

SACHS Annual Report (FY 2023-2024)

September 2024

Prepared by: SACHS Program Staff





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SACHS DIRECTORS

SACHS Directors during Fiscal Year 2023-2024:



MELISSA LIVINGSTON
FY 23-24 SACHS CHAIR
Director, Ventura County Human Services
Agency (HSA)



DANIEL NIELSON
FY 23-24 SACHS VICE-CHAIR
Director, Santa Barbara County Department of
Social Services (DSS)



DIANA ALEXANDER
FY 23-24 SACHS VICE-CHAIR
Assistant Executive Officer, San Bernardino County
Human Services (HS)



PAULA LLANAS
Director, Imperial County Department of Social
Services (DSS)



BRANDON NICHOLS
Director, Los Angeles County Department of Children
and Family Services (LA DCFS)



DR. JACKIE CONTRERAS
Director, Los Angeles County Department of Public
Social Services (LA DPSS)



AN TRAN
Director, Orange County Social Services Agency
(SSA)



CHARITY DOUGLAS
Director, Riverside County Department of Public
Social Services (DPSS)



DR. ERIC MCDONALD
Interim Director, San Diego County Health and
Human Services Agency (HHSA)

SACHS Year in Review

SACHS Chair Remarks

The SACHS program had another busy and exciting year, and the FY 2023-2024 report captures the essence and value of our collective work.

I sincerely thank all of the SACHS Directors, SACHS Program Staff, university partners, state and county staff, and special guests for supporting the SACHS vision and goal during this program year. The growing necessity of social safety net services for families and communities nationwide is becoming increasingly evident. Harnessing our collective partnerships to impact governmental and system changes to improve the well-being of citizens is SACHS's highest priority!

As I step down as SACHS Chair, I look forward to the leadership of Brandon Nichols as the incoming SACHS Chair for FY 2024-25 and to continuing collaboration with my Director colleagues. Thank you all for your ongoing support of the SACHS program and your commitment to advancing the work of human services locally and statewide.

With gratitude,



Melissa Livingston

Melissa Livingston

Director, Ventura County Human Services Agency
SACHS Chair (FY 2022-2023 & 2023-2024)

SACHS OPERATIONS



SACHS Directors' Alternates

Designated SACHS Director alternates during Fiscal Year 2023-2024 include:

- **Imperial County DSS:** Iris Montes, Assistant Director
- **LA DCFS:** Cynthia McCoy-Miller, Senior Deputy Director
- **LA DPSS:** Michael Sylvester, Chief Deputy Director of Administration and Chief Information Officer
- **Orange County SSA:** Veronica Rodriguez, Chief Deputy Director
- **Riverside County DPSS:** Todd Belanca, Managing Director
- **San Diego County HHS:** Dr. Kimberly Giardina, Child and Family Well-Being Director
- **Santa Barbara County DSS:** Amy Krueger, Deputy Director, Child Welfare and Adult Services
- **San Bernardino County HS:** Gilbert Ramos, Deputy Executive Officer, County Administrative Office
- **Ventura County HSA:** Jennie Pittman, Deputy Director

SACHS Program Staff

Staff of the Academy for Professional Excellence, the facilitating agency for both the SACHS and Leaders in Action (LIA) programs, who provided support during Fiscal Year 2023-2024:

- **Jennifer Tucker-Tatlow**, Executive Director
- **Alice Kennedy**, SACHS/LIA Program Manager
- **Tina Kerrigan**, LIA/SACHS Executive Administrator
- **Karissa Hughes**, Research Specialist & SACHS Coordinator
- **Jocelyn Smith**, MSW/MPH Intern

Facilitating Agency

- **Academy for Professional Excellence**-San Diego State University School of Social Work, San Diego State University Research Foundation (SDSURF)
- **Dr. Jong Won Min**, Director, San Diego State University School of Social Work

SACHS OPERATIONS



State Partners

The following State partners participated in discussions with SACHS Directors and provided relevant updates during Fiscal Year 2023-2024:

- **Kim Johnson**, Director, California Department of Social Services (CDSS)
- **Angie Schwartz**, Deputy Director, Children and Family Services Division, CDSS
- **Michelle Baass**, Director, Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)
- **Eileen Cubanski**, Interim Executive Director, County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA)

Membership Fees & Expenditures

SACHS membership fees and expenditures are reviewed annually. Membership fees support SACHS operational costs and select expenditures are specific to the Leaders In Action (LIA) program and if applicable designated SACHS research projects.

The fiscal health of the SACHS program is strong. Fiduciary responsibilities of the SACHS program are held by the SACHS Facilitating Agency, the Academy for Professional Excellence at the San Diego State University Research Foundation (SDSURF).



ABOUT SACHS



Vision

The vision statement for SACHS was reviewed during FY 2023-2024 annual planning and no changes were recommended. The vision statement is:

SACHS provides dynamic and influential leadership, cutting-edge knowledge, and best practices in the county human services arena, impacting social policies and advancing organizational excellence and social equity to help promote safe, healthy, and thriving individuals, families and communities in the Southern California region.

Mission

The mission statement for SACHS was reviewed during FY 2023-2024 annual planning and no changes were recommended. The mission statement is:

The Southern Area Consortium of Human Services, a county/university partnership, is a forum for county directors to explore and exchange ideas and information on issues facing public human services and to develop strategies for addressing these issues while maintaining a holistic, person-centered approach, and a social equity lens. SACHS engages in strategy discussions, fiscal planning, research, policy development, executive development, and succession planning to improve the quality, accountability, and responsiveness of human services in the Southern California region.

SACHS Program Goals

The goal statement for SACHS was reviewed during FY 2023-2024 annual planning and no changes were recommended. The goal statement is:

To explore and exchange ideas and information on strategic issues facing public human services and to develop strategies for addressing these issues while maintaining a holistic, person-centered approach, and a social equity lens.

ABOUT SACHS

Annual and Quarterly Meetings

SACHS directors conducted their Annual Planning Session in August 2023, and held three subsequent quarterly meetings in November 2023, February/March 2024, and May 2024. The program mission, vision, goals, operating procedures and focus areas were reviewed. A brief description of the program highlights and accomplishments during the 2023-2024 year are discussed on pages 8-13 of the report.

SACHS Standards of Practice

SACHS standard operating procedures were reviewed and approved during the SACHS Annual Planning Session in August 2023.

SACHS Standard Operating Procedures:

- Convene quarterly meetings in the Southern California Region.
- Invite special audiences (e.g., fiscal, program, or legislative staff) based on presentation topics.
- Identify local, state, and national subject matter experts to present on strategic issues currently being faced by SACHS counties.
- Provide a forum for directors to share issues that they are currently dealing with and to discuss potential strategies and best practices for addressing these issues.
- Conduct research to inform planning, goal setting, decision-making, and project management regarding critical issues.
- Infuse strategic issues and social equity practices into Leaders In Action curriculum.
- Coordinate efforts with other regional consortia regarding research objectives throughout the state.
- Form a strategic coalition that works in collaboration with CWDA to influence policy and legislative initiatives that impact the Southern California region.
- Facilitate collaboration between Southern California universities and SACHS counties to enhance the public human services workforce by better aligning graduate characteristics and agency needs.

SACHS Focus Areas



FOCUS AREA	PROPOSED MEETING AIM(S)	OUTCOME(S)
<i>Networking</i>	-Elevate systems thinking -Service delivery and managing risk	-Leverage collective power/privilege -Optimize service integration
<i>Advocacy</i>	-State collaboration -Legislative input	Influence policy, budget, and county resources
<i>Strategy</i>	-Prevention focus/DEI lens -Innovation	Effective change management and policy/practice implementation
<i>Support</i>	Directors' Roundtable/safe space	-Ad hoc brainstorming/problem-solving -Consensus-building
<i>Best Practices</i>	Shared policies/practices and organizational outcomes	-Cross-collaboration (consistency) -Adoption of emerging best practices
<i>LIA/Workforce</i>	-Leadership/staff development -Maximize university partnerships	-Retain organizational talent -Increase human services workforce
<i>Research</i>	-Identify/pursue research opportunities -Support/advance human services	Inform human services administration and practices

SACHS Highlights & Accomplishments



Networking

Bay Area Social Services Consortium (BASSC)

The SACHS and BASSC administrative staff participated in seven collaborative meetings to share resources and discuss consortium planning, projects, and regional priorities. The program managers of the consortium's executive development programs also participated in ad hoc meetings to share and discuss operational strategies and share promising practices. These sessions have fortified a strong partnership between the Southern and Bay Area consortiums.

Statewide Partnerships

Coalescing to address state and local priorities, SACHS Directors facilitated regular meetings with the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).

- *CWDA, Eileen Cubanski, Interim Executive Director*
Participated in the November, February, and May SACHS Quarterly Meetings to provide CWDA updates and engage in policy and budget discussions with SACHS Directors.
- *CDSS, Kim Johnson, Director, and Angie Schwartz, Deputy Director, Child and Family Services Division*
Participated in the November and February SACHS Meetings to provide CDSS updates and engage in discussions with SACHS Directors.

Collaborations

- *Complex Care Discussion: Treatment Options/Strategies for Youth with Child Welfare Directors*
During the February SACHS Quarterly Meeting, SACHS Directors met with Child Welfare Directors/lead representatives to discuss challenges and strategies for addressing the complex treatment needs of foster youth.
- *SACHS Leaders in Action (LIA) Networking*
In February, SACHS directors participated in a networking luncheon with the LIA 18 cohort, during which they discussed key issues in their respective counties. The LIA 18 cohort also participated in cross-county networking dinners during the five-month executive development program to expand their knowledge and support beyond the scope of their own county.

SACHS Highlights & Accomplishments



Advocacy

- SACHS Directors prioritized legislative advocacy as a critical focus area this fiscal year. These efforts included meeting with Brad Jensen (Director of Governmental & Legislative Affairs, San Bernardino County) to discuss legislative priorities, state legislation updates, and recommendations from the SACHS Southern Region Legislative Committee (an ad hoc committee formed to support SACHS Directors' analysis of legislative policies and strategies). The support of this committee was instrumental in expanding the dialogue between SACHS Directors and stakeholders. During the May 2024 SACHS meeting, it was determined the SACHS Southern Region Legislative Committee would disband and be reinstated on an as-needed basis.
- SACHS Directors, CWDA, and state leadership increased collaboration, communication, and partnership around legislative processes and strategies to improve human services policies regionally and across the state. Discussions were held with the CWDA Interim Executive Director about maximizing HSA county directors' impact, including their participation at Legislative Lobby Days in Sacramento, CA.
- Looking ahead, SACHS Directors remain committed to fostering stakeholder engagement, collaboration, and roundtable discussions focused on lobbying and legislative advocacy during the SACHS 24-25 program year.

Strategy

The following efforts were employed by SACHS Directors this fiscal year:

- Strengthening director support and building capacity within the SACHS consortium. This included incorporating director's virtual check-in meetings four times a year.
- Increasing key partnerships by expanding stakeholder engagement
- Exploring opportunities for collective impact by examining state policies and county operational procedures to maximize human services within the Southern Region.
- Increasing legislative input provided on behalf of the Southern Region.
- Facilitating strategy discussions among SACHS Directors, with CDSS and CWDA, regarding the CDSS Foster Care Rate Reform Proposal.
- Focusing on the California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) program, including identifying barriers as well as promising strategies to support implementation.

SACHS Highlights & Accomplishments



Strategy (cont...)

- Collaborating with Child Welfare Directors/lead representatives for a solution-focused discussion to address the challenges of *Complex Care and Treatment Options/Strategies for Foster Youth*.
- Continuing to focus on succession planning and staff retention by supporting the Leaders in Action (LIA) program and increasing director-led training and facilitation within the executive leadership program.

Support

- In addition to the Directors' Roundtable included at each SACHS quarterly meeting, SACHS Directors' Virtual Check-ins were implemented this fiscal year, providing increased opportunities for directors to connect, boost collaboration, build capacity around mutual goals, and elevate individual and collective support among the directors. This forum also allowed for further strategic planning of SACHS FY 2023-2024 in-person meetings, ensuring content was aligned with current county priorities.
- SACHS Directors collectively supported the onboarding and succession planning of 29 executives within the Leaders in Action (LIA) program. In addition to participant nominations, a networking luncheon, participation in the LIA mock board letter presentations, and graduation, six of the nine directors also facilitated training and/or participated in a panel discussion during the LIA 18 cohort's training series.

Research

SACHS counties participated in the following research efforts:

- The BASSC Human Services Workforce Study is a statewide research project that maps current recruitment and retention challenges and identifies promising and practical strategies for addressing them.
 - The study, which is conducted in collaboration with BASSC, CalSWEC, SACHS, and other local and state partners, uses a multi-phased, mixed-methods approach to explore workforce challenges and facilitators.
 - At the February SACHS Meeting, the BASSC Director and colleagues presented phase one study results, updates, and findings to the SACHS Directors. BASSC will share further updates as they become available.
- Exploration of joint statewide research project opportunities with other regional consortia.

SACHS Highlights & Accomplishments



Best Practices

Stakeholder Engagement

For FY 2023-2024, stakeholders included the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA), as well as Southern California child welfare services directors/representatives, Southern Counties legislative leads, Bay Area Social Services Consortium (BASSC) staff (including their executive development program lead and research team).

Guest Speakers

- Dr. Thomas Sy, Associate Professor of Psychology, University of California Riverside, provided a presentation on *Organizational Excellence: Fostering Job Satisfaction and Retention in Human Services*
- Brad Jensen, Director of Governmental and Legislative Affairs, San Bernardino County, presented key California legislation and considerations for SACHS legislative strategy.
- BASSC Staff, including Sarah Carnochan, Megan Braddock, Emmeline Chuang, and Emily Downey presented a summary of results from phase one of the BASSC Human Services Workforce Research Study.

Directors' Roundtable

Provides an avenue of support and resilience for SACHS Directors at each quarterly meeting, as they utilize this time to connect, share and discuss mutual issues/challenges, innovations, promising practices, and lessons learned.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

The SACHS Directors are a diverse group of leaders representing a mix of large and small urban and rural counties in Southern California. They bring a wealth of perspectives and experiences to SACHS. The diversity of SACHS Directors in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, and generational differences also enriches the SACHS program and outcomes.

DEI Resources and Tools:

- San Diego County's Child and Family Well-being Department shared their new Workload Equity Tool with SACHS Directors.
- Dr. Jackie Contreras (LA DPSS Director) developed and facilitated an impactful new training for LIA 18, *Implementing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Human Services*.

SACHS Highlights & Accomplishments

Best Practices (cont...)

Cross-county Collaboration

Roundtable discussions were held on CalAIM, Complex Care, CDSS Foster Care Rate Reform Proposal, and workforce development

Recruitment and Retention

SACHS participation (representing the Southern Region) in the statewide BASSC Human Services Workforce Research Study

Leaders in Action (LIA)/Workforce



LIA 18 Cohort

Since its twenty year inception, SACHS and the Academy for Professional Excellence have facilitated leadership training for 487 Leaders in Action (LIA) graduates! During Fiscal Year 2023-2024, a LIA cohort of 29 participants from eight Southern California counties completed the five-month executive leadership program. This program promotes effective succession planning with curricula and a practicum that are well supported by director-led training to increase executive development and the capacity for human services leadership. Through the years, participant and alumni evaluations consistently describe LIA training as relevant, informative, and essential to their roles as managers/executives in human services.

SACHS Highlights & Accomplishments



LIA/Workforce (cont...)

LIA 18 program highlights include:

- Enhanced the LIA curricula by adding two new courses:
 - *Implementing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Human Services* (Director-led)
 - *Working with Labor Unions* (Director-led)
- Expanded *Strategic Leadership and Practicum* training.
- Developed participants' social and emotional intelligence and culturally responsive leadership skills.
- Conducted LIA program evaluations (e.g., training, trainer effectiveness, and alumni surveys).
- Program upgrades: Created QR Codes for participants to have easier access to evaluation surveys, enhanced tracking and data collection, linked coaching attendance and evaluations in real-time, and improved evaluation dashboards to include monthly data.
- Technology implementation: The California Child Welfare Training (CACWT) software platform was implemented and supported the transition of LIA from a paper-based program to a hybrid format. CACWT is required for LIA participants and is the primary method of communication, evaluation surveys, and electronic access to LIA materials and resources.
- Implemented cross-county small group networking opportunities during monthly training blocks.
- Provided opportunities for SACHS Director and LIA participant team networking and graduation luncheons.
- Held monthly executive coaching sessions supporting LIA participants' individual development plans (IDPs).
- Provided post-graduation coaching sessions.
- Concluded LIA with Mock Board of Supervisors presentation simulation exercises.
- Former participants describe LIA as essential to their preparation for advancement into their current roles. Of 32 post-training survey responses from recent graduates (LIA 17 cohort), all indicated they are “integrating what they learned from LIA.”



OUR WHY:

**REVOLUTIONIZE
THE WAY PEOPLE
WORK TO ENSURE
THE WORLD IS A
HEALTHIER PLACE.**