

Mendocino County Department of Social Services CEO Report

December 2025



II. Safe & Healthy County

Department Procedures Released November 2025:

- DSS 25-04 Internal Complaints
- DSS 24-05 Accident, Injury, Illness Reporting/Perceived Hazard Reporting
- DSS 25-05 External and Welfare Civil Rights Complaints
- AAS 25-03 Veterans Affairs Work Study Program

Live Oak Apartments Celebrating 5 Years

On Thursday, November 20, 2025, the Live Oak Apartments celebrated a five-year anniversary by hosting an open house for community partners. Since the County purchased the former hotel in November 2020, the program has provided housing to 110 formerly homeless households, including 123 adults and 75 children. The project has served as a vital resource for seniors, veterans, families, and individuals with complex medical conditions.

Live Oak Apartments were made possible through Project Homekey funds, which were used to purchase the former Best Western Inn at 555 S. Orchard Street in Ukiah in November 2020. The program remains financially stable through multiple funding sources, including the requirement that each household contribute 30% of their monthly income toward rent. Capital improvements are supported by CARES Act funding, CDBG-CV funds, and a portion of the County's Permanent Local Housing Allocation. Operational funding is derived from tenant rent, HUD and State rental assistance programs, State operating subsidies, Tribal Rental Assistance programs, and the County's Permanent Local Housing Allocation. No County General Fund dollars are used to support this program.

A key component of Live Oak's success is its partnership with Rural Communities Housing Development Corporation (RCHDC), as well as robust onsite staffing. The program includes an onsite resident manager, two full-time staff members, a maintenance engineer, a part-time housekeeper, and an overnight property monitor. The result is a warm and welcoming environment that fosters a multigenerational community where people can safely stabilize and build supportive connections. "Live Oak provides opportunities for residents to engage with each other, community meals, crafting, and community garden workshops. Live Oak has a beautiful community garden for residents to plant or harvest fresh produce and herbs that are often used in cooking classes or community meals," shares Heather Criss, Program Administrator for Live Oak Apartments.

The apartment complex consists of 48 self-contained units, primarily studios. Six units are designed with pass-through doors to create two-room layouts for families. The property includes four ADA-accessible units, and all units feature small cooking spaces and food storage. At a time when the housing crisis affects every corner of our communities, Live Oak Apartments stands as a model of success—providing safe, stable housing with a strong sense of community and hope.

For more information, visit www.projecthomekeymendocino.org.



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Veterans Stand Down

In recognition of Veterans Day, Mendocino County Veterans Services hosted a Veterans Stand Down on November 13, 2025, bringing together over 20 community partners and service providers to support local veterans. The event offered a variety of services, including meals, haircuts, benefits information, housing assistance, and employment resources. Beyond receiving these services, veterans had the opportunity to connect with one another, socialize, and feel less isolated, fostering a sense of community and support among attendees.

While 17 veterans attended the Stand Down, the impact extends far beyond this single event. Over the past year, the Veterans Service Office has filed nearly 1,000 benefit claims, met with approximately 1,900 veterans and family members in person, responded to more than 3,600 calls and emails, and successfully brought in \$3.5 million in new federal benefits for veterans in Mendocino County. The Stand Down complements this ongoing work by offering an accessible, one-stop resource hub that also strengthens social connections for veterans.

This event underscores a continued commitment to the veteran community and a dedication to honoring their service not only on Veterans Day but throughout the year. Mendocino County Veterans Services looks forward to building on these connections and expanding outreach to ensure even more veterans are aware of and can access the services available to them.



Ivan Pantaleon, Senior Program Specialist and Heather Criss, Program Administrator at the Ukiah Veterans Stand Down event.

