile.”

When she’s not working, she continues her dedication to her nursing career path by caring for her two elderly parents. This does not leave a lot of time for hobbies, but she does enjoy reading, hiking and eating dark artisanal chocolates.

Always one to see the bright-side of things, Cecile had this to say about the pandemic, “I am grateful to be working with my fellow nurses, office support staff, epidemiologists, medical doctors, social workers and managers who have been spending seven days a week and long hours every day to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a historic event and we will get over this pandemic together!”

Pandemic Fatigue:

Tips and Resources for Staying Vigilant and Healthy

“ We may be done with the virus,
but the virus is not done with us.”

— Dr. Mark Ghaly, California Health and Human Services Secretary

Coronavirus, or COVID-19, is not over or close to being over. We have been living with the virus for months and have just recently seen another surge of cases in Orange County (OC) and across the nation. As the pandemic continues, and we tire of the numerous social and professional changes, it is easy to stop taking precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Behavior change is hard. Prior to the coronavirus we were allowed to eat inside restaurants, attend concerts and send our children to school full-time. The general population did not wear masks in public, maintain six feet of physical distance from one another or wash hands frequently. These recommendations are now the new normal and keeping up with them and the constant changes can be overwhelming.

It can feel strange to make major changes and reorganize your life if the virus doesn't feel real. That can be the case for those who have avoided the consequences of COVID-19 because they haven't experienced it personally or known anyone with the virus. This can provide a false sense of safety and provoke people to do something risky or stop practicing preventative measures.

What can you do? You can be mindful of and practice the tips below. You can also learn more about the resources and services offered by the County of Orange to help during these uncertain times.

1. Make a commitment. Behavior changes start with having a clear intention and making a promise. You want to do the right thing to keep yourself and others safe, even if that means a slight inconvenience. The same principle can apply to washing hands, maintaining physical distance and wearing a mask in public.
2. Stay flexible as recommendations change. New insights and recommendations about the virus change daily. It's hard – but important – to keep up.
3. Practice precautions until they are second nature. Repeat the step until it becomes a habit. Over time, you will find yourself putting on your mask, washing your hands and staying six feet apart without thinking about it.
4. Keep necessary supplies handy. Have multiple masks in various locations to make it easy. Also keep hand sanitizer accessible for frequent use.

The OC Health Care Agency's (HCA) Behavioral Health Services Director, **Dr. Jeffrey Nagel**, provided answers to some frequently asked questions about coping during COVID-19.

Q) What mental health resources does the County of Orange (County) offer for either employees or the general public?

The HCA has developed and curated a wide variety of resources on the County's COVID-19 Mental Health Supports Page, including specific resources for children,

youth and caregivers; health care workers and first responders; and older adults as well as resources for all. Included in these resources is information on wellness smartphone and online support apps. Please visit: <https://www.ocgov.com/covid>

County employees have access to comprehensive services and supports, including mental health counseling, newsletters, webinars and other online resources available through our Employee Assistance Program at: <https://www.ocgov.com/hr/eb/eap>

Q) COVID-19 has changed our daily lives in many ways, leaving many of us frustrated and tired with how nothing is like it used to be. What can people do to cope with this?

We should start with an understanding that a certain amount of frustration, fatigue, anxiety and sadness is a normal reaction to this pandemic. Normalizing these feelings is one way we can understand that we will not always feel our best. Still there are ways to be proactive about improving our mood. Having a positive outlook and healthy coping skills are key to being resilient during these challenging times. Check out Greater Good Magazine and learn 10 ways your brain reacts to uncertain times and how to develop a good frame of mind through skills such as mindfulness. For more information, visit: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/10_ways_your_brain_reacts_to_uncertain_times

Reaching out for emotional support, practicing healthy lifestyles, and learning relaxation skills are examples of healthy coping. For other tips and ideas, visit SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services) - Coping with Anger/Trauma: https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/pep19-01-01-002_0.pdf

Q) The County hasn't faced a situation that induces stress like this before. The closest might be the 1994 bankruptcy, but at least then employees still had their normal routines outside of work. How can County employees support one another during this time?

Starting with yourself is key. We all need to be aware of

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COVID-19 Vaccine Taskforce

Did you know that the OC COVID-19 Vaccine Taskforce meets regularly and posts slides from the meetings online for the community? OC Health Care Agency (HCA) vaccine planning involves using input from our Public Health staff, from medical experts and from the community, to assist us in developing procedures that meet all Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state regulations, while addressing the unique needs of the Orange County (OC) community. Learn more about the taskforce here: <https://occcovid19.ochealthinfo.com/orange-county-covid-19-vaccine-taskforce>.

Central to our planning is a Vaccine Taskforce comprised of members of at-risk groups such as health care workers, essential workers, ethnic communities and older adults, and organizations such as hospitals, clinics, educational institutions, unions and business, as well as experts in ethics, faith-based issues, veterans' issues and various medical specialties.

This group will address prioritization of vaccine recipients and how to address concerns about the vaccine among different demographic and workforce groups and make recommendations to the HCA planning staff and the HCA Director. The Vaccine Taskforce will partner with members of this group, to reach out to their constituents so there is active support during the process.

To access meeting minutes and stay informed, please visit: <https://occcovid19.ochealthinfo.com/taskforce-summary-meetings>

our stressors and common signs of stress in ourselves and others, learn how to manage our stress in healthy ways while supporting others to do the same and learn about resources that are available. A great resource is “How to Cope with Job Stress and Build Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic” at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/mental-health-non-healthcare.html>. One example of something you can do is to increase your sense of control by developing a consistent daily routine when possible — ideally one that is similar to your schedule before the pandemic.

- ◆ Keep a regular sleep schedule.
- ◆ Take breaks from work to stretch, exercise, or check in with your supportive colleagues, coworkers, family and friends.
- ◆ Spend time outdoors, being either physically active or relaxing.
- ◆ If you work from home, set a regular time to end your work for the day, if possible.
- ◆ Practice mindfulness techniques.
- ◆ Do things you enjoy during non-work hours.

Q) The mental health of children, teens and young adults has come up frequently in regard to online learning and disruption of their routines. How can the adults in their lives support those who may be struggling with all the change?

Below are some helpful resources for parents and caregivers, including communication tips and strategies for successful distant learning:

- ◆ Parents and adults can calm the concerns of youth by addressing their concerns, being honest, and keeping healthy routines. For more, visit: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Parenting-in-a-Pandemic.aspx>
- ◆ How to talk to kids about disappointment during COVID-19: <https://blog.chocchildrens.org/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-disappointment-during-covid-19/>
- ◆ Parents can set up success for distance learning by setting up a space, set a routine,

review expectations. See more at: <https://www.commonsense.org/education/articles/parent-tips-and-tricks-for-distance-learning>

Q) What are some daily behaviors that can help students keep their focus and motivation?

Below are some great resources to explore for enhancing social-emotional learning, self-care and focus, and attention on schoolwork.

- ◆ Practicing calm, maintain self-care and mind-body health. For more information, go to: <https://ocde.us/EducationalServices/LearningSupports/HealthyMinds/Pages/SEL-Resources.aspx>
- ◆ Include physical activity, take “attention” breaks, remove physical distractions. For more ways to help students keep focused go to: <https://www.edutopia.org/discussion/7-ways-increase-students-attention-span>
- ◆ Six Online Activities to Help Students Cope With COVID-19: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/six_online_activities_to_help_students_cope_with_covid_19
- ◆ Check out this website for ideas on how to set a schedule and make time for breaks and fun: <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/how-to-keep-kids-learning-when-theyre-stuck-at-home>

Q) Are there classes or online tutorials that you would recommend?

There are a variety of helpful resources through the Employee Assistance Program, including webinars. Upcoming titles of webinars, include “The Power of Positive Thinking,” and “Letting Go of the Past: Your Life is Now.” Visit www.resourcesforliving.com to register for an upcoming webinar and use login in ID: Orange County CA and “eap” for the password.

Q) How can young people experience outdoor play safely in the current environment?

- ◆ When you’re outside, fresh air is constantly moving, dispersing these droplets. Good examples include walking, hiking, and golfing. Here is a list of

safe outdoor activities during COVID-19: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/safe-activities-during-covid19/art-20489385>

- ◆ Carefully use playgrounds, and help children follow guidelines: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/visitors.html#playgrounds>

Q) As we approach the holiday season, which in normal times can bring up a lot of intense feelings, and with Orange County moving back to the more restrictive Purple tier, what activities can folks engage in to keep the season merry and bright?

- ◆ Keep your friends, families, and communities healthy and safe during the holidays: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html>
- ◆ Parenting, media and everything in between. Online playdates, game nights, and other ways to socialize at a distance: <https://www.common-sense-media.org/blog/online-playdates-game-nights-and-other-ways-to-socialize-at-a-distance>
- ◆ Even during this time of physical distancing, it is important to remain connected to our friends and family. There are creative ways to do this, and here are some strategies that others have used to remain connected during the pandemic:
 - Schedule FaceTime or Zoom calls with your friends or family
 - Old-fashioned phone calls are still a good way to connect
 - Writing letters or cards
 - Virtual coffee break with friends
 - Group text with friends
 - Outdoor walk while maintaining physical distance

The most important thing is not to give up. COVID-19 isn't going anywhere anytime soon. Preventative practices are needed until there's a treatment or a vaccine, which is many months away for the general public. The County is here to help. Take advantage of the many employee resources being offered at this time.



See the person not the condition

The OC Health Care Agency Launches Three New **Mental Health Awareness** Campaigns



“Help Is Here,” and “Be A Friend For Life,” and the Stigma Free OC “See The Person Not The Condition,” are three campaigns the OC Health Care Agency (HCA) launched in November, to help Orange County (OC) residents care for their own mental health and support the mental health of their loved ones through the holidays and beyond.

“Suicide prevention is very close to my heart. I have been open about the fact that I am a suicide survivor because I want to break the stigma around suicide and encourage people to reach out and seek timely help,” said **Dr. Clayton Chau**, HCA Director and County Health Officer. “When you consider the ongoing stress from COVID-19 and the added stress some feel during the holidays, I’m proud of HCA staff for bringing these campaigns to the community we serve.”

The first campaign launched, “See The Person Not The Condition” aims at reducing the stigma in seeking support of mental health wellness and recovery. It uses the StigmaFreeOC platform to target stigma surrounding mental illness, and alcohol and drug misuse, so everyone is supported in getting the help that they need.

The second and third campaigns focus on suicide

prevention. “Help is Here” targets adult males, who have the highest numbers of suicide deaths. The “Be A Friend For Life” campaign targets youth ages 15- to 22-years old, with a specific focus on the LGBTQ+, foster youth and high-achiever demographics who are at higher-risk for suicide.

“Suicide is a significant public health challenge that has only been exacerbated by COVID-19,” said **Dr. Jeffrey Nagel**, Deputy Agency Director of Behavioral Health Services (BHS). “All OC residents need to be aware and responsive to the warning signs of suicide in their loved ones and even in themselves, and then know where to seek help. There is hope. The evidence for effective suicide prevention practices is growing every day. These three campaigns are part of a comprehensive strategy looking to decrease the numbers of lives lost to suicide in OC.”

For more on these campaigns, go to:

www.StigmaFreeOC.com

www.HelpIsHereOC.com

www.BeAFriendForLife.com

Remember as a County of Orange employee, if you’re in need of mental health or other support services, please call Aetna Resources for Living at 1-800-221-0945 or visit <https://www.resourcesforliving.com/>.

If you or a loved one are thinking about suicide call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800-273-8255) (TALK).

Spread Cheer

Not COVID-19 or the Flu This

Holiday Season

Holidays usually mean gathering with friends and extended family, attending parties, hosting dinners, traveling and celebrating time-honored customs. But many holiday activities promote congregating and mixing of households, which increase the risk of transmitting COVID-19 and the flu.

With COVID-19 in our communities, you may be wondering how you can celebrate safely. See below for more information about holiday activities. Plan safer, alternative celebrations that don't spread coronavirus or the flu to your family and in your community. If you must travel, be informed of the risks.

Symptoms such as cough, difficulty breathing, fever, chills, headache and sore throat may tell you you're sick – but not with what. That's why you can now get free testing for both the flu and COVID-19 with a single swab at drive-thru OC Super Sites in Anaheim and Costa Mesa. Make your appointment today.

Finally, make sure to get your FREE flu vaccine. Getting a flu vaccine is an essential part of protecting your health and your family's health this season.

HOLIDAY CELEBRATION ACTIVITIES AND RISKS:

Lower Risk Activities. These activities are safer for your celebrations:

- ◆ Eating your holiday meal only with people who live in your household. Practice safe food handling.
- ◆ Having a virtual holiday celebration with friends and family.

- ◆ Dining at or ordering food from a SafeDineOC participating restaurant.
- ◆ Shopping online instead of in-person.
- ◆ Watching sports events, parades and movies from home.

Medium Risk Activities.

- ◆ Having a small outdoor celebration with family and friends. Remember, the smaller the number of people, the safer.
- ◆ Visiting holiday attractions where people can wash hands or use hand sanitizer often, wear masks and can stay 6 feet apart.

Tips to stay safe while gathering:

- ◆ If your gathering is indoors, try to stay at least 6 feet away from people who do not live with you.
- ◆ It's always safer to keep your face covering on. You can remove your face covering briefly when eating or drinking.

Higher Risk Activities. These activities can put you at high risk for COVID-19. You should avoid these activities to keep you and your family safe.

- ◆ Shopping in crowded stores and on popular shopping days like weekends.
- ◆ Watching or participating in a crowded race, parade or celebration.
- ◆ Attending large indoor gatherings with people from outside of your household.

Click [here](#) for more information on celebrating safely during the holidays.

I am so pleased to share with you that we've named two exceptionally talented and qualified individuals (one, a familiar face for many!) to serve as Deputy Health Officers (HO) for the OC Health Care Agency (HCA). - Dr. Clayton Chau, OC Health Care Agency Director, County Health Officer



I'd like to introduce you to our first Deputy HO, **Dr. Regina Chinsio-Kwong (Dr. CK)**, who obtained her medical degree in osteopathic medicine from Western University, and completed her residency training in family medicine at Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton. A distinct branch of medicine in the U.S., osteopathic medicine empha-

sizes the interrelated unity of all systems in the body, each working with the other to heal in times of illness.

During her active duty service, she served as senior medical officer at the Barstow Branch Clinic — providing primary care and urgent care services as well as occupational physicals for service members and contractors. Dr. CK was a member of faculty for 3 years at Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton's family medicine residency program and also planned and executed all medical and public health joint exercises with New Zealand, Australia, and Japan forces during the Pacific Partnership mission at Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands in 2014. She joined Mission Heritage Medical Group in 2014 as a primary care physician after 7 years active duty service. She is certified in functional medicine and integrative medicine through the American Board of Integrative Medicine. Prior to joining the HCA, she provided holistic care with the St. Joseph - Providence Health System.

Throughout her career, Dr. CK has been devoted to caring for the whole person. She has directed needs assessments and crafted responses to address health disparity, communicable disease control, and population health management; developed a public health infrastructure to protect and promote health and well-being and implement preventive interventions and disease surveillance; and, most importantly, brought public health innovations to scale.



Next, I'm excited to announce that **Dr. Matt Zahn** has also been selected to serve as Deputy HO for the HCA. Dr. Zahn will continue to hold the position of Medical Director of our Communicable Disease Control Division in Public Health Services while taking on the additional responsibilities of his new role.

Dr. Zahn received his doctorate in medicine from St. Louis University School of Medicine and completed his fellowship in Pediatric Infectious Disease at the Children's Hospital of Colorado in 2004. From 2004 through 2011, he served as Medical Director for the Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness. During that time, he also served as an Assistant Professor of Pediatric Infectious Disease at the University of Louisville School of Medicine.

He has been adjunct professor of Pediatrics at the University of California, Irvine since 2011. Dr. Zahn has served as chair for the Immunization Advisory Workgroup for the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) from 2009 until 2012, currently serves on NACCHO's Infectious Disease Workgroup, and is the liaison from NACCHO to the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. He has served on multiple national public health committees, including CDC's school-located vaccination advisory committee, and as president of the California Association of Communicable Disease Controllers. Most recently, Dr. Zahn has been selected to serve on the State of California's COVID-19 Vaccine Science Safety Review Workforce.

Please join me in congratulating Drs. Zahn and CK and wishing them well in their new roles!

The Reward of Helping

Rhonda Folsom,
Program Supervisor, Tobacco Use
Prevention Program



“Can I interview you?” That’s a common question that students often ask us in Public Health Services (PHS) for their school projects. In my 20+ years of public health, this is one of the rare times when a student followed-up and shared a final project. I was extremely touched.

Corey (last name withheld by request), contacted OC Health Care Agency (HCA) Communications for help with an undergraduate class interview, and her request was filtered down the chain to my colleague, **Anabel Bolaños**, Program Supervisor, Tobacco Use Prevention Program and me. Both of us had already ended our work day, but I decided to complete the written interview so Corey could finish her paper. The first several interview questions were academic and more challenging than rewriting our scope of work or requesting a budget change. However, the last few questions really sparked my interest. What would you tell your younger self about the field? To prepare for? To avoid? To pursue?

Over the past decade I have shared my life lessons and practical wisdom learned during my career, with students who were interested and willing to listen. Corey thanked me for my help and advice, which she summarized in her final paper. I was really moved by her well-written words.

“Rhonda offered some fantastic advice for individuals, such as myself, hoping to obtain a degree within the public health field. Among the multitude of advice provided throughout her interview, Rhonda noted the importance of improving interpersonal skills, being an effective team player, as well as being prepared to make mistakes and then to learn from them. With every failure, coping skills are important to keep yourself going after they occur. Always pursue challenges and learn new skills as well as new knowledge. Most of note that Rhonda had to share with me was, ‘Success will be determined by your treatment of people. People don’t care what you know until they know that you care.’ This stuck with me the most because it puts into perspective how important it is to be truly invested and passionate about improving public health.”

Completing the interview yielded a serendipitous reward. I made a difference in Corey’s life and she made one in mine. I gave her an advanced perspective on life and effective strategies for working with people wherever she goes. She gave me an uplifting reminder of why helping others, especially students, is so invaluable. The reward is most often intrinsic and invisible, but when it manifests itself, it touches my heart even more.

To read Corey’s report, click [here](#).

5 Things You Need to Know About:



1 Orange County (OC) was moved into the Widespread risk category or Purple tier for COVID-19 by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) in mid-November. The move came under the Blueprint for a Safer Economy which provides guidance from the CDPH for re-opening California. You can find a link to the Blueprint at <https://occcovid19.ochealthinfo.com/>, under State Reopening Orders.

2 OC Health Care Agency (HCA) Director and County Health Officer **Dr. Clayton Chau** was asked about the move to the Purple tier by the OC Register. He said, "I think this is the right move. We have seen a skyrocketing increase in cases and we expected this move to the Purple tier."

Website Migration

The OC Health Care Agency (HCA) is on schedule to migrate to the new Drupal web platform during the first part of 2021. The move will involve more than 6-thousand HCA web pages. "HCA will have a new Internet web page with better messaging hierarchy, concise content that is informative, complemented hopefully by videos and other visual aids to make it more engaging, along with intuitive navigation, chat bots, an overall makeover with a more modern look and feel, and lastly, what we all love, with an ability to report data and web traffic so we can gather metrics and create

useful dashboards," said **Rebecca Siddiqui**, Senior Project Manager, Business Continuity Program.

Google Analytics will be part of the migration and will be the source-reporting tool for such data to be extracted. Having a tool such as this will also help HCA collect anonymized information on common queries and topics and build a knowledge base of frequent inquiries and produce insightful analytics. That should allow programs to improve presentation, prioritization and availability of information, and help continue to improve the website and contents. This may also help

avoid emails and phone calls to the Agency from users who are looking for information and guidance.

Another component of this project is to implement a smart virtual assistant, a.k.a. Chatbot to improve communication and better manage inquires. This will enable users to have an interactive session that mimics a normal conversational type of question-and-answer exchange. Using artificial intelligence and improved responses over time through continuous machine learning based adjustments, the Chatbot application will guide the users to the appropriate content on the website,

Blueprint for a Safer Economy

3 The CDPH places counties in one of four risk levels: Minimal risk-Yellow tier; Moderate risk-Orange tier; Substantial risk-Red tier; and Widespread risk-Purple tier. The data and tier assignments are usually announced on Tuesdays.

4 Before counties can move forward to a less restrictive tier, they are to remain at levels in their current tier for at least 3 weeks. When a county reaches the metrics of the next tier, a county has to remain within those levels for two consecutive weeks before moving into that tier.

5 Each tier level has different guidance for what's allowed to take place among various types of activities such as weddings or retail. The guidance can be found on the Blueprint for a Safer Economy webpage <https://covid19.ca.gov/safer-economy/>. Type in the County on the left side and if you click on the box under Activity a list of activities will appear for you to scroll through.



Update

quickly and more accurately, and will hopefully allow users to have a more effective, fulfilling and meaningful experience.

The new web platform and Chatbot are designed to help the HCA work towards its larger goal to better inform the community and to provide valuable information related to COVID-19 and other topics in a timely, efficient and effective manner. The migration has been a collaborative process and it's happening even during the pandemic, thanks to the support and vision from the HCA's leadership which set the goal of improving the user experience;

the expertise of the HCA Information Technology team in finding solutions to challenges that arise; from the creative input from the Subject Matter Experts from each HCA program; and from the Public Information Office and Marketing for their guidance on creative styles. This is a team effort in updating content so it is meaningful and useful for the HCA's Orange County constituents.

Congratulations to:

Children and Youth Behavioral Health (CYBH) Crisis Assessment Team (CAT)

Steve Ambriz Team Excellence Award (TEA) Winners

In selecting the CYBH CAT for the TEA, the Orange County Employee Association (OCEA) and OC Health Care Agency (HCA) Labor & Management Committee (LMC) said the CYBH CAT, “addresses the needs of the whole person by helping the client recognize their own needs. It is evident the goal of this program is for the client to gain knowledge and skills to manage their emotional and behavioral crisis. The program’s talents highlight the team’s dedication to the community.” In the past fiscal year the CYBH CAT accepted 5,404 crisis calls and provided 4,037 evaluations to children in need or experiencing a mental health crisis. “The CAT staff are experts in working through a consistently stressful and chaotic environment with families and children that are often experiencing something traumatic. Clinicians on staff excel and thrive in these types of circumstances and they’ve hung together to work as a team.”-LMC.

We invited the CYBH CAT staff to share their thoughts about the work they do and receiving the Team Excellence Award. You can read more [here](#).

Brett O’Brien, Director of Children, Youth and Prevention Behavioral Health, with HCA 30 years.

“Congratulations to the CYBH CAT team on receiving the Steve Ambriz Team Excellence Award! This is well deserved for a team that, through never before seen challenges of the pandemic, continued to provide critical in-person life-saving services to very vulnerable children, youth and their families. As first responders to those in mental health crisis, these team members truly are heroes in our midst.”

Dawn M. Smith, Division Manager CYBH, with HCA 22+ years.

“I’m so pleased to see the CYBH CAT recognized by the LMC for the Ambriz Team Excellence Award! This team has demonstrated their commitment to helping youth and their families when they are in the midst of crisis. With the current pandemic conditions, many youth are feeling isolated and are at greater risk for self-harm while at the same time being less connected with schools that would normally identify symptoms and link to services. This team has always been, and continues to be, an important resource for vulnerable youth and their families. Great work!”



CAT overnight staff: (L-to-R): Anthony Ragazzo; Matilde Bongato; and Maaria Shaikh.

Matthew Kee, Program Manager II CYBH, with HCA for 6 years.

"I am so excited to see the CYBH CAT team receive the Steve Ambriz Team Excellent Award this year. The team has continued to show their dedication and persistence in delivering this critical service to youth and families in the Orange County communities throughout the years. It is wonderful for them to be recognized for their hard work and accomplishments, particularly during these challenging times. The support they provide day in, day out, 365 days a year, many times, is the start of the healing process for those in need in Orange County. These first responders are pushed every day and continue to meet the challenges they face. I thank them, as I know many in the community do as well, for their continued dedication and support. Congratulations!"



CAT AM staff: (L-to-R): Veronica Grimes; Lamba Aziz-Hanifzai; Kathleen Tran; and Gayana Berry.



CAT PM staff: (L-to-R): Priyanka Sharma; Jessica Thornton; and Maeve Diehm.

Claudia Garcia, Service Chief I, with HCA for 5 years.

"This award is a wonderful recognition of what we do as a team on a daily basis. The CYBH CAT clinicians evaluate in multiple settings and often times under stressful conditions. However, they consistently put forth a strong work ethic to ensure that any minor in crisis they evaluate receives the care, support and help they need. Although the work is done due to a strong commitment to keep our OC youth safe from harm, receiving this award from the HCA-LMC is definitely a morale booster in these difficult COVID-19 times."

Nancy Garcia, Service Chief II, with HCA 16 years.

"We are thrilled to have won the Team Excellence Award. The CYBH CAT is a team dedicated to providing high level quality of care and being acknowledged with such a recognition is an honor. I feel privileged to be working alongside Service Chiefs, Clinicians and Office Support who are passionate about the work that they do day in and day out. I have learned that a team can come together even in times of adversity and challenge to meet the needs of others and truly embody the definition of what a team is."



“You and your team have been amazing!” That’s from an email sent by the Orange County (OC) Business Council to the OC Health Care Agency (HCA) following the conclusion of the Safe Dine OC program. The program launched in early August and allowed restaurant owners in OC to apply for a grant of up to \$5,000 each to create a COVID-19 safe environment for workers and customers.

“Many restaurants who are struggling to survive were very grateful for the grant to ensure safe dining best practices for customers and their employees,” said **Steve Thronson**, Deputy Agency Director, Medical Health Services. “As we all know our OC restaurants feed our residents, provide spaces to build friendships and relationships, bring in tourism dollars, employ many people, and create multiple indirect benefits to our economy and quality of life.”

“I’m extremely proud of our health inspectors who made Safe Dine OC a success while carrying out their regular duties during this pandemic,” said **Christine Lane**, Director of Environmental Health. “Our inspectors and supervisors did great work to communicate with restaurants so they could meet the guidelines under this important program.”

“It has been a great privilege to support the HCA in administering the Safe Dine OC program,” said Natalie Rubalcava, Chief Operating Officer of the Business Council. “Together we were able to create a program that helped 2,135 restaurants during this pandemic.” The program was



able to meet its contract obligation of dispersing \$10 million in allocations. For a list of food facilities which received grants visit <https://www.ocbc.org/safedineoc-grantrecipient/>.

Operation Santa Claus and Senior Santa & Friends Need Your Help!

Help brighten the lives of our community’s most vulnerable by donating toys and gifts this holiday season.



GIVE ONLINE

ssa.ocgov.com/ssa_volunteer/donations/osc_donation

DONATE NEW UNWRAPPED TOYS

Drop off at 1505 E. Warner Ave., Santa Ana, CA 92705 or email operationsantaclaus@ssa.ocgov.com for a list of donation sites.

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

Volunteers are needed in November and December to sort gifts, restock and assist shoppers. Sign-up at www.signupgenius.com/findasignup and search for a sign up under the email address operationsantaclaus@ssa.ocgov.com

QUESTIONS?

Call 714-679-2438 for more information.



*****GIFTS FOR TODDLERS, TEENS, AND GIRLS ARE IN HIGH DEMAND.**

**“We make a living by what we get.
We make a life by what we give.”
-Winston S. Churchill**

Operation Santa Claus is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization operated by the County of Orange Social Services Agency.

Staying Healthy During the Holidays!

Did you know that eating healthy during the holidays doesn't have to be hard? You can still enjoy holiday meals and treats by eating smaller portions, making healthy substitutions, and planning ahead. Follow these three tips to help you stay healthy during the holidays.

Include lots of seasonal, colorful fruits and vegetables

Fruits and vegetables will add flavor, color and nutrients to holiday meals. They also help you feel fuller longer so you are not tempted to overeat.

Reduce calories when you can

Substitute lower fat options such as low-fat milk instead of whole milk. Choose water to drink most of the time instead of sugary beverages. For dessert, try baked apples with

cinnamon and a sprinkle of sugar instead of apple pie.

Look for opportunities to be active

Make being active part of your holiday tradition. After you eat, head outdoors for a quick walk.

Try adding some flavor and color to your holiday meal by including this roasted vegetable recipe.

Rosemary Balsamic Roasted Vegetables

Serves 8

Ingredients:

½ lb., Brussels sprouts, brown ends trimmed off and cut in half

½ medium cauliflower (cut into florets)

4 medium carrots (peeled, sliced)

½ pound turnips (peeled and chopped into ½ inch cubes)

½ pound beets (peeled and chopped into ½ inch cubes)

1/3 pound sweet potato (peeled, optional) cut into ¾ inch cubes

3 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar

3 tsp. extra virgin olive oil

2-3 Tbsp. fresh, chopped rosemary

2 clove fresh, minced garlic

1 tsp. onion powder

½ tsp. pepper

¼ tsp. salt



Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375.
2. Spray 9 x 13 baking dish with cooking spray.
3. Thoroughly wash all vegetables, cut and toss together in large bowl.
4. In small bowl, mix together vinegar, oil, rosemary, garlic, onion powder, pepper and salt. Pour over vegetable mixture and toss well.
5. Pour vegetable mixture into prepared 9 X 13 baking dish. Bake in preheated oven for 30-35 minutes, stirring once, until all vegetables pierce easily with a fork.

For more: <https://recipes.heart.org/en/recipes/rosemary-balsamic-roasted-vegetables>
<https://www.heart.org/-/media/aha/h4gm/pdf-files/hheatingguidefinalnohablogo.pdf?la=en>

Student Mask Message Contest

The OC Health Care Agency (HCA) was overwhelmed by the response from Orange County (OC) students to our Mask Message Contest! Our judges were so impressed by the creativity, heart and soul that students poured into their work. It was very difficult to choose winners, but we are proud to post Elementary, Middle and High School first, second and third place winners in three categories: Mask Art, Written Essay and Social Video. Principals from each winning school will be contacted and will receive a technology grant. Congratulations to the winners and the more than 600 students who entered!



The collage showcases just a few of the entries. You can view them for yourself at ochealthinfo.com/maskcontest. Please know that each office with the Orange County Board of Supervisors is also reviewing mask designs by students in their Districts and each Supervisor will be able to vote on one award winner each to celebrate on their social media feeds!

NEW STIGMA FREE OC EMAIL SIGNATURE

There's a new email signature with the revamp and relaunch of the Stigma Free OC website and the "See the person not the condition" campaign. The email signature has "stepped past" the familiar green tennis shoes and as you can see with the new email signature below, it now encourages the Orange County (OC) community to "take the pledge," and be a "Pledged Supporter" of the Stigma Free OC message. "Our goal remains to end the stigma surrounding mental illness and addiction," said **Mark Lawrenz**, Division Manager, Prevention and Intervention Behavioral Health Services. "The new email signature is more business-friendly and therefore it really is "the next step" to move businesses, cities, organizations and individuals into showing their support by taking the pledge to be stigma free." OC Health Care Agency staff can access the email signature on page 9 of the Professional Standards and Branding Style Guide [here](#).



Everyone in the OC community can take the pledge to be stigma free on the www.stigmafreeoc.com website. Click the "pledge to be stigma free" link in the middle of the page and complete the simple form. At the end, there's a certificate which can be printed and shared on social media, while the names of the last 100 individuals as well as all the organizations, businesses or cities who take the pledge are showcased on the StigmaFreeOC website.

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