

Mendocino County Department of Social Services CEO Report

June 2026

II. Safe & Healthy County



Bringing Veterans Affairs Closer to Coast Veterans: ATLAS Telehealth Arrives in Fort Bragg

In a major milestone for coastal residents, the Mendocino County Department of Social Services (MCDSS), in close collaboration with the San Francisco Veterans Affairs (VA) Health Care System (SFVAHCS), has officially announced the upcoming launch of a new ATLAS telehealth site at the Fort Bragg Veterans Memorial Building. This strategic partnership aims to bridge the healthcare gap for rural Veterans by bringing advanced virtual clinical care directly into the local community. Project organizers have outlined a structured, phased rollout beginning with a targeted soft opening in June 2026, followed by a formal community-wide grand opening across in mid to late summer 2026.

For many Veterans living on the Mendocino coast, receiving essential medical services has historically required navigating long, exhausting, and costly travel. Currently, local Veterans face an average distance of 57 miles—resulting in an 80-minute or longer drive depending on coastal road conditions—just to reach the nearest physical VA clinic. The ATLAS (Accessing Telehealth Through Local Area Stations) program directly solves this geographic challenge by establishing a dedicated, private space equipped with high-speed secure technology and specialized clinical video equipment. This allows the 807 Veterans residing within a 15-mile radius of the new site to seamlessly connect with their trusted VA providers without leaving Fort Bragg.

The new ATLAS station will operate directly out of the Veteran Services Office room inside the Fort Bragg Veterans Memorial Building. Because the local American Legion and the County VSO already run their daily operations from this facility, the site is a familiar, trusted, and highly accessible pillar for the local Veteran community. The station features a state-of-the-art virtual care cart equipped with secure technology, a dedicated interface, and a high-definition camera system. To eliminate technical anxiety, appointments will be supported on-site by trained volunteer attendants from the Fort Bragg VSO who will assist patients with checking in and setting up the secure VA Video Connect software.

The Fort Bragg ATLAS site is fully prepared, with hardware allocated and internet connectivity actively tested and confirmed on the County of Mendocino's secure network. Initial services will include vital primary care appointments and private mental health services, with site partners allocating weekly use on Tuesdays and Fridays from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. Looking ahead, project stakeholders plan to introduce additional clinical specialties and expand weekly operating availability as the program matures into the Fall and Winter seasons. This initiative stands as a testament to the power of localized public partnerships, spearheaded by regional champions from the Mendocino County Department of Social Services alongside the dedicated Connected Care workgroup from the San Francisco VA.

Mendocino County Department of Social Services CEO Report

June 2026



II. Safe & Healthy County

June is Elder & Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month

June is recognized as Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month, providing an opportunity to strengthen public understanding and reinforce the importance of recognizing and responding to concerns affecting vulnerable adults. In support of these efforts, the Board of Supervisors and Department of Social Services, Adult and Aging Services Division presented a proclamation on June 2, recognizing the importance of elder and dependent adult abuse prevention and education efforts within Mendocino County. Additionally, June 15 marks World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), a global initiative focused on increasing awareness of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation while promoting the dignity, safety, and well-being of older adults.

Adult Protective Services (APS) remains committed to its purpose of protecting vulnerable adults from harm while respecting an individual's right to self-determination and promoting safety, independence, dignity, and overall well-being. Through investigation, intervention, supportive services, and coordination with community resources, APS works to support vulnerable adults while preserving their ability to make informed choices whenever possible. Elder abuse can take many forms, including physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and financial exploitation, making early recognition and reporting an important part of prevention and access to supportive services.

In support of Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month and World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), APS staff will be participating in community outreach efforts throughout Mendocino County by visiting local senior centers and community locations to provide resource information, increase visibility of available services, and strengthen community understanding of the APS program and its mission. These outreach efforts provide an opportunity to encourage education and prevention efforts while promoting greater understanding of elder abuse and the importance of supporting older adults and vulnerable populations.

The Adult and Aging Services Division values the continued partnership of community agencies, healthcare providers, law enforcement, and local stakeholders who support efforts to identify concerns, connect individuals with services, and promote the well-being of older adults throughout Mendocino County.



**Mendocino County Department of Social Services Monthly
Data Dashboard**

Mendocino County Department of Social Services CEO Report

June 2026



II. Safe & Healthy County

Foster Care Awareness Month - The Work Behind the Commitment

May is Foster Care Awareness Month - a time to challenge common misconceptions about foster care and recognize the people who step in to support children, youth, and families navigating the child welfare system.

Resource and adoptive parent Jason Hanover understands that this work requires consistency, accountability, and a willingness to show up—especially when situations are complex. In 2016, he became licensed to care for three relative children between the ages of 9 and 15. He hadn't planned on becoming a parent, but as he puts it, "What began as an obligation became a privilege."



Four years later, Jason was asked to take in four siblings who otherwise could have been separated or placed outside the region. At the time, he was already parenting a four-year-old son. He agreed to the emergency placement and renewed his license.

During that case, Jason worked closely with both the children and their parents toward reunification. Like many families involved in child welfare, the parents were struggling with addiction. Jason recalls a turning point during a Child & Family Team (CFT) meeting: "Dad kept asking what he needed to do. I told him directly—he needed to get sober." Over the next several months, Jason stayed engaged with the family and ultimately advocated in court for reunification. Eight months after placement, the children returned home. Today, that family is stable—pursuing higher education, purchasing a home, and raising their children in a safe environment.

That experience influenced Jason's own path. He shifted his focus from criminal justice to social work and is now preparing to graduate from Chico State University with a Bachelor of Social Work, with plans to continue on to a master's program.

Since then, Jason has continued fostering and has adopted five children, with another adoption anticipated this year. His experience includes caring for a teen parent and her baby, supporting a transgender youth, and providing respite care.

Continued on next page

Mendocino County Department of Social Services CEO Report

June 2026

II. Safe & Healthy County



Foster Care Awareness Month - The Work Behind the Commitment - *continued*

He emphasizes that foster care is not just about temporary placement—it's about supporting families and advocating for reunification whenever possible. "At the end of the day, parents miss their kids," he says. "Respect and clear communication matter. Sometimes families don't feel like they have a voice."

For those considering becoming resource parents, his advice is straightforward: "Do it. And don't be afraid to advocate—family voices can get lost in the system."

In addition to parenting and completing his degree, Jason volunteers with the Lake and Mendocino County Toys for Tots program and works as a Social Worker with Lake County Social Services. Foster care is complex work. It requires commitment, patience, and the ability to navigate difficult situations—but as Jason's experience shows, it can also create meaningful, lasting outcomes for children and families.

If you are interested in learning more about fostering, please visit the County of Mendocino website at <https://www.mendocinocounty.gov/departments/social-services/children-s-services/foster-care> or call (707) 463-7990.

Mendocino County Department of Social Services CEO Report

June 2026

II. Safe & Healthy County



SUN Bucks Are Supporting Local Children

The State of California is launching SUN Bucks for summer 2026, providing eligible families with \$120 per child in food benefits to combat food insecurity while children are on summer break and without access to free school meals.

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has already begun mailing electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards for automatically enrolled children. Children 6-18 may be automatically enrolled if they receive CalWORKs, CalFresh, or Medi-Cal (certified at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level) or if they have been certified eligible to free meals through a school application. Families of children who are not automatically enrolled can apply by submitting a school meal application or Universal Benefits Application to their child's school by August 31, 2026.

SUN Bucks EBT cards are accepted at locations where CalFresh EBT cards are accepted. These benefits expire 122 days after being loaded onto the card, so families are encouraged to spend their SUN Bucks before CalFresh benefits.

To learn more, you can visit the [SUN Bucks site](#) on the State webpage or check out the [Summer EBT | Food and Nutrition Service](#) information from our federal partners. Since the program was implemented in 2024, over \$877 million in food purchases have been made in California using SUN Bucks.

