



Director's Desk

Christina R. Ghaly, M.D.
Acting Director

Greetings! There's no doubt that summer is almost over and fall is here! While I've learned to not be surprised by heat waves in September and even October, I have also appreciated some cooler mornings recently and eagerly anticipate getting into the full swing of fall -- by far my favorite season. Fall for me also means Back to School. My kids are all back in full swing of school, enjoying being in class (mostly enjoying it at least), spending more time with their friends, and getting back to regular sports practices.

This issue of the Pulse also draws attention to a couple of education and training efforts under way within DHS. DHS is sponsoring a number of programs to help develop our nursing work-

force, including helping to train County clients to become Nursing Attendants who can be hired into our hospitals and clinics. We are also proud to be mid-way through the RN to FNP training program which will train over 20 DHS nurses to take on a role as a nurse practitioner in the DHS Correctional Health Services unit. And finally, we highlight below a number of professional student worker positions, along with veteran intern positions, in Health Information Management, the unit that manages medical records, coding, release of information, and other services.

In addition, please enjoy reading more about the County's Whole Person Care program, which provides wrap-around programs and services to our patients, as well as one of DHS' growing number of medical-legal partnerships -- the one highlighted here is at MLK Outpatient Center. These services are critical for our patients in understanding and accessing services to which they are entitled. Please spread the news about these programs!

I wish you all the best this Fall.

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Providing Opportunities: Hiring Veteran Interns and Student Workers

By Christopher Rodriguez

In the past year, DHS Health Information Management (HIM) has hired thirty five veteran interns. Within this group, eleven interns were hired to permanent DHS positions. This program was initiated in 2017 through a partnership with Supervisor Kathryn Barger and the Fifth District Office. The interns have been very grateful for this opportunity, which allowed the department to add new, eager and hardworking staff. In addition, the utilization of veteran interns has assisted HIM to meet many workload requirements.

Nancy Aldrete was the first veteran intern hired by DHS HIM. In May 2017, Aldrete attended the Tribute to Veterans and Military Families event sponsored by the LA County Department of Human Resources. It was at this event where she met HIM staff who took notice of her positive character and effervescent personality. Soon after, Aldrete was hired and assigned to work at the HIM department at LAC+USC Medical Center where she worked for nine months until being promoted to a permanent county position. When asked about her experience, Aldrete said, "I can truly say coming in with a military background I naturally fell into place with the LA County workforce, specifically within HIM. I am able to apply that attention to detail, structure and discipline skills to my every day job duties, feeling accomplished at the end of each day."

DHS HIM is attempting to replicate the success of the veteran interns program by utilizing professional student workers in HIM units across DHS. To date, HIM has hired thirty-six professional student workers. The student workers have been assigned various duties within the department, including clerical support, document scanning, chart filing and release of information. This has provided a unique opportunity for the student workers to gain valuable professional and technical experience while they are enrolled in academic courses.





Training Programs for Workforce Development in DHS

By Lori Quince

The Department of Health Services (DHS) is engaging in innovative partnerships to provide professional development opportunities to improve patient care.

The **Nursing Attendant Training Program** began in 2017-2018, with the DHS Office of Nursing Affairs, Department of Human Resources (DHR), and Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS) to develop a plan to hire County clients as Nursing Attendants. This project will provide family-level wages and benefits. DHS and WDACS are preparing these County clients for future County employment by facilitating their graduation from a Nursing Attendant training program and completion of the California State testing process for Certified Nursing Assistants. The workshop provides students the opportunity to shadow an experienced DHS Nursing Attendant, observe patient care in an acute care environment and provide supervised direct patient care.

DHS plans to hire 305 Nursing Attendants by the end of Fiscal Year 2018-19 and provide them training to function as general Nursing Assistants and "Care Companions" for the Medical and Surgical areas at LAC+USC, Harbor-UCLA and Olive View-UCLA Medical Centers. A DHS team of forward thinking, progressive nursing instructors and staff led by Anita Mueller RN, Neurorehabilitation Clinical Nursing Instructor-Rancho Rehabilitation Center, developed the training program to enhance the role of our Nursing Assistants through defined Care Companion competencies. Care Companions focus on improving the functional health status of patients by utilizing skills and techniques such as early ambulation, redirection, cognitive stimulation and close observation of patients with altered mental state, impulsiveness or extreme risk of falls/accidental injury.

The **High Road Training Partnership** is designed to prepare individuals with employment barriers for permanent County jobs. This program is a collaboration between the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), DHR and the Worker Education and Resource Center (WERC). This partnership is based on a report by WERC that proposed the creation of pilot projects in several high-demand, entry-level County jobs. The Board of Supervisors has approved WERC's recommendations and directed the CEO to implement them in collaboration with County departments. DHS agreed to help launch the first project. The pro-

gram will start with Intermediate Clerks at LAC+USC Medical Center and will continue to be implemented across DHS facilities based on vacancies and operational needs.

WERC and DHS began recruitment efforts for these permanent Intermediate Clerk jobs, by focusing on individuals enrolled in County safety net programs, including CalWORKS Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) and General Relief Opportunities for Work (GROW). WERC and DHS staff will tailor training efforts to the specific role of clerks in County hospitals, focusing on computer skills, customer service, team-building and effective communication with coworkers and the public. WERC will continue to provide supportive services to

participants during the first six months on the job, and workplace mentors will help them develop their professional performance and prepare them for the County workplace culture.

Lastly, the **Correctional Health (CH) Training Program** is an 18-month academic partnership with California State University Los Angeles (CSULA). This accelerated Bachelors of Science in Nursing (BSN) to Family Nurse Practitioner Program (FNP) began January 2018. Twenty-three (23)



BSN Registered Nurses (RN) were selected through a competitive application process to attend CSULA's accelerated FNP program. The students completed the first 8 months of the program and will soon begin their clinical rotation assignments in Primary Care, Women's Health & Pediatrics, Family Practice, Adult Gerontology Primary Care I & Internal Medicine, Adult Gerontology Primary Care II and the Emergency Room. The DHS Office of Nursing Affairs oversees the program with Dolores Thompson, CH Lead NP and Margarita Pereyda, CH CMO. The students are partnered with Medical Doctors and Nurse Practitioners to foster a collaborative approach to learning, with the goal of meeting the specific needs of the jail population. The students are currently working in CH as RNs to deepen their understanding of common chronic conditions, substance use and behavioral health issues seen in CH. The students will graduate mid-December, 2019 and are committed to work as FNP in CH for a minimum of 3 years.

These programs are designed to create pathways to work and ensure that DHS can continuously provide optimal care for our patient population.

Lawyers and Doctors are in the House

By Yolanda Vera

After a checkup with a medical provider or social worker, patients at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Outpatient Center can now meet with a legal aid attorney for free legal representation and advice on issues such as government benefits, landlord tenant law, domestic violence and immigration law.

“Our patients have complicated lives and the resulting stress makes them even sicker,” said Yolanda Vera, MLK Outpatient Center. “We are excited about this collaboration with the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles to better meet our patients’ needs under one roof.”

Through this initiative, called the Whole Person Care/Medical Legal Partnership–LA, the MLK Outpatient Center’s most vulnerable patients can get expert legal advice on various problems affecting their well-being. The program is designed to be closely integrated with the patients’ primary care visits and all medical home providers know an easy referral pathway exists for patients who mention legal problems during a clinic visit. So far, the program has helped homeless patients, patients struggling with mental health or substance abuse; medically high-risk patients before and after their hospital discharge, and patients who have been recently

released from prison. The Medical Legal Partnership team works closely with the MLK Outpatient Center’s social worker staff as well as its homeless outreach team to tackle the hardest legal problems.

The program has been very popular from its inception. The Outpatient Center launched the program in April of this year and it served 10 patients on its first day. Since then, over 300 patients have walked in for advice. Attorneys have opened



almost 250 individual cases for brief to extended legal assistance. An attorney staffs the office from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each Tuesday and Thursday and an attorney is available Mondays,

Wednesdays and Fridays by referral.

The program also helps the MLK Outpatient Center improve its clinic services. The Medical Legal Partnership has helped the Outpatient Center identify areas needing additional provider training and ways to improve the front office registration workflow.

Besides Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, collaborating partners include the DHS Whole Person Care team, Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County; Mental Health Advocacy Services and Bet Tzedek.

Whole Person Care - Los Angeles: Impacting Lives

By Marina Alvarez

Whole Person Care - Los Angeles (WPC-LA) is a five-year pilot program spanning from 2016-2020 designed to improve the health and well-being of some of the most vulnerable individuals living in Los Angeles County. WPC-LA works with Medi-Cal eligible community members who are experiencing homelessness, justice involvement, serious mental illness, substance use disorder, complex health conditions and/or barriers to a healthy pregnancy. WPC-LA brings together health and social service delivery entities across the County to build an integrated, more community-centered system of care, and develop the foundational infrastructure necessary to deliver seamless, coordinated services to Medi-Cal eligible populations.

A key feature at the heart of WPC-LA is the use of care management teams across all Service Planning Areas (SPA) and in collaboration with various Health Agency programs within the Departments of Mental Health, Public Health and Health Services. Many of our WPC-staff members bring shared, lived

experience along with cultural competency that offer a unique connection with our program participants. The care management team’s role is to provide social support, identify needs, accompany and connect participants to resources they need to thrive.

WPC-LA programs are transitional programs that help participants during times of high-risk when participants seek

social, health and behavior services. Assistance included in these areas range from specialized wraparound services for individuals with complex health and mental health needs, peer mentorship, accompaniment to physical and behavioral health appointments, linking participants with community-based organizations,

and assistance with reintegration into the family unit and the community upon exiting the criminal justice system. WPC-LA is also uniquely equipped to provide linkages to a breadth of services for individuals at-risk of becoming homeless or experiencing homelessness. For more information about Whole Person Care – Los Angeles and its programs, please visit: <http://dhs.lacounty.gov/wps/portal/dhs/wpc/>.

