

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**APHSA Announces Recipient of 2024 Excellence Award for Outstanding State Member**  
*Michael Leach recognized for outstanding leadership at APHSA National Human Services Summit*

ARLINGTON, VA – The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) is proud to announce that Michael Leach, State Director for the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS), was awarded the prestigious APHSA Excellence Award for Outstanding State Member. The award was presented at the 2024 APHSA National Human Services Summit in recognition of Mr. Leach's unwavering commitment to human services and his innovative leadership during challenging times.

"Michael has been an exceptional leader while with the South Carolina Department of Social Services [DSS]," says Kelly Garcia, the Director of the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, and Chair of the APHSA Leadership Council. "His true character shined through as he led the agency through the unprecedented challenges of a global pandemic."

Michael Leach's career started in Tennessee where he worked to improve the quality and effectiveness of services that supported children at risk for adverse outcomes. In 2019, he began leading a staff of more than 4,400 professionals at South Carolina's DDS, operationalizing a prevention mindset to the way the agency supports healthy and thriving families.

Director Garcia adds that, "Michael's forward-thinking approach and diverse background have equipped him to navigate complex systems and develop long-term solutions that will have positive outcomes for generations to come."

The APHSA Excellence Award for Outstanding State Member honors those who make significant contributions to APHSA and the human services sector through their dedication to moving human services upstream, advancing social and economic mobility, and strengthening the sector. Michael Leach's recognition reflects his meaningful contributions and the lasting impact he has made on service delivery.

*The [APHSA National Human Services Summit 2024](#) took place June 9-12 at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, VA.*

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**About APHSA:** The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) supports leaders from state, county, and city human services agencies to advance the well-being of individuals, families,

and communities nationwide. As a bipartisan membership association, they work with their members to generate pragmatic solutions grounded in lived experience with a lens for equity and belonging. Visit [www.aphsa.org](http://www.aphsa.org) to learn more.

