

# CORE Investments Annual Report

*Fiscal Year 2019-2020*



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# CORE Investments Annual Report

## Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-2020

# Executive Summary

## BACKGROUND

The Collective of Results and Evidence-based (CORE) Investments is a funding model and a movement to achieve equitable health and well-being in Santa Cruz County, using a collective impact, results-based approach that is responsive to community needs. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-20, the County of Santa Cruz Human Services Department awarded \$4.2 million to organizations which provide safety net services in the areas of health, mental health, substance use, and homelessness to seniors, children and youth.

Total # of  
organizations **41**

Total # of  
programs **67**

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM FINDINGS

CORE Investments programs reported on organizational changes, successes, challenges, Evidence Based Practice implementation, technical assistance needs and COVID-19 impact. Programs also reported on numerous client achievements, which resulted from service delivery and CORE Investments funding and support.



### Successes

Programs described key successes related to the **rapid and collaborative response to COVID-19**. Programs have responded quickly to participant needs while continuing to provide ongoing staff development, improving referral processes, decreasing wait times and advancing phone and web-based service delivery.



### Challenges

Programs reported **high staff turnover and recruitment challenges** due to the **high cost of living** in Santa Cruz County. Additional challenges reported by programs included **participant transportation needs and participant and volunteer recruitment and engagement**.



### COVID-19 Impact

COVID-19 has dramatically affected CORE Investments programs and the participants they serve. Programs reported **increased client needs** due to COVID-19. Many programs **offered aid including transportation** to grocery stores or medical appointments, **food distributions**, support with **applying to programs** like Covered California, support with securing **housing** and **physical and behavioral health service** delivery.

“The **COVID-19 crisis is disrupting everything in our lives** — how we work, how we raise our families, the systems that we are part of. It is affecting how we are able, or not able, to provide services.”

- CORE Investments program



CORE Investments programs used a variety of **adaptations to address COVID-19** related challenges. For example, **nearly 90 percent of programs offered services via phone**.

## Background

The **Collective of Results and Evidence-based (CORE) Investments** is a funding model and a movement to achieve equitable health and well-being in Santa Cruz County, using a collective impact, results-based approach that is responsive to community needs. **In Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-20, the County of Santa Cruz Human Services Department (HSD) applied the initial version of this new funding model and awarded \$4.2 million to 67 programs operated by 41 organizations.** CORE Investments grantees include nonprofit organizations and local public agencies that provide safety net services in the areas of physical health, mental health, substance use, and homelessness to older adults, children and youth.

This annual report will describe the CORE Investments approach as well as CORE Investments program progress, challenges and lessons learned. The findings detailed below inform next steps for planning.

### The CORE Investments Approach

In 2015, the Board of Supervisors approved a phased-in approach to designing and implementing a results-based collective impact funding model and directed HSD to lead the process in partnership with interested community programs funders and stakeholders. After extensive research, and in collaboration with multiple stakeholders from multiple sectors, the HSD Community Programs funding process was transformed into a new model named the Collective of Results and Evidence-based (CORE) Investments. The County and the City of Santa Cruz partnered to implement the first funding cycle of CORE Investments by issuing a joint Request for Proposals (RFP) to provide evidence-based safety net services linked to specific result areas and community-level indicators. The initial CORE Investments RFP in 2017 was based on the following critical actions:

- **Collaborate for Collective Impact:** Funders collaborate and align with local stakeholders and initiatives.
- **Focus on our Community Needs and Results:** Community-established strategic plans define needs, disparities and shared results.
- **Use Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs):** Programs provided evidence of effectiveness as Model, Promising or Innovative.
- **Provide Support on Key Concepts:** Technical assistance on key concepts is provided to applicants.
- **Monitor Outcomes and Results:** Outcomes are identified, monitored and evaluated at program and community level.

Since the RFP, CORE Investments has evolved to reflect the potential for it to serve as a vehicle for collective impact beyond the current contracts funded by the County and City of Santa Cruz. The mission of CORE Investments, developed with input from multiple stakeholders, reflects a shared commitment to inspire and ignite collective action to ensure Santa Cruz County is a safe, healthy community with equitable opportunities for all to thrive.



The evolution and refinement of the CORE Investments model has been documented in the Phase 2-4 progress reports submitted to the Board by Optimal Solutions Consulting.

## Methodology

In August and September 2020, HSD Centralized Contracting Unit staff collected and summarized data from several sources, including CORE Investments program annual progress reports<sup>1</sup> and CORE Conversation and Coffee Chat event records. Using Excel, HSD aggregated quantitative and qualitative data in order to document reported progress, challenges and lessons learned for this annual report. HSD staff reviewed, coded and summarized qualitative data, noting emerging themes across programs.

## Findings

Findings summarized and presented in this section are based on the data submitted by CORE Investments programs in their end-of-year progress reports. Programs reported quantitative data on activities, participants, quality and outcomes along with qualitative data on program staff and organizational changes, successes, challenges, EBP implementation, technical assistance needs and COVID-19 impact.

Each CORE Investments program has one scope of work per program in its contract, which details the expected program performance measurements. Each scope of work is divided into four domains that answer three central questions, as described in the table below.

How much is done and for whom?	
<b>Activities</b>	The number of “primary” or major components of services provided.
<b>Participants</b>	The number of participants who received services.
How well were the services provided?	
<b>Quality</b>	Indicators were identified for each program that are designed to measure quality, such as timeliness, engagement or adherence to an EBP.
Is anyone better off?	
<b>Outcome</b>	Indicators were identified for each program that attempt to describe the result of the services in changing knowledge, behavior or a condition.

One limitation of this report's analysis pertains to the complexities of measurements that vary across the programs. For example, some programs use internally developed surveys, whereas other programs implement multifaceted, validated assessment tools. Similarly, some programs

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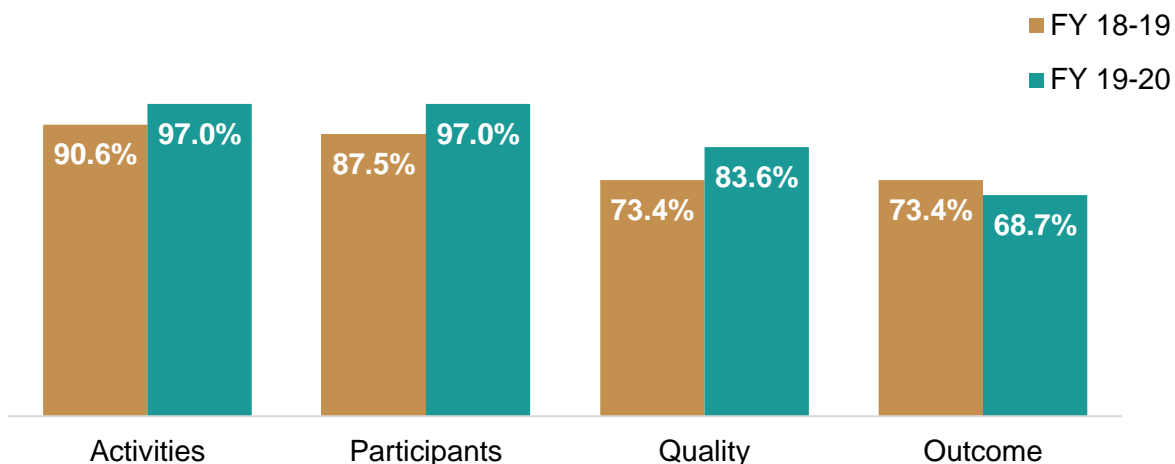
<sup>1</sup> The Success Stories included in this report are a subset of the many accounts of participant achievement submitted by programs in their annual progress reports. Client names in Success Stories have been changed to protect the identity of individuals.



report on a unique number of program participants while others do not specify unique versus duplicated number of participants. HSD continues to work each year with programs to refine evaluation methodologies as the project moves closer to all programs using shared measurement tools whenever possible and appropriate.

In the FY 2018-19 HSD CORE Investments Annual Report, staff analyzed and presented data on whether programs were successful in reporting their performance measurements. The chart below displays comparison between FY 2018-19 and FY 2019-20 for percentage of programs reporting all data by scope of work measurement type – activities, participants, quality and outcome.

Despite COVID-19 challenges, a larger percentage of programs reported all data for activities, participants and quality measurements in **FY 2019-20** than in **FY 2018-19**. For example, 97 percent of programs reported all required performance measurement data on activities in FY 2019-20. This finding suggests program growth in evaluation, contract compliance and related reporting activities. Performance measurements were often not collected/reported due to COVID-19 challenges.



The majority of CORE Investments programs reported achieving their annual performance measurements. However, some programs reported challenges meeting performance measurements due to COVID-19. For example, due to COVID-19, the number of enrolled program participants was often lower than expected or scheduled events were canceled. Additional information on COVID-19 impact is detailed below in this report.

In addition to activities, participants and quality, programs also reported on program outcomes, which are a direct result of the services provided and contribute to positive impacts at the community level. The outcomes were

### Success Story

“I’m deeply grateful for my Grey Bears bag. Especially right now during COVID while I’m not making any money. The Grey Bears bag is the only food that I’ve had since March 11th and I’ve been able to survive on it. Thank you so much. I’m so grateful to all of you.”

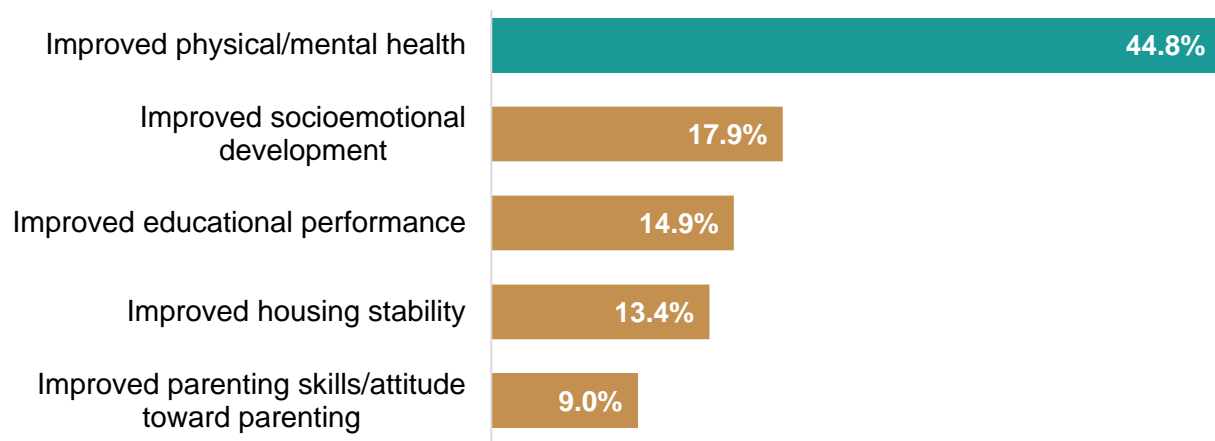
-Healthy Food for Seniors client, Grey Bears



reviewed and placed in approximately 30 different community impact categories. The top five most frequently reported community-level impacts are presented in the graph below.

The majority of programs reported they achieved their intended outcomes. For those that did not, some progress was reported, or reasonable challenges were noted due to COVID-19 or measurement issues. Across all 67 programs there are a total 176 outcome performance measurements, and of these there were 141 outcome measurements that demonstrated success<sup>2</sup>, amongst 30 coded community impact categories.

CORE Investments programs reported on numerous client achievements and the majority may be categorized in the following 5 community impacts. **Nearly half of all programs** reported at least one outcome measurement indicating success in **improving participant physical/mental health**.



### Program Staffing and Organizational Changes

Several CORE Investments programs reported staffing and organizational changes during FY 2019-20. In addition to routine recruitment, hiring and promotions, programs worked to adapt to COVID-19-related challenges. **Seven programs reported furloughs, layoffs, trimmed salaries or reduced staff hours.** While some programs described a decreased demand for some services at the beginning of Shelter in Place (e.g., in-person appointments), several reported increased demand in services. Many programs anticipate heightened participant needs in FY 2020-21, and others are planning to recruit or already have recruited more volunteers to provide assistance. Another program described how COVID-19 and Shelter in Place has increased the need for additional phone support, which required the hiring of a second staff person.

<sup>2</sup> Success is defined as documented progress toward achieving outcome performance measurement. This total includes those who both achieved outcome performance measurements and those that improved outcomes but may not have necessarily achieved the annual performance measurement.



Three programs reported high staff turnover or recruitment challenges due to the high cost of living in Santa Cruz County. One program explained,

“It continues to be an employment and economic concern with the early care and education workforce, when students have to choose between a career that they are passionate about and committed to versus working in a position that is unfulfilling, so they can afford to live in Santa Cruz County. This economic discrepancy must be addressed as a countywide economic and employment crisis.”

Similarly, another program noted that turnover requires additional training activities in addition to disrupting rapport that staff have built with program participants. The program staff explained that they have tried to use additional training, interview questions and staff reviews to support and encourage longer-term employment.

## Successes

The majority of programs described key successes related to the rapid and collaborative response to COVID-19. The current climate for nonprofits was described by one program as “an environment of ambiguity, strained government resources, and new emergency programs.” Another program noted the “unprecedented need in the community that necessitated extra staff time to keep up with requests for assistance in applying for unemployment benefits, CalFresh benefits, and access to health care coverage, as well as new programs such as rental and emergency food assistance.” **Programs quickly responded to community needs and implemented new programs, such as those focused on helping residents purchase essential items like food.**

Additional reported successes included programs providing participants with assistance in finding permanent housing, employment, legal aid, education and behavioral health services. Educational services, including early childhood education and enrollment in higher education, remained ongoing priorities. Programs also described ongoing staff development, improved referral processes, decreased wait times, strong participant engagement and improved online and telephone offerings. Many programs detailed how participants reported they are highly satisfied with the program, often find it to be useful in meeting their needs and are experiencing improved relationships as a result of services.

## Success Story

“ALCANCE made strong relationships with a youth at [a local school]. He was engaged and motivated in the Joven Noble session until COVID restrictions went into effect. During the check-ins, this youth expressed the family was experiencing financial difficulties and was stressed due to the parents losing their jobs. In response to this disclosure, ALCANCE’s case manager connected with the mother of the youth and offered her community services available to her. The family was able to be supported with low barrier rental assistance for the month of April and directed to food distribution sites available in the community.”

-ALCANCE Street Outreach Program, Community Action Board (CAB)





## Success Story

“WomenCARE has been a life-affirming, bright spot in my life for over two years. While you’d think that getting together with women wrestling with cancer might be a downer, that’s not the case at all. WomenCARE is the one place where I can get totally real about what I’m going through. Whether it’s sharing the ins and outs of a difficult treatment decision, concerns about how illness is impacting loved ones or the latest cutting-edge research, exchanging stories with my WomenCARE peeps inspires me, reduces my fears and makes me feel connected. Kudos to WomenCARE for fostering an environment where deep healing, caring, and friendships thrive.”

-WomenCARE client,  
Family Services Agency

## Program and Community Challenges

The vast majority of reported program challenges related to COVID-19 impact and are described later in this report. Additional challenges reported by programs included issues related to participant **transportation needs**, participant and volunteer **recruitment and engagement**, **lack of affordable housing in the county**, and **staff turnover** due to high cost of living in the county.

Four programs described how the federal administration’s “Public Charge” rule has negatively impacted the community. One program described how **families are hesitant to apply for services** like Medi-Cal and Covered California. Another program noted, “We have witnessed many individuals and families withdrawing from prior federal/state programs due to fear of being identified as immigrants and being placed in removal proceedings. Many families and individuals are concerned about having their personal information recorded in any system, including non-government systems.”

Another program described similar challenges

in providing support to families,

**“Successfully filing immigration cases has grown progressively difficult in the last three-and-a-half years.** Cases that were once routine, such as naturalizations or family-based petitions for residency, now must be closely examined to determine the client’s chances of approval. Those cases deemed viable are still more likely than ever before to be sent back for additional evidence, held for review over a period of many months or even years, and — in the worst-case scenario — rejected altogether.

The most significant new obstacle that was put in place in the past year was a heightened Public Charge standard. To prepare clients whose cases are subject to Public Charge, we collect evidence documenting their ability to earn a living, carefully vet their sponsors and joint sponsors, and in some cases advise them not to file until they have a stronger case. Similarly, for naturalization cases with any irregularities, we run background checks, file Freedom of Information Act requests, collect documentation, and only then inform clients whether or not it is advisable to file.”

Families in these cases are provided with appropriate referrals to resources, such as legal aid, and ongoing follow ups.



## Evidence-Based Practices Implementation

CORE Investments programs reported on both successes and challenges related to the use of EBPs. Many programs attributed their positive outcomes and improved evaluation processes to their use of EBPs through CORE Investments funding. One program explained that the **EBP has “increased organizational cohesion, efficiency and improved services and activities.”** Programs often credit strong staff skills, technical assistance for staff and ongoing trainings for the reported progress and positive participant feedback. Staff also work on maintaining and updating data collection and reporting systems, which provide HSD with feedback on EBP progress. One program collaborates with other agencies from across the United States to better understand the most up-to-date research on best practices for service delivery.

**Staff turnover creates a challenge in maintaining staff adherence to EBP.** As detailed earlier in the report, many programs face staffing challenges and onboarding of new staff must include training on both program delivery as well as outcome reporting. Many programs rely on volunteers or interns; these interns often vacate positions after completing their educational program. Participant engagement and recruitment often are challenges for programs as they work to implement new strategies to address barriers. COVID-19 presented a significant challenge for EBP delivery. Several programs described how service delivery and evaluation methods were impacted by the pandemic. One program described, **“Lack of sufficient staffing due to difficulty finding qualified staff, family and health leaves, and staff cutbacks due to COVID-19 have hindered our ability to provide the level of programming.”** Another program moved in-person surveys to web-based platforms for data collection purposes. A third program had planned to conduct focus groups on program successes and opportunities for growth, but the groups have been put on hold due to COVID-19.

## Technical Assistance Needs

Programs shared their appreciation for the ongoing technical assistance training provided through the CORE Investments model. Between July 2019 and June 2020, the **CORE consulting team provided 21 opportunities for training and technical assistance** to CORE Investments programs and other partners from grassroots groups, nonprofits, public agencies

## Success Story

“Tanya and her two young children fled her abusive relationship due to domestic violence. Tanya called Monarch Services 24-hour crisis line, spoke with an Advocate to explore and develop a safety plan for herself and her children. Due to COVID-19 Tanya was unable to stay with any family or friends. The legal advocate was contacted immediately and began the process with the client via phone to obtain a restraining order; the client was provided motel vouchers for several nights, a Child Abduction notification was submitted directly to protect the client from any abduction report against her. She and her children were provided with gift cards for food and other essentials. Advocates ensured to check in with her daily and ensure her safety. Tanya was granted her restraining order and was able to safely move back home with her kids. Tanya continues to work with advocates on counseling, advocacy, and referrals.”

-Monarch Services-  
Servicios Monarca



## Success Story

“After exiting and aging out of services provided through the Extended Foster Care system, Steve was a young adult who transitioned from stable housing, to couch surfing, to temporary stays with loved ones, to finding space at the COVID response shelter program collaboratively operated by the County and Encompass Transition Age Youth (TAY) programs. Steve was steadfast and determined to make things work. Steve had participated for years in Encompass Transition Age Youth programs such as YAP (Youth Advocacy Project) practicing advocacy for themselves and YAB (Youth Advisory Board) helping to advocate for youth programs in Santa Cruz. While at the shelter, he jumped on the opportunity for full-time employment as a shelter host at another of the COVID Response Shelter sites set up in Santa Cruz County. In the midst of the epidemic, with all of our housing support and assistance programs heavily impacted with lengthy waitlists, Steve’s time had finally come as his name hit the top of the waitlist for TAY’s Transitional Housing Plus program. Despite these challenges, by July 1st, 2020, Steve was signing a lease and picking up his keys to his new apartment. A tremendous achievement to say the absolute least. It’s a beautiful view through the eyes of the service provider to see this resilient youth go from experiencing homelessness to being housed. Now housed and employed, with new goals to pursue higher education or vocational training, for Steve, the sky is the limit.”

- TAY (Transition Age Youth) Youth Advocacy Project, Encompass Community Services

and philanthropic organizations. Virtual *CORE Coffee Chats* are made available to local nonprofits via live Zoom sessions on a regular basis, and links to recordings, notes and additional resources are shared after each event. Several programs expressed a need for training on how to develop program evaluation tools and measure impact. Support with online evaluation tools, such as online surveys, may prove particularly useful due to COVID-19 restrictions. In light of recent national events, one program also recommended trainings on racism, trauma and self-care. **Programs reported additional needs for training and technical assistance on virtual modalities and how to assist clients during COVID-19.** As one program explained,

“The challenge is to assist our under-resourced adults and seniors. Many of these adults/seniors lack a device, internet service or the skills to navigate use of a device. Partnership with community programs aimed at equipping isolated adults/seniors with communication devices, the skills to use them and Internet service is critical for these county residents.”

Another program also described a need for training on how to motivate and keep staff engaged when they are working remotely. As more agencies are beginning to use programs like DocuSign, there is

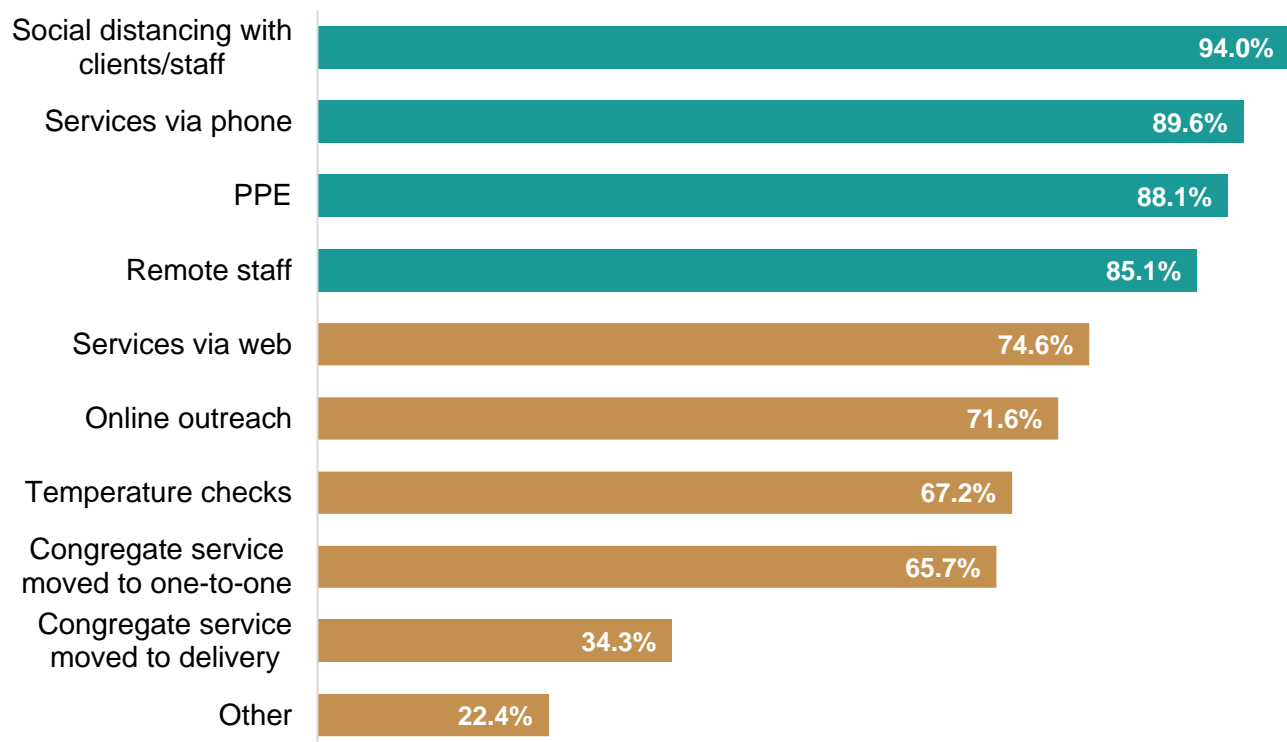
increased need to protect client information online. Relatedly, one program expressed a need for user-friendly staff trainings on cybersecurity.



## COVID-19 Impact, Adaptations and Lessons Learned

COVID-19 has dramatically affected CORE Investments programs and the participants they serve. Restrictions and precautions related to the pandemic have often changed how programs approach service delivery. One program acknowledged, “The COVID-19 crisis is disrupting everything in our lives — how we work, how we raise our families, the systems that we are part of. It is affecting how we are able, or not able, to provide services.” Programs immediately began brainstorming how to adapt their services to meet participant needs. Staff called, texted, emailed, sent letters/cards and conducted Zoom sessions with participants to establish a working remote relationship. These alternative modes of communication often have continued due to ongoing restrictions.

Over 80 percent of programs reported using **social distancing, phone outreach, personal protective equipment (PPE)** and **remote options** for staff as a way to address COVID-19-related challenges.<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Responses in the “Other” category above included:

- Client testing and health screenings
- COVID-19 information offered through a monthly newsletter
- Frequent cleaning/disinfecting of work areas
- Hotline launched
- Increased ventilation
- New residents quarantine, no visitors
- Outdoor waiting areas
- Posting signage of COVID-19, risk assessment and preventative measures
- Transition to remote call response
- Weekly briefings/meetings with government agencies, nonprofits, and consortiums
- Working closely with funders to receive approvals for modified delivery model



Additional **adaptations to support remote work** reported by CORE Investments programs included:

- Establishing an electronic fax system;
- Use of electronic signature systems (e.g., DocuSign);
- Establishing staff Virtual Private Network (VPN) connections;
- Secure email accounts for transferal of confidential client documents;
- Updated phone systems to streamline organizational ability to review and respond to faxes, voicemails, and internal agency messages in a confidential manner;
- Staff trainings on telephone/web-based program offerings and participant engagement; and
- New/used technological equipment for staff and participants.

**Behavioral health providers** have developed innovative systems to address rising client population needs. One program's outreach worker is conducting check ins on the street with social distancing measures in place. Another program reported notably high call volume to their suicide prevention hotline, and the agency purchased new equipment that ensures the caller's quick and easy access to trained responders. A third program developed a 24/7 online platform for LGBTQ+ youth as well as expanded support services, considering the fact that COVID-19 has serious implications for the mental health of LGBTQ youth.<sup>4</sup>

**Medical providers** have worked to develop creative approaches to their service delivery. Due to COVID-19, patients with chronic illnesses often are not being seen at regular intervals. In order to address this challenge, one program initiated phone calls to more than 2,000 patients with chronic illnesses to ensure they had access to care and linked many patients with telehealth appointments. They also offered pickup or delivery options for medications and supplied free medications as needed. Another program offered curbside or car services for those with chronic illnesses. A third program has implemented pre-screening for all patients on the phone 24-48 hours before arrival to determine the patient's health and exposure. Upon arriving at the medical facility, temperature checks are administered, and all patients are required to wear masks before and after receiving care. Lastly, there are a limited number of patients scheduled at any given time to allow for physical distancing and to provide additional time to disinfect operatories.

While online and phone outreach have been successful for some programs, not all participants find these outreach methods easy to access or preferred. **Common challenges included participants' lack of technological devices (e.g., laptops, hot spots), challenges with internet connection and lack of private space for discussion.** One program addressed technological challenges by providing participants with take-home activities and exploring the availability of equipment, such as hot spots, in collaboration with schools, partners and

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<sup>4</sup> Source: The Trevor Project. (April 3, 2020). Implications of COVID-19 For LGBTQ Youth Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. Retrieved from: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/2020/04/03/implications-of-covid-19-for-lgbtq-youth-mental-health-and-suicide-prevention/>



supporters. Another program explained, **“To address participant reluctance to attend online workshops, we are offering guidance and support through individual sessions.”**

One program is **working to address challenges related to technology knowledge and access among older adults**. This program has designed and offered training courses on technology for older adults, transformed programming to a virtual model and is working with state partners to develop a comprehensive approach to bridging the digital divide. The program is also working with tech companies and the California Department of Aging to provide devices and connectivity to older adults. A second program is launching a newly developed series of activities, which will engage older adults via friendly phone calls, offer guidance on video conferencing and provide training on emergency preparedness and fall prevention.

Programs reported **increased client needs due to COVID**, and many offered aid including transportation to grocery stores or medical appointments, food distributions, support with applying to programs like Covered California, support with securing housing, and physical and behavioral health service delivery. One program noted,

“The increased number of program clients continues to impact our program infrastructure costs, including refrigerated truck miles, staff and driver hours, expanded cooler capacity and electric power, forklift hours, client intake, surveys and tracking requirements and volunteer driver mileage/food delivery systems.”

Many programs reported additional costs related to the provision of PPE, such as gloves and masks. As one program explained, “With labor-intensive safety measures, increased costs of PPE, and limited clinical capacity, our costs are greater than our revenue, making financial support more needed than ever before.”

While needs have notably increased, many programs reported **funding challenges** during FY 2019-20, often due to COVID-19. The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) provided a degree of relief for some programs, however many programs reported salary and staff time reductions as well as furloughs. Fundraising events were often postponed or canceled, and programs appealed to individuals and organizations for donations. One program reported securing COVID-19 response grants and contributions to help offset the cost of advanced PPE and the increased cost of care.

Programs reported **lessons learned** from COVID-19 impact and response. Some programs connected with fellow nonprofit, government and foundation partners to strengthen COVID-19 response. One program detailed their collaborations, “Stronger connections were created with the probation department, mental health providers and the County Office of Education to support the needs of the youth and families during this pandemic.” Similarly, another program shared, “We do not need to recreate the wheel, when it comes to developing protocols and facilitating trainings...**The incredible collaboration and support that has been reinforced through this unfortunate time, has brought many of us together.**”

Several programs described the **value of consistent agency-wide communication** in response to COVID-19. One program developed an Incident Command Center while another organized weekly meetings with leadership to communicate updates from partners and

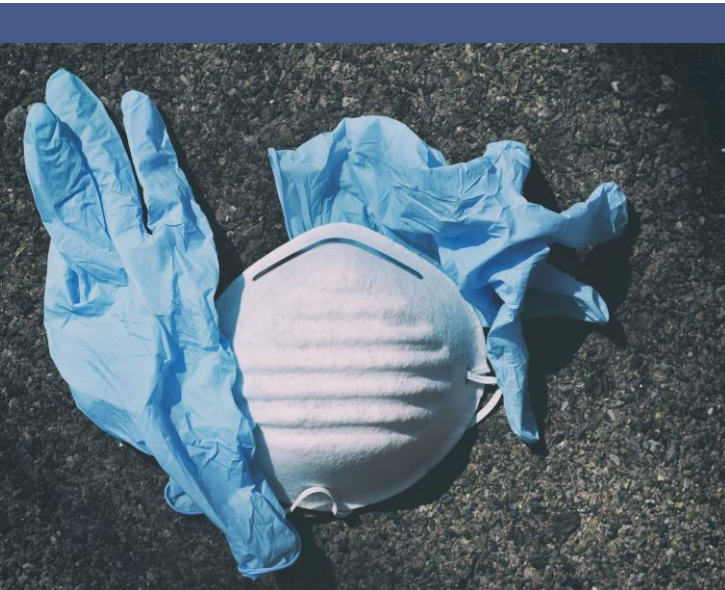


government agencies. These meetings were also used to develop and implement new safety protocols, organize distribution of PPE and cleaning supplies and discuss staffing challenges.

While a few in-person services did not easily translate to remote delivery, many other programs have found value in the necessary adaptations caused by COVID-19. One program explained, **“We have found that certain outreach, recruitment and training activities work very well via Zoom and we anticipate offering those after the pandemic has subsided.”** One medical provider noted that telephone and video visits have been notably popular, helping to decrease no-show rates. These options remove the need for patients to arrange for transportation, take long periods away from work and arrange for childcare. Another program anticipates that the shift to remote work rather than being in the office will be a permanent change.

Lastly, program participants viewed **CORE Investments programs as trusted sources** of information and support during the pandemic. Program staff offered social support to those who are currently isolated in addition to providing important referrals and services. As one program articulated,

“Staff worked with dozens of suddenly unemployed community members experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety who shared the relief of ‘getting to talk to a human’...Advocates were able to identify or provide other supports such as CalFresh, food pantries, grocery gift cards, and rental assistance that were more readily available. Further, staff were able to inform participants of protective policy changes including lack-of-payment eviction and utility shutoff moratoriums, the extended tax deadline, freezes on student loan payments, changes in public transit, and pandemic job-protected leave programs. **For many participants who may have had fragmented or inaccurate information, these conversations with a trusted advocate helped to provide hope.**”



“There was a marked increase in stress on staff as they balanced the **universal anxiety around the pandemic and the needs of their own families with the secondary trauma of participants.** Particularly in the beginning of shelter-in-place, staff were fearful of exposure at work. The program manager maintained adherence to social distancing and the use of PPE for both staff and participants, kept staff up to date on state and county information as it emerged, and worked with HR to address specific concerns. While services have adjusted to the crisis, the **uncertainty of pandemic continues to be a challenge** both in program planning and in addressing staff needs such as childcare.”

-CORE Investments program



## Next Steps

CORE Investments will continue to serve the Santa Cruz County community in FY 2020-21. In an attempt to align with the new budget cycle, on December 11, 2018, the County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors directed HSD to extend the CORE Investments agreements awarded under the original CORE Investments RFP to four fiscal years, with FY 2020-21 as the final year and a new CORE Investments RFP scheduled for fall of 2020. However, to minimize



administrative burdens and prioritize service delivery during COVID-19, on May 12, 2020, the Board approved a plan to continue existing CORE Investments services and agreements, with consideration of any required budget reductions, for another year through FY 2021-22. This postponed the anticipated release of the CORE Investments RFP to fall 2021. As of fall 2020, HSD staff are working with programs to finalize contracts for FY 2020-21.

Continuous quality improvement is a key element of CORE Investments, and HSD continues to work with CORE Investments programs to understand programs' needs and perspectives, provide reporting guidance and support and revise scopes of work as needed. The CORE consultant team provides technical assistance on data collection, reporting and EBP implementation. During FY 2020-21, additional training and technical assistance support will be provided as the nonprofit community continues to navigate the impact of COVID-19. HSD and the CORE consultant team are working collaboratively on designing a shared measurement system to assess collective impact. Key outcomes and measurements help to ensure alignment of efforts and overall accountability.

Uncovering and addressing root causes of inequities remains a central focus of the of CORE Investments movement. The CORE Results Menu, published on DataShare SCC in October 2020, supports the broader movement toward understanding causes of inequities and generating different ways of working together to create change. Wherever possible, indicators highlight disparities by age, race or ethnicity, geography, language, or any other "equity dimensions" for which data are currently available. Additionally, future CORE Investments *Coffee Chats* will continue to offer resources on racial equity, diversity and inclusion. The CORE Steering Committee remains committed to strengthening their internal racial equity initiatives.

The CORE movement will continue to adapt and respond to the changing needs of the Santa Cruz County community while embracing its culture of learning, shared decision-making processes and focus on equity. The CORE consultant team plans to continue engagement with local partners and stakeholders as the project works to support nonprofits and residents during FY 2020-21. Findings presented in this annual report will inform planning for the next contracting cycle and the RFP, which is scheduled to be released in fall 2021.





## Appendix: List of CORE Investments Programs Funded by HSD<sup>5</sup>

- **Advocacy, Inc.**, Long Term Care Ombudsman Program
- **Arts Council Santa Cruz County**, Mariposa's Art
- **Big Brothers Big Sisters Agency of Santa Cruz County, Inc.**, One to One Mentoring
- **Boys & Girls Clubs of Santa Cruz County**, Project Learn
- **Cabrillo College Stroke and Disability Learning Center**, Cabrillo College Stroke and Disability Learning Center
- **Cabrillo Community College**, Cabrillo Children's Center Lab School
- **California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.**, Legal Services
- **Central Coast Young Men's Christian Association**, Afterschool and Day Camp Program/YF4L
- **Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County Inc.**, ALCANCE Street Outreach Program
- **Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County Inc.**, Davenport Resource Service Center
- **Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County Inc.**, Rental Assistance Program - North/Mid-County
- **Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County Inc.**, Santa Cruz County Immigration Project
- **Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County Inc.**, South County Housing Collaborative
- **Community Bridges**, Elderday
- **Community Bridges**, Lift Line
- **Community Bridges**, Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County
- **Community Bridges**, Child Development Division
- **Community Bridges**, Child & Adult Care Food Program
- **Community Bridges**, La Manzana Community Resources
- **Community Bridges**, Live Oak Community Resources
- **Community Bridges**, Mountain Community Resources
- **Community Bridges**, Nueva Vista Community Resources

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<sup>5</sup> In addition to the funded programs on this list, there are six CORE programs funded by *only* the City of Santa Cruz. These programs are: **Coastal Watershed Council**, Watershed Ranger; **FoodWhat, Incorporated**, FoodWhat or "Food, What?!"; **Homeless Garden Project**, Transitional Employment and Job Training Program; **Santa Cruz Barrios Unidos, Inc.**, Kids Club; **The Diversity Center**, The Diversity Center's 60+ Program, and **Walnut Avenue Family & Women's Center**, Walnut Avenue Early Education Center. One contracted agency, **Parents Center**, is funded for two CORE programs that are managed directly by the Health Services Agency (HSA) in order to meet federal requirements for matched funding for the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) program.



- **Court Appointed Special Advocates of Santa Cruz County**, Court Appointed Special Advocates of Santa Cruz County "CASA"
- **Dientes Community Dental Care**, Integrated Dental Care for Our Community
- **Encompass Community Services**, Housing Pathways
- **Encompass Community Services**, PAPÁS, Supporting Father Involvement
- **Encompass Community Services**, TAY (Transition Age Youth) Youth Advocacy Project
- **Encompass Community Services**, Mindfulness-Based Medication Assisted Treatment Program
- **Families In Transition of Santa Cruz County, Inc.**, Family Housing Stabilization
- **Family Service Agency of the Central Coast**, Counseling Services
- **Family Service Agency of the Central Coast**, I-You Venture
- **Family Service Agency of the Central Coast**, Senior Outreach
- **Family Service Agency of the Central Coast**, Suicide Prevention Service
- **Family Service Agency of the Central Coast**, Survivors Healing Center
- **Family Service Agency of the Central Coast**, WomenCARE
- **Grey Bears**, Healthy Food for Seniors
- **Housing Matters**, 180/2020
- **Janus of Santa Cruz**, Co-occurring Disorders (COD) Treatment Capacity: Training and Integration of Behavioral Health Interventions to Effectively Serve Persons with Co-Occurring Mental and Substance Use Disorders (SUD)
- **Mental Health Client Action Network**, Drop-In Center
- **Mental Health Client Action Network**, Motivational Interviewing Peer Support Counseling
- **Monarch Services-Servicios Monarca**, Monarch Services-Servicios Monarca
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness Santa Cruz County**, Sustaining Families Program
- **New Life Community Services**, Gemma
- **Pacific Preschool**, Pacific Preschool
- **Pajaro Valley Children's Center**, Pajaro Valley Children's Center
- **Pajaro Valley Prevention & Student Assistance, Inc.**, Functional Family Therapy
- **Pajaro Valley Prevention & Student Assistance, Inc.**, Seven Challenges
- **Pajaro Valley Unified School District**, Healthy Start Program
- **Planned Parenthood Mar Monte**, Westside & Watsonville Health Centers
- **Salud Para La Gente**, Coordinated Care Program
- **Santa Cruz Barrios Unidos, Inc.**, Educational Outreach Program
- **Santa Cruz Community Health Centers**, Santa Cruz Community Health Centers
- **Santa Cruz Toddler Care Center**, Santa Cruz Toddler Care Center
- **Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County**, Nutrition Education Program
- **Senior Citizen Org. of San Lorenzo Valley**, Senior Outreach and Activities



- **Senior Citizens Legal Services**, Senior Citizens Legal Services
- **Senior Network Services, Inc.**, Aging in Community: Housing and Home Help Services
- **Seniors Council of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties**, Area Agency on Aging of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties
- **Seniors Council of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties**, TCE-PROJECT SCOUT
- **The Diversity Center**, The Diversity Center's Youth Program
- **Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired**, Safe and Healthy Living Program
- **Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County**, Beat Back Diabetes
- **Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County**, Friends Outside
- **Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County**, Seniors Programs
- **Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County**, YouthSERVE
- **Walnut Avenue Family & Women's Center**, Youth Advocacy and Violence Prevention
- **YWCA of Watsonville**, YWCA State Preschool





**County of Santa Cruz Human Services Department**

**Planning and Evaluation Division**

**For more information, please contact:**

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