



Whole Person Care Learning Collaborative Unsung Hero Awardees

Aasha Abbott, Housing Navigator

Santa Cruz County

Aasha works for WPC partner agency, Front St, Inc., as a Housing Navigator. Aasha has been a consistent presence on the Whole Person Care – Cruz to Health housing team and the driving force behind our pilot's successful housing placements. Our WPC pilot has learned so much from her. She is intelligent, patient, and thorough. Aasha has made positive developments to our county's housing navigation and coordinated entry process. Her ability to procure and retain affordable housing units and landlord contacts in this tough market reflects her commitment and enthusiasm for social justice.

Her interactions with clients are positive and appreciated, and there are several examples of how she has helped in the community. One WPC enrollee said of Aasha "[She] always has a smile, and always shows kindness ...she was very supportive throughout the process. She'd come and see me every week - even after placement. She has helped work through my craziness and accepted me for who I was. She helped me in every single incremental procedure, and protocol of the housing process, explaining line by line what the forms meant, helping me understand the requirements."

Anira Khlok, Program Analyst

City of Sacramento

Anira played an instrumental role in setting up systems within the City of Sacramento to effectively manage the WPC program. Before WPC, the City of Sacramento had no experience administering a Medi-Cal pilot program. Anira served as a Program Analyst for the City and brought her social work background, passion for working with underserved populations, and creative problem-solving skills to help the City successfully run the WPC pilot. She streamlined contracting procedures, set up new budgeting tools, and supported partner engagement efforts across all providers.

Dolores Gonzalez, WPC Nurse Coordinator

Riverside County

Dolores has provided constant leadership for WPC. Dolores provides constructive criticism while consistently encouraging the staff to grow and improve patient outcomes. No matter what the staff has faced during the many program changes implemented to our pilot, Dolores provides positive leadership and encouragement. Her encouragement for staff to strive towards collaboration with multiple stakeholders for outcome improvement has heightened the positive impact of WPC's success. Dolores leads by example and demonstrates a true passion for the work that she does for the clients and staff of WPC.



Geno Robledo, Peer Support Specialist II

Kings County

Geno's role as Kings WPC Peer Support Specialist is to reduce the loss of contact, increase enrollee engagement, and build rapport and trust among the target population. These connections were critical to those who were hesitant to seek appropriate services. Many of the individuals Geno connected with were either immobile or completely unwilling to seek assistance for critical medical conditions. Geno's unwavering determination and grit led to an elderly homeless woman with complex medical conditions and mobility restrictions receiving the care she needed, preventing her condition and injuries from worsening.

During his first month on the job, referrals increased 85% and he identified and addressed a transportation barrier. Geno's ability to quickly build rapport and trust with individuals bridged the homeless population and other homeless outreach efforts. Geno continues to play a vital role in assisting the WPC target population by being the main frontline worker aiding those at-risk or COVID positive. As a result, he has connected numerous individuals to WPC or Project Room Key. Geno has been a true hero in the battle to improve the wellbeing of the Kings County community.

Holly Webb, Director, Enhanced Care Management, WellSpace Health

City of Sacramento

Holly's dedication to serving vulnerable populations through the City of Sacramento's WPC pilot has led to the creation of new partnerships to provide clinical care and housing services. Her collaborative approach helped foster a community of providers within the WPC pilot that shares best practices, lessons learned, and innovative approaches to working with those experiencing homelessness in Sacramento. Holly currently serves as the Director of Enhanced Care Management for WellSpace Health overseeing many Medi-Cal programs, including WPC.

Jaime Rios, Community Worker

Santa Clara County

Jaime Rios is an integral member of the County of Santa Clara WPC team. When Jaime joined WPC more than a year ago, his willingness to learn and proven track record in serving those in greatest need in the community made him an ideal person to work on the interdepartmental efforts being piloted between the Health System's hospitals, clinics, behavioral health, custody health, and the sobering center.

Jaime's cultural and linguistic competency, excellent customer service skills, and the genuine rapport he quickly establishes with clients are key to his success. He provides a critical linkage to individuals who come through the Mission Street Sobering Center and helps to connect them to the appropriate care. Jaime meets patients where they are, listens to them, connects them to resources, helps them set goals, assists with VI-

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SPDATs and Medi-Cal enrollment, and monitors their progress with regular check-ins. What makes Jaime stand out is his passion for this work and his ability to connect with individuals by intuitively identifying the best way to interact with them. He demonstrates understanding, firmness, and kindness with each interaction and with each person.

Jodi Nerell, Former Director of Behavioral Health Integration, Sacramento Covered

City of Sacramento

As a pioneer in developing innovative programming for individuals experiencing homelessness and other underserved populations, Jodi worked as the Director of Behavioral Health Integration for Sacramento Covered, a key WPC Service Partner, where she led the on-the-ground implementation of the City of Sacramento's WPC program. Through Jodi's dedication and guidance, Pathways is placing Sacramento's most vulnerable and fragile homeless residents at the center of a more coordinated, responsive, and sustainable health and housing system of care. Jodi's partnerships within the Sacramento area's health service delivery system and her reputation as a committed, trusted partner has resulted in unprecedented, multi-sector collaboration to support and improve care coordination for Sacramento's homeless population. Jodi has spearheaded the organization and delivery of critical program services in WPC, including connection to mobile dental care, transportation services, social security benefits, and legal aid. Jodi is currently the Director of Local Mental Health Engagement at Sutter Health in Sacramento.

Katherine Werner, Engages and makes appointments for those needing MH and SU services

Riverside County

Katherine leads clients to be successfully connected to treatment by consistently engaging with WPC clients who have been referred to mental health and substance use disorder services. Katherine helps these individuals make appointments and communicates with the pilot when WPC clients successfully engage and follow-up with their referrals.

Linda Raygoza, WPC Health Educator

Kern County

Ms. Linda, as she is referred to by our patients, has been instrumental in the positive impact WPC has made with our patients. From initially struggling to get two patients to attend our classes, to now hosting full classes, Linda exhibits a passion that resonates with our patients and has helped gain buy-in for the program. The positive experiences from our WPC classes have helped to make a lasting impact on our patients. Linda is always willing to take on new projects like the WPC support group, the Serve Safe

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certification, and outreach efforts. Further, Linda has served as an effective advocate for our patients and has gone above and beyond to make sure they know someone is looking out for them. Most importantly, Linda has continued to a safe space our patients' to connect, heal, and grow. Thank you for all that you do, Ms. Linda!

Maria X. Martinez, Director of Whole Person Care

San Francisco

Maria X Martinez worked for San Francisco's Department of Public Health (DPH) for 23 years, during which time she passionately championed the needs of vulnerable populations. She focused on building initiatives and developing care models for high-risk populations through new collaborations and system design. Maria continually strived to bring a racial and equity lens to the work of creating a seamless network of services to engage and meet the needs of San Francisco's most complex and vulnerable residents. The capstone of Maria's career was serving as the Director of SF WPC, a project that aims to improve outcomes for adults experiencing homelessness in San Francisco through enhanced care coordination. Maria solidified SF interagency partnerships between DPH, the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, and the Human Services Agency, bringing these departments together to work in ways they previously had not. Under her guidance, San Francisco adopted a population-based, data-informed approach to provide holistic health, housing, and human services to shared clients. The culmination of this work was the "Shared Priority Project," which piloted city-wide care coordination and interagency data sharing to identify and problem-solve system barriers and create street-to-home plans for vulnerable adults experiencing homelessness. Through Maria's visionary leadership, SF's Whole Person Care work cemented during the five-year waiver will continue through the Shared Priority collaboration, direct clinical services that have coalesced as DPH's new Whole Person Integrated Care section, and in the new Integrated Homeless Resource Center, which will be located in a new development co-locating residential and supportive services under one roof (opening late 2021). Maria truly paved the way in creating care models and effective systems of care for vulnerable people and those experiencing homelessness in San Francisco. So much that lives on in the SF Department of Public Health is a result of her vision, commitment, incredible work, and dedication to improving the lives of marginalized populations. A beloved colleague, leader, and mentor who touched innumerable lives during her 23-year tenure with DPH, Maria X passed away after a brief battle with cancer on July 15, 2020.

Mario Luna, Business Systems Analyst II

San Bernardino County

Mario works behind the scenes at a different location. His ability to combine the various sources of data from San Bernardino County and all of our partners is to be commended. He never said, "that can't be done." Throughout the years, he has always said, "let me look at it and get back to you" and gets it done.



Neil Kurtz, Homeless Services Program Planner

Sacramento County

Neil is instrumental in supporting a key city-county partnership between the City of Sacramento's WPC pilot and the county's Flexible Housing Pool (FHP) program. Neil works as a Homeless Services Program Planner for the County of Sacramento's Department of Human Assistance. The FHP program helps families and individuals' transition from the streets or temporary emergency shelter to permanent housing and new lives. FHP builds new partnerships and connects existing crisis response programs with re-housing services. This partnership with the county has been important for ensuring that WPC patients have access to a full array of housing programs available in our community. By working together, we have been able to house several shared clients, while improving and enhancing the coordination supports to local providers as they rehouse clients. Not only is Neil a joy to work with, but he has also played a critical role in supporting program coordination activities between both programs. It is with a deep appreciation of his collaborative nature and tireless commitment to ensuring all Sacramentans experiencing homelessness have access to housing supports and services that we nominate Neil as an unsung hero.

Noemi Perez, Social Worker

San Benito County

Noemi Perez joined the Whole Person Care program in the beginning as an Office Assistant III, while pursuing her B.A. degree in Social Work. When she received her degree, she was promoted to a Social Worker. Ms. Perez is a dedicated, passionate, and committed team member with the ability to connect with and establish positive working relationships with clients without judgment. She works directly with high-risk populations including homeless individuals. Despite the challenges that clients have with multiple barriers, she has never given up on anyone, she works even harder to help them in any way possible. I admire her dedication and ability to provide intensive case management along with supportive services, care coordination, and linkages to other services. I often get positive comments from clients and partners about her commitment, passion, and dedication. Thank you very much, Noemi.

Tari Dolstra, Probation Division Director

Riverside County

Tari was one of the initial contacts the WPC pilot established for each of the probation sites in Riverside County. Tari provided us with education about her department and introduced us to the language used within her department. She collaborated with us in the development of the referral form to ensure we were collecting the correct information for the probation department. Tari has always communicated openly with us and clients within the probation department to share services to support clients. Her door is always open and she promotes collaboration for successful outcomes.

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We have screened over 10,000 clients in the past three years throughout Riverside County at eight different probation sites. This type of pilot would not be successful without the foundation of support, education, and follow-up from Tari who ensures every individual is given the opportunity to re-enter their community and decrease their chances of recidivism. Thank you, Tari for all your support. Your collaboration with WPC is groundbreaking work that led to Nurses screening at probation sites. We have developed a great partnership and are looking forward to more!

Vanessa Wentwoord, Mental Health Clinician and Project Manager

Solano County

Vanessa is a founding member of the team both as a clinician and as a leader since WPC contracted with Bay Area Community Services. During her time with the program, Vanessa has been highly involved in the care coordination of nearly 200 of the most clinically complex, high-acuity, and most frequent utilizers of emergency care in Solano County. In her charge, the WPC program garnered a reputation for providing creative and transformational care by adopting a “whatever it takes” team-based community-focused approach 7-days a week that draws on natural supports and linkages. Her leadership opened Solano County to a perspective of care that is less encumbered by systemic barriers by demonstrating accessibility, responsiveness, and collaboration. In doing so, the WPC pilot filled a complex care services gap in the system of care. These profoundly transformational services are even more needed in this uncertain economic and socially restless time; Vanessa’s has more than risen to the occasion to show the people of Solano County the type of care the most vulnerable of the community should come to hope for.

Rebecca Alvarado, Manager, Consumer Engagement Special Projects

Alameda County

Rebecca is a licensed clinical social worker. Over the 20 years before the Care Connect program, she served Oakland residents seeking care at Highland, the County’s public hospital, and at Eastmont Wellness a community clinic, both in direct service and as a manager and trainer of community health workers, social workers, and community-rooted volunteers. She has a well-earned reputation among her colleagues, her clients, and their families for putting them and their concerns first and truly caring about them. She carried that ethic into the development and implementation of Care Connect’s Consumer Fellowship. Her decades of experience working with Oakland’s Mayan community’s culturally affirmative approach to care led to Care Connect endorsing her proposal of a Mam speaking team. Her Mam speaking team was able to quickly gain the trust needed to effectively halt the spread of COVID-19 within the community. It is Rebecca’s reputation in the community that made this success possible.