

Mendocino County Department of Social Services CEO Report

March 2026

II. Safe & Healthy County



March is Social Worker Appreciation Month

March is Social Worker Appreciation Month, a time to recognize the dedication and impact of Social Workers and Social Worker Assistants throughout the Department of Social Services.

Every day, these professionals support individuals and families facing difficult situations, including abuse, neglect, disability, poverty, aging-related challenges, and other complex life circumstances. Their work requires compassion, problem-solving, and strong knowledge of community resources and programs.

Through programs like **In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)**, eligible residents receive the support they need to remain safely in their homes. The Public Authority helps maintain a strong caregiving workforce by assisting providers with enrollment, maintaining a registry, and supporting the in-home care system throughout the county.

The **Public Administrator** ensures that vulnerable individuals and their estates are managed responsibly and in accordance with the law. Quality Assurance efforts help maintain program accuracy, accountability, and proper documentation.

SSI Advocacy Social Workers assist individuals in applying for Supplemental Security Income and navigating the appeals process, helping residents secure stable financial support.

Within **Family and Children's Services**, Social Workers provide 24/7 response to reports of suspected child abuse or neglect. They work closely with families to connect them with parenting support, counseling, and community resources. Their goal is always to keep children safe while helping families stay together whenever possible. They also support youth in foster care and help young people successfully transition into adulthood.

The **Resource Family Approval** program supports relatives and community members who want to become foster caregivers by guiding them through training, background checks, and ongoing support to ensure children receive safe and nurturing care.

The **CalWORKs and CalWORKs Job Services** Social Worker supports teens and families overcome challenges such as lack of transportation, stable housing, and educational attainment.

The work of Social Workers and Social Worker Assistants is often urgent, challenging, and deeply meaningful. Their commitment helps protect children and vulnerable adults, strengthens families, and supports the wellbeing of our entire community.

Let's Celebrate Social Worker Appreciation Month!

*Planting the seeds of
hope every day*



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Changes Coming to CalFresh Work and Community Engagement Requirements

Starting June 1, 2026 California will be implementing the federal changes on CalFresh work and community engagement requirements. These updated rules apply to individuals categorized as Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDS)-- people between the ages of 18 and 64 who do not have a disability and are not caring for a dependent child under the age of 14. ABAWDS will be screened for any exemptions or compliance at application and redetermination.

Individuals are excused/exempted from requirements if any of the following apply to them:

- Under age 18 or over age 64
- A parent or responsible for a dependent child under the age of 14
- You are excused from the general CalFresh work requirements
- Unable to work at least 20 hours per week or a total of 80 hours or more per month because of a physical or mental health issue.
- Unable to work because you are struggling with drug or alcohol addiction or a victim of domestic violence or experiencing chronic homelessness. The condition must be tied to a physical or mental health issue.
- Pregnant (any stage of pregnancy).
- Identify as an Indian, Urban Indian or California Indian under the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHICIA).
- Participating in an Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) training program for at least half-time.
- Living in an area where the ABAWD work requirement is waived.

If an ABAWD does not meet an exemption, then they can meet the work and community engagement requirements through working, volunteering, or being enrolled in school or a job training program for an average of 20 hours per week or earning \$217.50 per week before taxes. ABAWDS who are not exempt and who are meeting the work and community engagement hours will only be eligible to receive 3 countable months of CalFresh benefits within 3-year period.



Mendocino County Department of Social Services Monthly Data Dashboard



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Adult Protective Services Spotlight

During **February**, Adult Protective Services (APS) received **116 referrals**. All mandated response timeframes were met, resulting in a response compliance rate of 96.43%. APS continues to exceed State-mandated response standards, demonstrating sustained performance and timely protective action for vulnerable adults across the County.

To ensure continuity of services and equitable regional access, APS implemented a structured quarterly coverage plan addressing staffing limitations in outlying areas, particularly where on-site personnel are limited. This proactive workforce strategy, supported by focused supervisory oversight, strengthened cross-regional coverage and prevented service disruption. Strategic staff deployment and operational flexibility enabled APS to maintain strong response times, compliance standards, and timely case actions despite ongoing staffing transitions.

APS social workers serve on the front lines responding to abuse, neglect, self-neglect, exploitation, and complex care needs among vulnerable adults. Their work requires advanced assessment skills, sound judgment, strict adherence to statutory mandates, and the ability to navigate high-risk situations with professionalism and compassion. They balance regulatory compliance with client-centered practice, often under urgent and high-stakes circumstances where timely intervention directly impacts safety and well-being.

Beyond direct client engagement, APS social workers collaborate with law enforcement, medical providers, and community-based partners to coordinate protective actions while safeguarding individual rights and self-determination. Continued outreach and training for mandated reporters strengthen early identification efforts, promote timely referrals, and enhance community awareness of adult abuse prevention.

Administrative Support and Adult Services Integrated Program Support (ASIPS) staff provide the critical infrastructure that sustains this level of performance. These teams support State Hearing preparation and representation, assist in program procedure development, monitor fraud referrals, and collaborate with Quality Assurance to ensure documentation integrity and defensible case actions. Their work enhances regulatory compliance, mitigates financial risk, and ensures consistent program interpretation across units. In addition to APS, these teams support programs throughout the Adult and Aging Division, contributing to operational consistency, organizational resilience, and sustained service continuity.

Collectively, this integrated structure allows APS to remain focused on its core purpose: protecting vulnerable adults from harm; respecting their right to self-determination; promoting safety, independence, dignity, and well-being; and providing thorough investigation, timely intervention, coordinated case management, and supportive services. APS social workers deliver complex, high-quality casework grounded in statutory authority and professional ethics, while maintaining a strong customer-service orientation toward clients, families, and community partners. Their work reflects a balance of investigative rigor and compassionate engagement, ensuring individuals are not only protected, but supported in maintaining autonomy and stability whenever safely possible.