



Catalyzing Connection And Collaboration

2025-2026 Annual Report



SDSU
San Diego State
University

LiveWellSD.org/LWCIL

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A Message from Our Steering Committee Co-Chairs

As the co-chairs of the [Live Well Center for Innovation & Leadership \(LWCIL\)](#), we are proud to share and celebrate our collective progress for Fiscal Year 2025-2026.

Together, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) and San Diego State University (SDSU) are blazing a trail of innovation and excellence with respect to academic-practice partnerships.

Across our co-led steering committee, subcommittees and workgroup structures, we are providing expansive opportunities for students and alumni to be exposed to health and human services careers, facilitating collaborative research connections, and bringing academia, practice and community together to tackle health and human services challenges, such as college student food security.

Despite emerging policy and political changes, we remain steadfast in our partnership, commitment and impact. We are expanding our efforts regionally to elevate, support, and sustain San Diego County's health and human services workforce as part of our HealthWorks! San Diego regional collaborative with CSU San Marcos (CSUSM).

This year's annual report highlights some of our more visible accomplishments. We both know and appreciate that these accomplishments would not be possible without the leadership and engagement of faculty, staff, students, and community partners.

Together, we look forward to continuing to advance a healthy, equitable, safe and thriving San Diego region.



Amy Bonomi, PhD, MPH
Dean
College of Health and Human Services
San Diego State University



Elizabeth A. Hernandez, PhD
Interim Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Health and Human Services Agency
County of San Diego

About the Live Well Center for Innovation & Leadership

Vision

The Live Well Center for Innovation & Leadership is a national model of excellence in academic-practice partnership within a San Diego region that is healthy, equitable, safe, and thriving.

Mission

To strengthen the partnership between academia and health and human services practice through integrated education, research, workforce development, and service that advances equity in San Diego County.



LIVE WELL
CENTER FOR
INNOVATION &
LEADERSHIP



Annual Highlights

2025-2026

- Launched the **Academic Internship Program Pilot** with seven HHSA departments, Behavioral Health Services and 16 SDSU students.
- Hosted the **2nd Annual Health and Human Services Careers Week** making more than 325 meaningful student, alumni and professional connections.
- Co-planned the **Pathways 2 Public Health High School Summer Camp** exposing 30 students to public health careers and academic pathways.
- Co-hosted the **Measuring What Matters Data Summit** involving 215 SDSU students, faculty, HHSA data professionals and community partners.
- Advanced **five collaborative health equity research projects** with faculty and HHSA practitioners.
- Convened faculty, students and community members to coordinate efforts to improve **college student food access and security**.
- Secured a \$900,000, three-year health workforce grant from Health Career Connection/ CA Endowment Social Bond funds to foster **regional collaboration between HHSA, SDSU, and CSUSM**.





People Success

Building a diverse, competent and engaged health and human services workforce.

Subcommittee Co-Chairs



Dr. Jong Won Min
Director and Professor
School of Social Work
San Diego State University



Allison Boyer
Interim Director
Aging & Independence Services
Health and Human Services Agency
County of San Diego

Workgroups and Co-Leads

Student Field Experiences

Allison Hirahara, Community Health
Promotion Specialist, Department of
Strategy and Community Engagement

Geysil Arroyo, Instructor and Administrator
of Field Practice, School of Public Health

Workforce Development

Sarah Kneeland, Policy Analyst, Department
of Child and Family Well-Being

Ignatius “Iggy” Nip, Director, School of
Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences

Student and Alumni Outreach

Brynn Viale Long, Policy Director, Behavioral
Health Services

Emily Schmied, Associate Professor, Division
Head, and Associate Director for Academic
Affairs, School of Public Health

Community College & High School Outreach

Adriana Ramirez, Interim Assistant Director,
Self-Sufficiency Services

Jennifer Cosio, Lecturer, Undergraduate
Advisor and Coordinator,
School of Social Work

Inspiring, Connecting, and Preparing Students for Health and Human Services Careers

Providing students with hands-on opportunities to learn and connect with HHSA and other industry professionals continues to be a priority for the People Success Subcommittee, co-chaired by SDSU’s School of Social Work Director, **Dr. Jong Won Min**, and HHSA’s Aging &

Independence Services Director, **Allison Boyer**. This year, the subcommittee made impressive progress with the launch of the Academic Internship Program Pilot and Pathways 2 Public Health High School Camp, as well as successfully executing the Second Annual Health and Human Services Careers Week. In addition, the partners explored collaborating to improve the career readiness of all College of Health and Human Services students. These combined efforts helped advance our shared priorities of inspiring and preparing the next generation of health and human services workers entering careers within HHSA and the broader San Diego region.

Academic Internship Program Pilot Students Learn, Connect and Contribute

After two years of careful planning, our **Academic Internship Program Pilot** launched in Spring 2026 with a cohort of sixteen SDSU students. Students participating in the pilot program gained meaningful, hands-on field experience across seven HHSA departments and Behavioral Health Services. The first cohort of interns included nine undergraduate and seven graduate students from SDSU's College of Health and Human Services and the School of Public Affairs.

The Academic Internship Program is designed to build an equitable, coordinated, non-clinical, academic credit internship program for the Health and Human Services Agency. Our ultimate goal for the program is to inspire students to choose careers within HHSA and its more than 350 contracted partners by matching them with dedicated professionals, exposing them to rewarding work that improves lives throughout our county, and providing them with opportunities to gain new skills and knowledge while contributing their own talents over the course of a semester.

Examples of intern projects included evaluating community engagement efforts and the Regional Homeless Assistance Program, developing communications campaigns and materials about changes to CalFresh and Medi-Cal, conducting analyses in the public health laboratory to protect community health, and developing a wellness program for caregivers. Many interns took advantage of optional tours of HHSA's state-of-the-art Public Health Laboratory and the Registrar of Voters. They also participated in student roundtable meetings and other professional development trainings to advance their communication, leadership, professional development, and teamwork skills.

Nearly 30 SDSU students are set to participate in the program this Fall 2026 as we continue to focus on providing enhanced opportunities and support for students and supervisors, while planning for the program's long-term sustainability and inclusion of other academic partners.



New Pathways to Public Health Summer Camp Exposes High School Students to Health Careers and Academic Pathways

Thirty-four students representing 16 high schools from across San Diego County explored public health careers and academic pathways during the inaugural **Pathways to Public Health (P2PH) High School Summer Camp** which launched June 2026. An initiative of SDSU's School of Public Health (SPH) and funded by the Regional K-16 Collaborative Grants Program, P2PH was led by Dr. Zohir Chowdhury and co-designed with extensive input and participation from LWCIL's Community College and High School Outreach Workgroup. The workgroup is co-led by Self-Sufficiency Services' Adriana Ramirez and the School of Social Work's Jennifer Cosio.

During the four-day experience, SPH's Dr. Chowdhury, Geysil Arroyo, and Olivia Wurzbach introduced students to SDSU faculty, alumni, and public health leaders including a welcome by Dr. Eyal Oren (SPH) and HHSA's Public Health Officer, Dr. Sayone Thihalolipavan. Students also engaged in interactive activities, including outbreak investigation scenarios, designing their own health promotion campaigns, and learning about various public health subfields. Beyond applied learning, students toured the SDSU campus including a visit to Dr. Eunha Hoh's and Dr. Elana Elkin's environmental health research labs, received an overview of the Bachelor of Science in Public Health (BSPH) program, graduate school opportunities, and admissions resources to prepare for their future career pathways in public health.

The camp concluded with a celebration ceremony during which participants were awarded certificates of completion by Dr. Oren and Dr. Elizabeth Hernandez, HHSA's Interim Deputy Chief Administrative Officer. Following the success of the P2PH camp, the workgroup will continue collaborating on ways to connect local community college and high school students to health and human service careers, academic pathways and inspiring academic and practice professionals.

A Year-Round Presence and Health and Human Services Careers Week Helps Students and Alumni Connect to HHSA Professionals and Careers

Over the past year, LWCIL's SDSU Student and Alumni Outreach Workgroup, co-led by Behavioral Health Services' Brynn Viale Long and the School of Public Health's Dr. Emily Schmied, established

"I had no idea about the variety of topics in public health. Learning about the different subfields, especially environmental health, showed me how many vital topics there are to explore."

Makenna, Fallbrook High School
Pathways to Public Health (P2PH)
High School Summer Camp
participant



a consistent and visible presence on SDSU's campus. Their efforts resulted in more students and early career alumni exploring pathways into health and human services careers within the County and the community.

The **2nd Annual Health and Human Services Careers Week** showcased a robust lineup of activities designed to connect students with County departments, community partners, and professionals across the sector. The week included a kick-off event featuring the Live Well on Wheels bus, County resources and student organizations; career development and pursuing County careers workshops; a Health and Human Services Careers Expo; and the Meet the People student, alumni, and professional networking event. The end result was students and alumni learning, connecting and being inspired by professionals from HHSA and other major health and human services employers from across the region.

HHS Careers Week Highlights

- **More than 325 meaningful connections** were made by students and alumni who engaged directly with County departments and health-sector employers.
- **Over 30 employers including 10 HHSA departments/offices** exposed students and alumni to compelling job and internship opportunities.
- **Three interactive workshops** helped students improve their career readiness and provided practical guidance on navigating County hiring processes and understanding health and human services career pathways.
- County services and professions received a boost in visibility with the integration of the Live Well on Wheels (Live WoW) Mobile Office and student resource groups into the **campus-wide kickoff event**.



"Health and Human Services Careers Week is about inspiring the next generation workforce by showcasing County and regional health careers and creating meaningful student, alumni and professional connections."

Dr. Nicole Magnuson, Director, Live Well Center for Innovation & Leadership





Research & Data Excellence

Inform and improve academia, policy, and practice with rigorous and relevant research.

Subcommittee Co-Chairs



Dr. Amanda McClain
Associate Professor
School of Exercise &
Nutritional Sciences
San Diego State University



Dr. Ankita Kadakia
Deputy Public Health Officer
Health and Human Services Agency
County of San Diego

Workgroups and Co-Leads

Advancing Health Equity Research

Dr. Tracy Finlayson, Professor, Global
Health Management and Policy, School of
Public Health and Co-Leader, Community
Engagement Team, HealthLINK Center

Hanna Marquez, Epidemiologist II,
Public Health Services

Catalyzing Research Connections & Knowledge Sharing

Dr. Giang Pham, Associate Dean of
Research, College of Health and Human
Services

Jeff Jimenez, Community Data & Analytics
Manager, Department of Strategy and
Community Engagement

Joint Policy & Practice

Nadia Campbell, Director of Research Initiatives,
SDSU's Division of Research and Innovation

Melissa Yakuta, Senior Data and Research Analyst,
Department of Strategy and Community Engagement

Facilitating Shared Understanding and Meaningful Research Collaboration

Under the leadership of co-chairs, **Dr. Ankita Kadakia**, HHSA's Deputy Public Health Officer and Associate Professor **Dr. Amanda McClain**, School of Exercise & Nutritional Sciences, the Research & Data Excellence Subcommittee is making impressive strides in advancing research collaborations and catalyzing meaningful connections between SDSU faculty and HHSA practitioners. From leading an academic-practice research-focused workshop at the 2025 Live Well Advance & School Summit to convening data-minded professionals at the Measuring What Matters Data Summit and establishing new policies and processes to support ongoing research and data sharing, the subcommittee has prioritized shared understanding, relationship-building and sustainable structures for long-term collaboration. As a result, five health equity research projects are underway with faculty and County staff working together to address emergency room dental health utilization, hospital discharges and food insecurity, economic supports for families referred to child welfare, LGBTQ+ health disparities, and Adult Protective Services Crisis team dementia referrals. In addition to co-publication, the partners strive to improve more lives through informed policy and practice.

Measuring What Matters Brings County Leaders and Researchers Together for Data Rich Discussions

County leaders, academic researchers and recognized *Live Well San Diego* partners came together in early September 2025 for the **Measuring What Matters Data Summit & Networking Event**. The two-part event was coordinated by LWCIL's Catalyzing Connections Workgroup co-leads, Jeffrey Jimenez, Community Data and Analytics Manager, and Dr. Giang Pham, Associate Dean of Research, and co-hosted by the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency and San Diego State University with the goals of strengthening cross-sector collaboration and expanding awareness of local data resources. During the morning session, 215 attendees explored how County and partner data can drive research, program innovation, community impact, and collaborative problem-solving. The afternoon session provided an exclusive learning and relationship-building opportunity for 65 County data professionals and SDSU researchers. Nearly 100% of attendees found both events personally beneficial with meaningful connections made. Together, these provided an excellent model for how data, research, and partnerships can strengthen community outcomes across San Diego County.



2025 Measuring What Matters Data Summit & Networking Event

Research and data exhibitors shared their successes and resources with community partners.



2025 Live Well Advance & School Summit

Subcommittee leaders and members facilitated a workshop about academic-practice research collaboration and data sharing.



2026 HealthLink Symposium

Subcommittee leaders and members facilitated and participated as panel members sharing about community partnership and research collaboration.



Public Health Laboratory Tour

Subcommittee members and other SDSU faculty took a tour of the state-of-art Public Health Laboratory after an in-person subcommittee meeting hosted by Public Health Services.





Service to Community

Integrating academia, practice, and community to advance equity and eliminate health disparities.

Subcommittee Co-Chairs



Dr. Mounah Abdel-Samad
Associate Director and
Associate Professor
Public Administration Policy
School of Public Affairs
San Diego State University



David Estrella
Director
Housing and Community
Development Services
Health and Human Services Agency
County of San Diego

Workgroups and Co-Leads

Community Impact Workgroup

KellyAnne Rodriguez, Chief, Departmental Operations,
Department of Strategy and Community Engagement

Dr. Alan Card, Assistant Professor, School of Public Health

Aligning People and Passion to Address Community Health and Well-being Priorities

The Service to Community Subcommittee, co-chaired by HHSA's **David Estrella** and SDSU's **Dr. Mounah Abdel-Samad**, worked with an impressive academic-practice team to explore opportunities to improve housing stability for San Diego County's aging population and address college student food security. The various efforts led to deeper relationships across SDSU and HHSA as demonstrated by collaborative convenings with community partners, jointly pursuing grant opportunities, and welcoming HHSA professionals into the classroom to share their knowledge and experience working in the Office of Homeless Solutions.

Students, Faculty, Practitioners, and Community Partners Unite to Improve College Student Food Security

Far too many college students across our state and county are food insecure. More than 33,000 of the 879,000 CalFresh-eligible college students in California attend SDSU.

As part of the Service to Community Subcommittee, the **Community Impact Workgroup** co-led by HHSA's Departmental Operations Chief, KellyAnne Rodriguez, and Dr. Alan Card, Associate Faculty with the School of Public Health, convened a group of 30 subject-matter experts including students, faculty, and basic needs professionals from local community colleges and universities in April 2026 to discuss increased collaboration to improve college student food access and CalFresh enrollment. The convening was in partnership with the *Live Well San Diego* North Central Community Leadership Team which has food access as an identified priority.

Students working with Dr. Amanda McClain, Associate Professor at the School of Exercise and Nutritional Sciences and Dr. Rebecca de Souza, Professor at the School of Communications in support of the workgroup presented about the needs of SDSU students and the challenges with accessing and maintaining CalFresh. The County's Self-Sufficiency Services team, Michelle McGeary and Ismael Lopez, also shared information about the CalFresh program, H.R. 1 impacts, and opportunities to collaborate.

As part of a statewide effort to increase CalFresh enrollment, County of San Diego has a goal of enrolling nearly 26,000 students during the 2026/2027 academic year. Next steps include convening interested parties on SDSU's campus to increase campus-wide collaboration, supporting SDSU's basic needs center with monthly enrollment parties on campus, and reconvening the basic needs leaders and staff from San Diego's academic institutions in late August 2026, to share best practices, foster collaboration, and coordinate outreach efforts.

The goal is to improve college and county systems through sustainable, data-driven and community-led action, while ultimately removing food insecurity as a barrier to academic and life success for college students county-wide.





Leadership & Sustainability

Create a nationally recognized academic-practice partnership model with innovative leadership committed to improving academia, policy, and practice.

Subcommittee Co-Chairs



Dr. Eyal Oren
Director and Professor
School of Social Work
San Diego State University



Carey Riccitelli
Director
Department of Strategy and
Community Engagement
Health and Human Services Agency
County of San Diego

Establishing Systems and Structures for Sustainability and Excellence

The Leadership & Sustainability Subcommittee launched in 2025 with a team of SDSU and HHS professionals focused on communications, measures of success, resource development



**HEALTH
WORKS!**
SAN DIEGO

A regional health and human services workforce collaborative



and a sustainable partnership structure. Under the leadership of co-chairs, **Carey Riccitelli**, HHSA's Director of the Department of Strategy and Community Engagement and SDSU's School of Public Health Director, **Dr. Eyal Oren**, the members developed a partnership charter, adopted a year-round communications plan and set out to identify key metrics for each subcommittee and the partnership overall. The biggest coup for the group was securing a nearly \$1 million grant increasing LWCIL capacity and partnership in support of regional health and human services workforce collaboration.

Health and Human Services Workforce Grant Expands Partnership and Regional Opportunities

Embracing LWCIL's vision for innovation, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, San Diego State University and California State University San Marcos jointly pursued and were awarded a \$900,000, three-year health workforce grant in October 2025. The grant, made possible by Health Career Connection and California Endowment Social Bond funds, funded two new regional health workforce positions at SDSU and CSUSM as well as planned convening, workforce reporting, and collaboration activities.

A regional taskforce including Deans Amy Bonomi (SDSU) and Jennifer Ostergren (CSUSM), HHSA's Interim Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Dr. Elizabeth Hernandez and Director, Carey Riccitelli, and LWCIL Director, Dr. Nicole Magnuson, will be overseeing the development of a business plan including defined, multiyear health workforce priorities. The group named the regional health and human services collaborative — **HealthWorks! San Diego**—with nursing, behavioral and mental health, aging services and support, and public health as critical areas for workforce impact.

The HealthWorks! San Diego collaborative is being coordinated by LWCIL and supported by a team representing HHSA, SDSU and CSUSM. This newly established team is charged



with facilitating cross-partner collaboration in service to the grant commitments as well as elevating the importance of the health workforce and addressing current and future workforce needs. As one of 11 grantee statewide, the partners also benefit from cross-region collaboration, knowledge sharing and capacity building.

DrPH Students Learn About HHSA Policy and Practice in Multi-day Visit

For the second year, students enrolled in the School of Public Health's Doctor of Public Health program spent exclusive time with HHSA's leadership and staff as part of their annual on campus and in the community learning experience. The DrPH program, entering its third year, comprises mid-career professionals from across the nation and globe with aspirations of transitioning into systems-level public health leaders and administrators. During their time with HHSA, they learned about the Agency's integrated health, housing and social services structure, the far-reaching programs and services it administers to improve the lives of 1.3 million county residents, and the complex challenges being navigated with new federal and state policy and funding shifts. The two-day visit in June 2026 was coordinated by **Chris O'Malley**, Community Health Statistics Chief and current DrPH candidate, **Dr. Alan Card**, Associate Professor with the School of Public Health, and LWCIL Director, **Dr. Nicole Magnuson**.



A special thank you to our 2025-2026 Steering Committee, for your ongoing leadership and commitment to collaboration innovation, and impact.

Amy Bonomi, PhD, MPH (Co-Chair)

Dean, College of Health & Human Services,
San Diego State University

Elizabeth A. Hernandez, PhD (Co-Chair)

Interim Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, County
of San Diego Health and Human
Services Agency

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Tracy Finlayson, PhD
Professor, School of Public Health
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Karen Macauley, PhD, DNP, FNP-BC, GNP-BC
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College of Health & Human Services

Matthew Mahar, EdD, MEd
Director and Professor
School of Exercise & Nutritional Sciences, College of
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Corinne McDaniels-Davidson, PhD, MPH, MCHES
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Jong Won Min, PhD, MSW, Director and Professor,
School of Social Work, College of Health & Human
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Ignatius Nip, PhD, CC-SLP, Director and Professor,
School of Speech, Language & Hearing Sciences,
College of Health & Human Services

Eyal Oren, PhD, MS, Director and Professor, School of
Public Health, College of Health & Human Services

Mitchell Rauh, PT, PhD, MPH, FACSM, Director and
Professor, School of Public Therapy, College of Health
& Human Services

**County of San Diego Health and Human Services
Agency**

Alberto Banuelos, PhD, Director, Self-Sufficiency
Services

Jamie Beam, MPA, Director, Medical Care Services

Allison Boyer, MPA, Interim Director, Aging &
Independence Services

Jennifer Bransford-Koons, Interim Chief Operating
Officer, Executive Administrative Office

Beverly Connolly, Director, Human Resources

David Estrella, JD, Director, Housing and Community
Development Services

Alfredo Guardado, MSW, Director, Child and Family
Well-Being Department

Angela Mitchell, BSN, MSN, RN, Chief Nursing Officer,
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Nadia Privara Brahms, MPA, Director, Behavioral
Health Services

Carey Riccitelli, MPH, Director, Department of
Strategy and Community Engagement

Sayone Thihalolipavan, MD, MPH, Public Health
Officer, Public Health Services

Adrienne Yancey, MPH, Interim Director, Public
Health Services

Live Well Center for Innovation & Leadership

Nicole Magnuson, EdLD, MBA, Director



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