

Civilian review of law enforcement rare for counties

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Debra Moses believes in the Richland County, S.C. Sheriff's Advisory Council. For the past five years, she's been offering her input into how Sheriff Leon Lott's deputies interact with the community, how the department staffs itself and how discipline is handled.

For her, the time she spends is an endorsement.

"I'm retired," she said. "If I didn't think that this council wasn't important, I wouldn't be wasting my time with it. It's a way I can help improve our county and offer my voice and opinion."

As the nation reckons with racial disparities in the criminal justice system, many calls for reform include citizen review boards of law enforcement agencies, one of the recommendations to come out of the 2015 President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing.

That task force was born from the 2014 death of Michael Brown, unarmed, in St. Louis County, Mo. at the hands of a police officer, similar to George Floyd's death in May in Minneapolis.

While cities have formed dozens of police review boards, only 11 counties, along with two city-county consolidated governments, have done so. Reflection after Floyd's death, though, has more counties considering it.

On June 16, the Miami-Dade County, Fla. Board of County Commissioners voted to approve, with a veto-proof majority, a preliminary measure creating an independent civilian panel that would review complaints against Miami-Dade police officers and allow county staff to investigate claims. The *Miami Herald* reported that the county would fund the panel with at least \$7.59 million. The county's previous review board was cut in 2009 during the Great Recession.

"Any time you can have an independent party that can independently evaluate the functions of a law enforcement agency, I think that's a good thing whether that's a county or a city," said Michael Gennaco, a founding principal of the OIR Group, a firm that evaluates law enforcement agencies. Gennaco previously served as chief attorney of Los

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County Executive Mark Hackel (right) discusses the 2020 census in Macomb County, Mich. with Macomb Community Action Director Ernest Cawvey. The Census Bureau has extended census deadlines until Oct. 31. The bureau extended the self-response phase for online, phone and mailed responses and provided census takers with more time to interview non-responsive households in person. Photo by Mitch Hotts, The Macomb Daily

LOCAL GOVERNMENT JOBS CONTINUE TO SEE DECLINE

by **Stacy Nakintu**
and **Kevin Shrawder**

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released its monthly jobs report for May, reflecting a dramatic change of course in labor market conditions, but not for local governments. On top of ap-

proximately 800,000 local government jobs lost in April, local governments lost another 487,000 in May. This additional loss brings the total number of local government jobs lost for just these two months to nearly 1.3 million jobs, revealing the massive financial challenges of county governments across the

nation.

Much of the decline in local government employment occurred in education systems, with nearly 310,000 education-related jobs lost to local governments in May. However, another 177,000 jobs were

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COVID-19: Entrepreneur center helps local businesses

by **Rachel Looker**
staff writer

The goal of the Hillsborough County Entrepreneur Collaborative Center (ECC), when it opened in Florida, was simple: Help the entrepreneur and small business communities. Now, as times have changed,

the ECC is providing the same services — just during an economic recession caused by a global health pandemic.

"We still are the hub of entrepreneurship and now we've become almost the hub to serve during disaster time," ECC Manager Lynn Kroesen said.

The ECC has been offering county support to the local startup community by providing access to business service providers, resources, mentorship and specialty training since 2014. The center, which is funded through county tax

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County gets resources out

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dollars, is an 8,000-square-foot facility centrally located in the county.

“We identified that it was super challenging and difficult for entrepreneurs to navigate the system,” Kroesen said. “They had no idea who to go to or which organization would best fit their needs depending on whatever stage of business they were in.”

The center serves as the hub for non-profits, government agencies and educational institutions and offers free resources to entrepreneurs including state-of-the-art technology, executive office space, conference rooms, collaborative areas, dry erase walls, free Wi-Fi and a resource area for business research.

One of the programs, 1 Million Cups, developed by the



Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, individuals meet at Hillsborough County’s Entrepreneur Collaborative Center in Hillsborough County, Fla. to learn about the center’s resources for entrepreneurs and small businesses. Photo by David Garza-Manahan

Kauffman Foundation, assists entrepreneurs by allowing them to pitch their ideas and receive feedback. This pro-

gram has offered over 550 entrepreneurs the opportunity to share business ideas to crowds of up to 70 people in Hillsborough County.

“People want to participate in the programs like 1 Million Cups because they love watching Shark Tank on TV,” Kroesen said. “They get addicted to the entrepreneurs in the center and they become an entrepreneur groupie and become one themselves.”

When the coronavirus began to spread, the center made a transition in just two weeks from in-person events and consulting to providing virtual services.

“We’ve been able to tap into an entirely new audience whether it’s new entrepreneurs that are coming out of the woodwork because of COVID-19 or whether it’s our businesses that have pivoted,” Kroesen said.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, the center held 100 events with 1,100 participants each month. This past April and May, when services tran-



sitioned to being held virtually, the center is averaging 120 events with over 1,600 attendees. Kroesen said the center has been helping business owners discuss ways to diversify and establish continuity plans to be successful during the COVID-19 outbreak, with help from the center. Businesses in Hillsborough County, like many others across the country, have transitioned to producing hand sanitizer, plexiglass and masks.

“I think the businesses are desperate for resources,” Kro-

esen said. “They’re looking for new ways to market themselves because they are not able to do it the old ways.”

She explained how the county is utilizing funding from the CARES Act to launch the Economic Recovery Program to help businesses that have been impacted by the outbreak.

“COVID-19 is not going to stop us,” she said. “If anything, it’s given us more fuel to the fire that we need to grow and we need to be there if and

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SNAP/STATS

VISITING A NATIONAL PARK THIS SUMMER?

MOST VISITED	NO. OF VISITORS
Great Smoky Mountains.....	12.5 million
Grand Canyon	5.97 million
Rocky Mountain	4.7 million
Zion	4.5 million
Yosemite.....	4.5 million

Source: National Park Service

Center helps businesses

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when the next disaster happens so that we can continue to serve more entrepreneurs.”

The Jim Moran Institute (JMI) for Global Entrepreneurship at Florida State University partners with the ECC. Shane Smith, director of JMI’s Central Florida Operations, said the ECC serves as an added asset to the community and a “one-stop location” for small businesses.

“It’s really just a symbiotic relationship where when they have people come in and ask questions that fit our mold, they pass them on to us,” he said.

During COVID-19, Smith said the center went into “battle station mode” and has stepped up to offer more resources to the community. He described how the ECC is still connected to its partners by sending weekly emails about opportunities and classes that are available online.

“As a business owner, I know I can call the ECC and if they can’t answer, I know they will point me in the right direction,” he said.

Kroesen said without county commissioners approving the creation of the ECC, she thinks there would be less job growth throughout the county, adding that the entrepreneurship hub keeps families, students and youth in the community.

“We are a job creator,” she said. “We are helping entrepreneurs not just hash out their idea but hire employees that are in our community.”

For now, the center will continue to offer virtual events before transitioning to in-person meetings when permitted while following social distancing and other health guidelines.

“Knowing there’s one central location where they can access all of their resources in one place helps ease the business owner’s mind and gives them peace of mind that the resources are there and that we’re working very hard to serve them and have their best interests in hand,” Kroesen said. **CN**

Local governments lose 1.3 million jobs due to pandemic

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non-education jobs such as healthcare practitioners, social workers, law enforcement officers, maintenance crews and construction workers. Overall, since March, local governments experienced a decline of more than 523,000 non-education jobs. Individuals in these jobs are directly responsible for providing essential services and resources to counties, many of which are amid the ongoing public health crisis, subsequent economic hardship and civil unrest.

The continued hardship of county and city governments prevails at a time when other industries are seeing a historic reversal: overall, the unemployment rate decreased to 13.3 percent and 2.5 million jobs were gained across industries, surpassing the previous record of monthly jobs gained in a single month from 1983.

The COVID-19 pandemic and efforts to mitigate its spread impacted every sector of the labor market, causing a devastating loss of more than 20 million jobs and an unemployment rate of 14.7 percent — the highest rate since the Great Depression — a month earlier. These effects have trickled down to counties, which are facing unprecedented challenges because of the economic strain from efforts to alleviate the spread of the pandemic —

such as business closures and stay-at-home orders — including a \$114 billion loss of revenue through the end of FY2021. Additionally, counties face an estimated \$30 billion financial cost in the form of pandemic response efforts. In response to these fiscal challenges, counties are furloughing workers, pausing nonessential capital projects and reworking devastated budgets while providing critical services to residents. So far, the National Association of Counties (NACo) has tracked 120 counties which have been forced to furlough or lay off a share of the county workforce due to COVID-19 budget impacts, though many more counties are expected to have enacted similar measures.

Despite the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, recovery is on track for several industries. Local government, however, is not yet one of those industries, as illustrated by its continued decline in employment. Employment increased substantially in May for some of the hardest-hit industries such as leisure and hospitality, construction, education and health services, retail trade and manufacturing industries. At the issuance of the BLS jobs survey, 23 states had initiated reopening and the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funds had been distributed. The increased business activity paired with

federal funding for small business paychecks stimulated job growth in these industries.

The leisure and hospitality industry rebounded with an increase of 1.2 million jobs — over half of the jobs gained in the economy — and the industry’s unemployment rate dropped to 35.9 percent. Employment in the construction and manufacturing industries increased by 464,000 and 225,000 jobs, respectively, while healthcare increased by 312,000. Retail trade employment increased by 368,000 jobs following a decline of 2.3 million in April. The recovery across industries signals good news as revenue streams for counties will begin to grind back to life; unfortunately, this upturn will likely not cover losses sustained in recent months.

Overall, unemployment rates for minority workers remain higher than the national rate. The unemployment rate for Hispanic workers dropped to 17.6 percent in May, while it remained at 16.8 percent for African American workers.

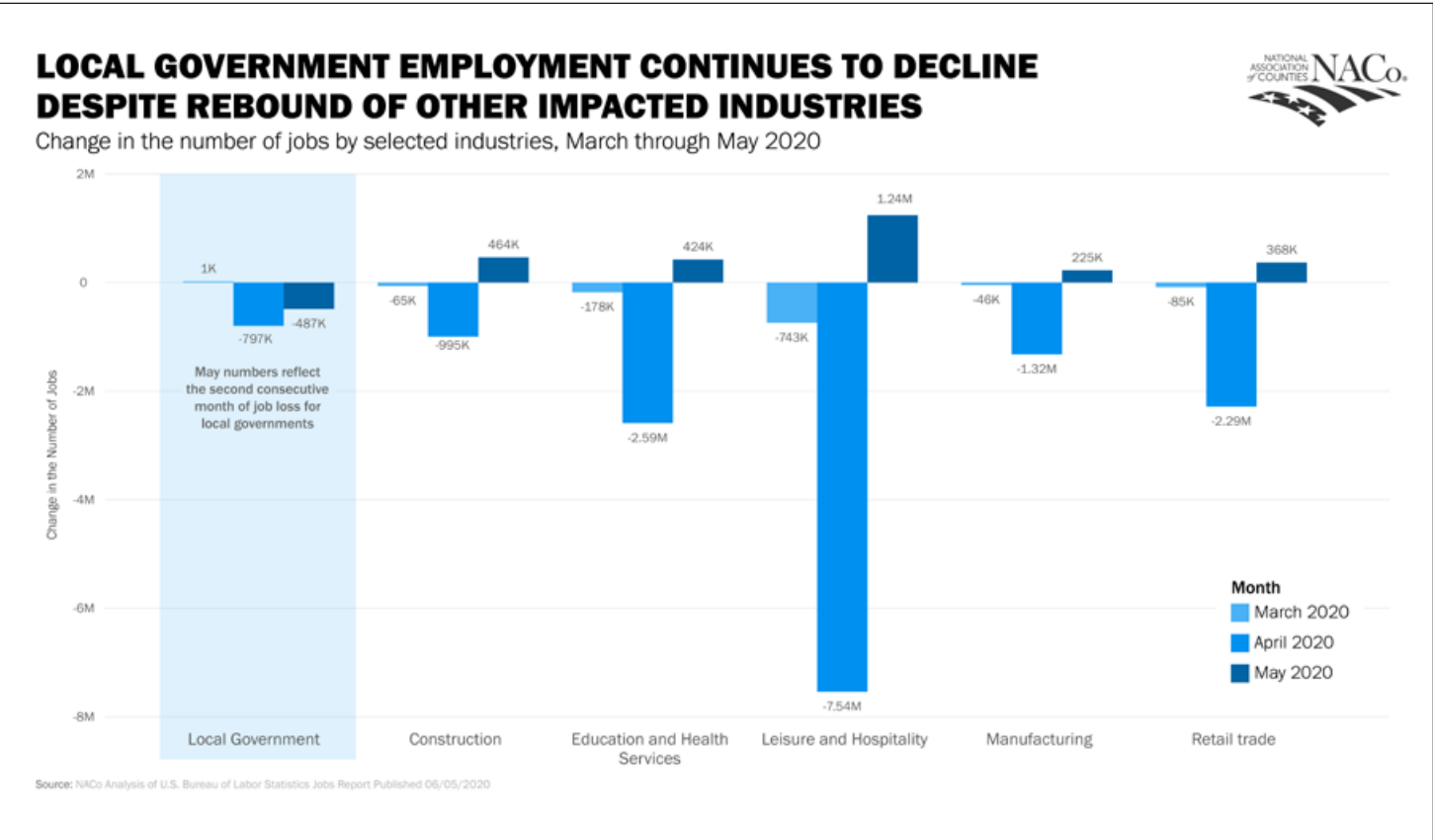
Following a dramatic increase of 16.2 million in April, according to BLS data, the number of people on temporary layoffs fell by 2.7 million to 15.3 million in May. However, BLS reported that misclassification errors impacted the labor force measures. During the pandemic, 4.9 million workers were misclassified as “em-

ployed but not at work” instead of “unemployed on temporary layoff.” Thus, the April unemployment rate would have been higher at 19.2 percent as opposed to 14.7 percent, and the unemployment rate in May would be 16.1 percent as opposed to 13.3 percent. Nevertheless, the overall trend remains unchanged.

Although the latest jobs report presents a national economy on the road to recovery, county governments are still reeling from the economic strain created by the pandemic. Counties are on the frontline of the COVID-19 response and have lost significant revenue because of efforts to contain the pandemic. The continued decline in local government employment reflects the ongoing manifestation of those impacts at the local government level. Faced with major budget shortfalls, counties continue to work toward balancing support for the adversely affected members of the community and facilitating the reopening of local economies with reduced county staff levels.

Check out NACo’s analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on the county workforce here: www.NACo.org/covid19/workforce. **CN**

Stacy Nakintu and Kevin Shrawder are data and research analysts in NACo’s County Innovations Lab.



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and we'll be in touch.

Looking forward to hearing from you, }
Mary Ann, Charlie and Rachel }

'I want to talk about those hard issues people don't want to talk about'

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Angeles County's Office of Independent Review.

"It's still a relatively new concept," he noted. "We've had rocket ships longer than we've had police oversight."

Because most counties directly elect sheriffs, there's little county boards or administrators can do to prompt sheriffs' offices to adopt review boards, leaving most to do it voluntarily or to meet a federal consent decree. The city and county of Denver, for example, has an appointed sheriff, which allowed the mayor to impose a review board on the office.

"That creates some complexities," Gennaco said. "Any sheriff could do with the support of a board. I think they'd be supportive, by and large. I would advise against the sheriff being involved in the selection process, I don't think that bodes very well for the appearance of independence. The administrative office of a county can do that work."

Local governments can hire contractors, like Gennaco's firm, to review their officers or form community-based review boards.

"Traditionally oversight had been largely community review boards, they often have access issues," he said. "It's hard for a well-respected community member of goodwill to develop a skill set to have meaningful input into what's becoming a more and more complicated profession."

In South Carolina, Moses hasn't seen that in her experience. She now chairs Richland county's advisory council.

"We discuss a lot of the things that are going on in the county, what's working well, what's broken," she said. "We'll give our feedback on the actions deputies have taken, we'll get to see footage and make recommendations for disciplinary actions or termination."

She said the crucial part of assembling an effective review board has been finding people in the community who aren't shy about sharing their views or concerns.

"We want to make sure our recommendations are fair, and we put a lot of thought into the feedback we give the sheriff," she said. "It's our community and we want it to be a good place to live, make sure our property values reflect that."

Moses was surprised that Lott invited the council to weigh in on hiring.

"It's important that we make clear to everyone who works there that they need to understand the cultural perceptions of authority, and that goes the other way, too," she said.

Moses helps lend insight into the county's large African American community and the experiences of individuals with mental and physical disabilities, a community she worked with professionally.

"The deputies need to know that how they approach people won't be perceived the

same way all the time," she said.

Suffolk County, N.Y. Sheriff Errol Toulon is recruiting members of the public for a new Sheriff's Community Advisory Board.

"I want to give them a better understanding of the sheriff's office and to talk about those hard issues people don't want to talk about," he said.

He reached out to schools and at public meetings, a staple of his first two-plus years in office, and he was concerned in the aftermath of Floyd's death and subsequent backlash against law enforcement.

"I am hoping the goodwill we had established hadn't been jeopardized," he said. "I felt it was important to bring in community stakeholders to at least talk about whatever issues they were concerned about."

"We don't want finger pointing," he said. "We know there are mistakes in any profession, but we want to make sure we can talk about things."

For Toulon, he sees the board as a two-way street, soliciting feedback from the public on training and supervision — two critical areas he says can destroy a law enforcement agency — and helping residents understand his deputies' responsibilities, which differ from those at the county police department.

"We don't want to be close-minded and say 'We're law enforcement, we know what's right,'" he said. "But I understand the anger. People are saying 'enough is enough,'

and law enforcement is frustrated that we're all painted the same way."

On top of the systemic benefits that public feedback can offer law enforcement, Gennaco said there's savings to be had in oversight, even if it involves hiring a firm.

"It provides a layer of inde-

pendence and serves a risk management function," he said. "That can result in reduced exposure from a civil liability perspective. Just preventing one of those messy judgments or settlements is a cost-effective way of doing business. It more than pays for itself." **CN**

COUNTIES, CONGRESS WORK TOWARD LAW ENFORCEMENT REFORMS

by **Charlie Ban**
and **Brett Mattson**

As Congress debates legislation on policing reform, counties are examining different measures they can take to address racial disparities in law enforcement.

On June 8, congressional Democrats, led by Rep. Karen Bass (D-Calif.) and House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler (D-N.Y.), introduced the Justice in Policing Act of 2020 (H.R. 7120).

It would make sweeping changes to administration and enforcement standards of local law enforcement agencies, including mandating the use of body-worn cameras, updating reporting requirements for use of force and officer misconduct, creating uniform accreditation standards across agencies and implementing policies and procedures that prohibit and combat racial profiling.

At the same time, county officials are opening their ears to public concerns about the direction law enforcement is headed.

In Pennsylvania, the Allegheny County Council is considering a measure that would ban the use of less-than-lethal crowd control methods, including tear gas and rubber bullets.

Members of the King County, Wash. Council are considering legislation to make the sheriff an appointed position and grant subpoena power to the county's Office of Law Enforcement Oversight. If passed, the measures, both of which were recommended by the 2018-2019 King County Charter

Review Commission, would be on the November ballot.

The "defund the police" school of thought saw some traction in Prince George's County, Md., where County Executive Angela Alsobrooks asked the County Council to allocate \$20 million from the county police capital project budget to build a new mental health facility.

Nearby Montgomery County is considering legislation that would require police to intervene if they see an officer using excessive force. That would include prohibiting striking someone who is already restrained or using deadly force without an imminent threat to life or serious injury.

The Harris County, Texas Commissioners Court approved eight measures to reform the criminal justice system, including studies that could lead to reallocating the county's criminal justice budget, implementing an independent oversight board to investigate excessive police force and expanding the public defender's office.

The Sarasota County, Fla. Sheriff's Office outlined how it complies with seven policies that make up the Campaign Zero "#8CantWait" campaign in its own effort, "How We Serve: Defining the Culture of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office."

Elsewhere in Florida, Broward County Sheriff Gregory Tony committed an additional \$1 million to the already allocated \$500,000 for deputies to participate in a racial equity and implicit bias training program.



Counties step up mental health services

by **Charlie Ban**
senior writer

Three months into the COVID-19 pandemic, more than two million U.S. residents have seen the virus take root in their lungs, but a much larger share have felt it affect their minds.

As the tolls of physical distancing and economic uncertainty, along with anxiety resulting from the many unknowns of the novel coronavirus, add up to emotional stress and turmoil, effective mental health services have proven crucial to keeping residents functioning while they wait out a return to a somewhat familiar life.

Nearly one-third of Americans have been reporting signs of anxiety or depression since the pandemic began, according to the Household Pulse Survey by the National Center for Health Statistics and the Census Bureau. A poll by the Kaiser Family Health Foundation found that 45 percent of adults across the country say that worry and stress related to the pandemic are hurting their mental health.

Long-term, research by the Robert Graham Center for Policy Studies in Family Medicine and Primary Care and the Well Being Trust found that as many as 75,000 more people will die from drug or alcohol misuse and suicide throughout the decade if policymakers ignore the collateral damage from the pandemic as it affects Americans' emotional well-being.

But as counties grapple with how best to provide mental health services, they are uncovering new challenges and also new adaptations that could pay off down the road.

Many counties report taking greater advantage of telehealth in assessing patients in distress, in addition to replacing in-person meetings with clients. They save time for both client and practitioner and limit exposure to the novel coronavirus.

"It's magic," said Sevet Johnson, behavioral health director for Ventura County, Calif., whose staff has rarely had enough personal protective



equipment to safely enter hospitals where they would be at risk of contracting the virus. "We need to see their faces, have some interaction, see how they're responding. But now we can see their faces, see their delays, their confusion, track their eye movement. That's the kind of thing you would be able to do in person, and you get a good feel for what's going on with them."

In addition to avoiding a drop-off in efficacy, Johnson said the efficiency presented by telehealth, which wasn't really on her department's menu before the crisis, has been productive.

"We can assess three people in three hospitals over the course of six hours," she said. "Usually we have to drive back and forth and that takes most of the time. We might have been able to do 1.5 a day beforehand."

She also reports that administrative work has been more efficient with the adoption of telework.

"We're finding benefits in the midst of all of this chaos," she said.

How long the chaos lasts, however, will change the way counties are able to respond. After six weeks of physical distancing restrictions and

stay-at-home orders in Madison County, Ill. Mental Health Board Director Deborah Humphrey saw everyday residents getting closer to a breaking point. While their calls for service hadn't increased dramatically, anecdotes from community service practitioners have helped Humphrey monitor the county's pulse.

"There are a lot of distressed people, they're dealing with food scarcity, economic insecurity," she said. "The longer this goes on, the worse it's going to get. People are living on the edge right now, not knowing how long this is going to go on, 'Am I going to be laid off? Are my hours going to be reduced?' And parents are finding themselves suddenly becoming educators."

In Clark County, Wash., Crisis Services Manager Kara Wade said her team received a lot of calls in late February and early March for people paranoid about exposure to COVID-19, a number that tapered off as March went on and residents stayed home.

"There was a steady stream of concern in their comments," she said. "I expect we will hear from more people when we start opening back up."

Her staff mainly evaluates patients in person, while main-

taining physical distancing.

"If someone is already paranoid, to have to talk to someone in a little box, to not know where they're coming from, that is unsettling. It's better to provide the services in person."

Concerns mount

Though Humphrey prides herself on maintaining healthy habits, she admits feeling social isolation wearing on her, and she can't blame others for feeling the same way.

"I feel like I practice good self-care," she said. "I get up, I take my shower, I get dressed like I'm going to the office, I'm doing the things I would if I were going to work. I take the boys (her husband and twin 11-year-old sons) on walks, we're eating well, but I still feel that isolation from our friends even though you can do virtual with them. It's just not the same."

In addition to the cumulative stress from prolonged physical distancing, Humphrey sees emotional challenges coming when the county's economy restarts.

"To me, when I'm in a crisis, I tend to maintain through that," she said, "Afterward, when I get through it and reflect on what I went through, that's when it hits me. I think a lot of people

are going to see a need for help right about when they expect things to get better."

Johnson said Ventura County has seen about half as many suicides among residents compared to the same four months of 2019, but she also expects mental distress to pick back up when residents get a full view of the economic upheaval.

"We haven't seen a huge surge yet, but we're more worried about later," she said.

Humphrey lives three blocks away from her 87-year-old mother, and while her family can interact with their matriarch from her porch, it isn't the same, she said.

That sense of social isolation is a feeling Oakland County, Mich. Commissioner Katherine Nelson anticipates many of her county's residents are feeling as a result of physical distancing measures, and successfully pitched the Social Connectedness Task Force to the County Board. "We are an aging county, and senior isolation is the perfect breeding ground for loneliness," she said, noting that seniors there often lose many "snowbird friends" in the winter. "What can we do in light of living in a time where we have to practice

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Pandemic's silver lining? Shining a spotlight on mental health

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physical distancing?"

Nelson said some seniors have reported struggling with the purpose of each day while isolated.

"We know that digital solutions aren't the only solutions," she said. "They don't have access to family members, and they're frustrated with not knowing how to use technology. Everyone is talking about these great digital platforms, but if they don't know how to use FaceTime, and their relatives can't come over to teach them, what use is it to them?"

The task force will identify solutions to reduce social isolation and loneliness among the county's senior population.

Although some older residents have been resistant to adopting videoconferencing, Johnson said it has helped bring in participants in Ventura County's DUI treatment program, many of whom face transportation barriers to reach meetings.

"We've seen a significant increase in participation that we haven't seen in years," she said. "If they can just sign into Zoom and participate in their classes to get their licenses back, people are eager and they are showing up in unprecedented numbers."

"I think staff are adapting well and our clients are too," she said. "We're finding while it's different and it's not something we really planned for, given the current stay-at-home orders and we can't see most of our clients face-to-face like we routinely would, we found some great efficiencies and we found some great processes that we really would love to be able to use in the future."

Humphrey continues worrying about the future, not just for the idled workers and the heads of households. With summer approaching and school closures continuing, she is concerned for the social development of children who haven't seen their friends in months.

"We probably won't have summer camps and we probably won't have sports leagues, but there has to be a way the parks departments can do some program while practicing social distancing," she said, "In my own children, I can see their energy level is off the charts. Part of that is from not having gym and running around, but I see it as a lot of nervous energy; that's how children manifest stress."

Like Johnson, Humphrey does see a positive for her field coming out of the pandemic.

"Mental health practitioners have been trying to raise consciousness forever, and now it's hitting everybody's doorstep," she said. "Our county chairman said the Board is looking at things differently, mental health is one of the top five issues for the county. I never thought we'd see the day with that kind of support from that level. This is negative, but it's given us an opportunity to get out there and talk about mental health and engage the public right now while we can." **CN**

MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19: WHAT SOME COUNTIES ARE SEEING AND DOING

- Coconino County, Ariz. Community Services will begin offering financial coaching classes via Zoom to help individuals prepare for a financial crisis.
- Arapahoe County, Colo. has added a support line staffed by bilingual behavioral health experts.
- The DeKalb County, Ga. community services board/pharmacy services has arranged for same-day delivery of medication refills to the homes for all clients using telehealth access.
- Though Solano County, Calif. adult wellness centers are now closed, the agency set up "buddy calls" so local residents can provide peer support to one another. Agency staff are also calling them to check in and are delivering food.
- The San Diego County, Calif. suicide prevention and stigma reduction campaign began media messaging that directly addresses behavioral health impacts of COVID-19, including impacts of prolonged isolation.
- Cook County, Ill. created multidisciplinary behavioral health tactical teams that include psychiatrists, mental health Advanced Practice RNs, MAT (medication-assisted treatment) certified medical providers, psychologists and LCSWs to provide telehealth services to individuals experiencing homelessness and residing in shelters.
- Palm Beach County, Fla. implemented a strategy to ensure food distribution and services to seniors and other populations in partnership with community-based partners, faith-based community and local municipalities.
- Charlotte County, Fla. added a free hotline staffed with two therapists, dedicated toward those who are not currently in treatment, but are seeing an exacerbation of stressors like job loss or illness.

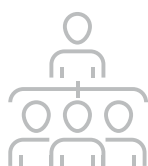


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CAPITAL LOOP

Transportation bill

The House Democrats' surface transportation reauthorization proposal introduced earlier this month contains key provisions that would support affordable housing and economic development activities important to counties, if enacted. The legislation — the INVEST in America Act (H.R. 7095) — provides a five-year, \$494 billion reauthorization of key federal highway and transit programs through FY 2021 — and places new emphasis on transit-oriented development programs. The 2015 FAST Act is set to expire Sept. 30. Specifically, the INVEST in America Act would:

- **Establish a new Office of Transit-Supportive Communities with key resources for local governments:**

A new office to make grant programs, provide technical assistance, coordinate transit-housing policies across the federal government and implement strategies that promote equity for underrepresented and underserved communities. Grant programs would allow eligible grantees to perform activities such as designing or building a transit line and servicing an existing transit line or station that is part of the transit system, among other activities.

- **Create a new grant program for counties to plan economic development projects:**

Establishing a competitive grant program under the Department of Transportation for assistance with development projects. Counties would be eligible to apply for the program. Eligible projects include those that have the potential to enhance economic development, facilitate multimodal connectivity, increase access to transit hubs for non-motorists and include private sector participation, among others. The legislation requires that eligible projects be completed at an 80 percent federal share.

- **Permit property disposition for affordable housing development:**

Allowing a transit grantee to transfer property no longer needed to a local government authority

including a county, non-profit, or other third party for the purpose of transit-oriented development projects, so long as at least 15 percent of the housing units developed be offered as affordable housing. Federal interest on those assets would be released.

- **Create new incentives for the construction of affordable housing:**

Directing the Department of Transportation to weight favorably applications for projects from capital investment grant sponsors that preserve or encourage affordable housing nearby. Counties would be eligible to apply directly. Local governments would be allowed to use funds from the U.S. Economic Development Administration Public Works grant program or Community Development Block Grant program to satisfy the local match requirement.

Overall, the five-year reauthorization contains an extension of current law for highway and transit programs for FY 2021, followed by new and existing authorizations for these programs from FY 2022 to FY 2025. It also includes new five-year reauthorizations for the Federal Railroad Administration and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

This is the second time Congress has acted to reauthorize surface transportation programs ahead of the FAST Act's expiration in September, though it is the first complete reauthorization bill released in either chamber. The U.S. Senate's only official reauthorization action to date remains the favorable passage of a bipartisan highway title out of the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works last summer.

Neither the House nor the Senate proposals include a "pay for" to account for projected shortfalls in revenue from the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) — which is predicted to be insolvent as early as 2021. At least \$140 billion in additional revenue sources would need to be identified to fund the INVEST in America Act. Once both cham-

bers have developed and passed complete authorizations, the two versions must be conferred. The INVEST in America Act does not currently enjoy bipartisan support, though it likely will not need it to pass both the House T&I Committee and the House itself, setting up difficult negotiations in the Senate to work out what appears will be significant differences between the two. Should lawmakers reach an agreement in the form of a conference report, both chambers will need to approve the legislation prior to the deal going to the President's desk to be signed into law.

This timeline — in conjunction with COVID-19 and the 2020 elections — will likely set up one or more short-term extensions of the FAST Act once it expires on Sept. 30, as is partially proposed in the first year of the INVEST in America Act, and as has been the case with most recent reauthorizations. It is likely a special rule in the House in coming weeks will separate the INVEST in America Act into two bills, with the one-year FAST Act extension becoming standalone legislation.

HHS

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) distributed approximately \$35 billion from the Provider Relief Fund to certain Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) providers and providers serving safety-net hospitals.

The funding will help fulfill the diverse needs of key county health care providers such as Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospitals, behavioral health providers and assisted living facilities, many of which are relying on assistance to keep their doors open during this public health crisis.

Counties support nearly 1,000 hospitals, make key financial contributions to the Medicaid program, and plan and operate community-based services for persons with mental illness and substance abuse conditions through 750 behavioral health authorities.

HHS was also expected to



distribute approximately \$15 billion to eligible Medicaid providers that participate in state Medicaid and CHIP programs and that have not received a payment from the Provider Relief Fund General Allocation authorized under the CARES Act. The department will also allocate \$10 billion to safety-net hospitals that serve many uninsured and underinsured residents. The agency is also expected to announce an additional application window for \$10 billion in "hotspot" funding.

USDA

On June 12, U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue issued a memorandum to U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Chief Vicki Christiansen providing direction to modernize the agency's systems and approaches to better manage national forests and grasslands. The memorandum is designed to improve the health of the national forests, protect communities from the threat of wildfire and its aftermath, and increase economic opportunities and recreational access on National Forest System (NFS) lands. The memorandum directs the USFS to act on four key priorities:

- Increasing the productivity of national forests and grasslands
- Valuing our nation's grazing heritage and the national grasslands
- Increasing access to our national forests
- Expediting environmental reviews to support active management

Counties rely on the NFS for economic opportunity, clean

water supplies and landscape conservation. The memorandum tasks the USFS with reducing red tape to increase energy and mineral exploration. USFS is expected to further promote forest management activities and timber harvests on NFS lands to support local economic growth, protect watersheds, and safeguard species habitat. The USFS will also deploy new broadband infrastructure to boost internet connectivity in rural America.

National grasslands consist of approximately 3.8 million acres across 12 Western States and provide an important feed source for ranchers and habitat for diverse wildlife. The memorandum deems grazing "essential" for the management of the NFS and requires USFS to ensure grazing access in the development of forest plans. Additionally, it calls for expediting the renewal of existing grazing permits and gives USFS greater flexibility in working with ranchers on grazing practices on federal lands.

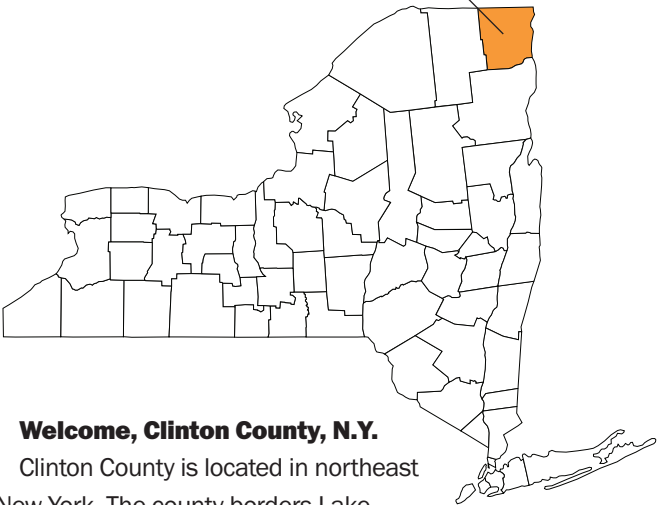
Additionally, the memorandum requires USFS to, where feasible, create new recreation opportunities in areas of the national forests that currently limit public access. Decisions on public access will be made in coordination with states, counties and other interested parties. Approximately 150 million people visit the NFS annually, according to the most recent National Visitor Use Monitoring Program Report from the Forest Service, bringing economic growth to local communities.

USFS is required to stream-

See LEGISLATION page 11

GET TO KNOW...

Clinton County, N.Y.



Welcome, Clinton County, N.Y.

Clinton County is located in northeast New York. The county borders Lake Champlain to its east and Quebec, Canada to its north. Named for George Clinton, the first governor of New York, the county was founded in 1788. Its population is around 80,000. The county seat of Plattsburgh is located on Lake Champlain.

The county offers a variety of outdoor activities with plenty of lakes and rivers as well as the Adirondack Mountains all located within its borders. Popular spots include the Plattsburgh City Beach, the Cumberland Bay State Park, the Point Au Roche State Park, Taylor Pond and the Ausable Point State Park.

Clinton County served as the location for many military engagements during the War of 1812 including the Battle of Plattsburgh. Visitors can learn about the county’s involvement in the war at the War of 1812 Museum in Plattsburgh. Currently, the county is home to the Plattsburgh Airbase Redevelopment Corporation, which was formerly the Plattsburgh Air Force Base.



BEHIND THE SEAL

GILMER COUNTY, GA.

The Gilmer County seal features an outline of the county’s shape divided into three segments.

The first segment depicts two chickens symbolizing poultry production, a large portion of the county’s agriculture and economy.



The second segment includes an apple to represent how Gilmer County is known as the “Apple Capital” of Georgia. Ellijay, the county seat, holds the Georgia Apple Festival every October.

The third segment depicts mountains and a river. The mountains represent the natural beauty throughout the county that provide recreational opportunities for county residents and visitors while the river represents the three rivers that run through the county.

If you would like your county’s seal featured in “Behind the Seal,” contact Rachel Looker at rlooker@naco.org.

PROFILES IN SERVICE

REBECCA CARTER

Board Member
NACIO President
Public Information Officer
Mecklenburg County, N.C.



Carter

Number of years involved in NACo: Seven

Years in public service: Nine and a half.

Occupation: Public Information Officer for Mecklenburg County, N.C. Includes internal and external communications, media relations and marketing.

Education: Bachelor of Arts in interpersonal and organizational communications from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The hardest thing I’ve ever done: Being a working mother.

A dream I have is to: Drive cross country with no timeframe and visit every state, eat at local restaurants, meet new people and experience all of the different cultures in our country.

You’d be surprised to learn that: I love to entertain and will use any excuse to celebrate.

My favorite way to relax is: Spending time at the beach.

I’m most proud of: My family — not just my husband and 4 and 6-year-old sons, but also my mom and dad, my extended family and the values they instilled in me.

Every morning I read: My Google alerts and the online version of our local newspaper.

Three people (living or dead) I’d invite to dinner:

My paternal grandmother (I never got to meet her), Oprah Winfrey and Robin Williams.

My favorite meal is: Pretty much anything Italian.

My pet peeve is: Not using your manners. I am from the South after all.

My motto is: “Progress over perfection.”

The last book I read was: *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens

My favorite movie is: *Pretty Woman*. I watch it every time I see it come on TV.

My favorite music is: I like a little bit of everything — country, pop, rock, but my favorite genre is probably classic R&B and soul.

My favorite U.S. president is: John F. Kennedy (JFK). As the youngest POTUS and the first Catholic president, I think he symbolized the youth-centric attitude of the era and represented the radical change happening in the country during that time.

My county is a NACo member because: Being a member of NACo helps us better serve our county. There are so many opportunities to network and to learn and grow — webinars, conferences, forums and affiliate organizations like NACIO.



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Faces on the Frontlines: Child protective caseworker Christina Lee

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

Protecting the country's youngest population can be a challenging feat during a public health crisis.

County department of social services employees such as Christina Lee, a child protective caseworker in Oswego County, N.Y., are working to protect children under a variety of new and challenging circumstances.

Here's a look at how Lee is continuing to do her job during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mornings

Lee spends the majority of her week working from home. Her commute now consists of the short distance between her bed and the kitchen table where she spends her days working on a laptop.

"I have a 30-minute commute to the office, so I have more time if I just get right from my bed to my kitchen table," she said.

Every morning, Lee pulls up a to-do list she wrote from the day before to check deadlines and case updates. Her mornings consist of reviewing cases, writing notes or calling families or contacts who can provide insight into a family's situation.

When making phone calls, Lee makes another short commute from the kitchen table to her car outside because of confidentiality issues. She has a husband and daughter at home, preventing her from taking calls inside the house.

"I'll go into my car so I'm in there by myself, kind of isolated and I bring my laptop in there because I type while I'm on the phone," she said.

The department has allowed video chatting on a case-by-case basis during the pandemic instead of interviews in person. Virtual interviews also require the commute to the car where Lee brings her laptop and speaks to families.

"[This is] to make sure that we are keeping the safety and well-being of ourselves and our clients into consideration," she

said.

Once a week, Lee spends her morning making a real commute to the office where the Oswego County Department of Social Services restricted the number of employees allowed at any given time. Each case worker is designated a certain day of the week to work from the office.

Her main focus at the office is paperwork — scanning physical evidence into a digital filing cabinet, printing letters to send and faxing questionnaires to doctors or school staff.

"I try to get in there early like 8:30 a.m. and then I try to only stay until about noon so I'm limiting my amount of time that I'm in the office to just a couple of hours a week to limit my exposure risk," she said.

At the office, protocols are in place. Everyone is required to wear a face mask, deputies who serve as security for the office take everyone's temperature and employees use hand sanitizer before going upstairs to their desks. Lee said she can take off her face mask at her cubicle but must put it back on when walking around common areas.

Afternoons

Following her work in the office on Tuesday mornings, Lee will transition out into the field during the afternoon. She tackles any necessary home visits on Tuesdays, which look a lot different than before the pandemic.

Lee calls the 911 center before visiting a home and tells them the address of where she is going to receive information about possible COVID-19 concerns at that location.

"That's been a really great resource for us because there is a task force if it happens that there's concerns for COVID," she said. "There's a group of volunteers that take on those cases and they are in the full gear and everything."

Lee wears a facemask when visiting homes. In some situations, she will stand outside while a family member will go



Lee wears a mask during a visit to a client's house during the COVID-19 pandemic. Photo courtesy of Christina Lee

into the home and show Lee the different areas of the home through video chat while she waits outside.

"Most of the time I do go in," she said.

Lee is part of the multidisciplinary team, a joint task force with police to investigate crimes against children. When she gets a case where police are involved, she visits the child advocacy center to interview children.

"We're all wearing masks, keeping our distance. The child advocacy center is not fully staffed right now," she said.

Evenings

Although the situation has changed from earlier this year, Lee said at the end of the day, she enjoys working from home and said the transition

has been smooth because the county has pushed for working remotely since implementing an iPad system.

"When this hit it was like we were already prepared for the remote access stuff, so it wasn't too much of an adjustment to be honest," she said.

Lee said she does not anticipate a rush to work back in the office full time.

"We work in the field," she said. "You go to the office just to do the paperwork and that's really it."

She said the pandemic's biggest impact on her job is the lack of connection.

"I try my hardest to keep a smile on — even though you can't see it — I always let them know I'm smiling under this mask," she said. "I try to show that I care about you, I want to

make sure that you're OK and when I have to do that virtual piece, I feel more disconnected."

Lee wants others to know that child protective caseworkers are still out in the field helping children despite the public health crisis.

"Even in the midst of COVID, we're still out there going to homes and seeing children and we're trying to do our best to take all the precautions as far as face coverings and distancing," she said. "We have to be out there, we have to be seeing children, we have to make sure they're safe," she said. **CN**

NACo's *We Are Counties Campaign* puts faces on the frontline services counties provide. For more information, visit WeAreCounties.org.

OP-ED

Through the Eyes of a Gen Z

by Kaitlyn
"Charlie" Gullet

In the last few weeks we have seen the people of the world band together in the largest civil rights movement ever to happen. However, contrary to popular belief, this isn't just about the death of George Floyd. He just happened to be the last straw for us. What we have seen is the black community, in the words of Fannie Lou Hamer, becoming "sick and tired of being sick and tired." For years, we have seen the murder of our people with no justice, and now we have taken to shouting, "No justice, no peace."

While "No justice, no peace" has been shouted and chanted, another phrase has also become popular: "Defund the police," which has been misconstrued. Most of the people who say to "defund the police" are not saying that we should

get rid of the police — it is less "defund" and more "reform."

We have already seen parts of the reform start to happen. Democrats in Congress have already taken action toward this reform. These protests over

'This isn't just about the death of George Floyd. He just happened to be the last straw for us.'

police brutality have spurred them to create the bill known as the Justice in Policing Act. This bill will help target the four big issues of the police: justice for victims, accountability, training and policies and transparency.

These protests haven't just caused us to fix the problems we have with the police. We have also seen it change other

issues that we have in America. The Confederate flag and Confederate statues have started to be removed across the country. We are seeing small changes happening. Even in my area, we are trying to remove the statue of General Custer. These protests haven't just helped the black community. They are slowly starting to hopefully right the wrongs of this nation. With all that is happening, I hope that we are able to continue to make progress. We just need to remember this doesn't stop at the protests. We need to continue all the way to the election of local, state and federal officials. Only then, can we truly make a change.

Kaitlyn Gullet, preferred name "Charlie," is an intern with the National Organization of Black County Officials and a double major in Biochemistry and Bio-medical Humanities at Hiram College.

CAPITAL LOOP

From LEGISLATION page 8

line environmental analyses to enhance management of forests and grasslands. Many of these changes were reflected in the draft rules to modernize the NEPA process issued by USFS last summer. Counties supported these draft rules to establish time and page limits on the completion of NEPA documents, narrow the scope of environmental reviews to focus analyses on meeting the benchmarks in existing laws and regulations, and establish greater consultation across agencies in establishing more efficient environmental reviews.

Head Start

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) released \$750 million in emergency funding for Head Start and Early Head Start provided by the CARES Act.

Congress provided the supplemental funding to help Head Start and Early Head Start agen-

cies undertake preventative, preparedness and response activities related to the coronavirus.

For more information on legislation important to counties, please visit the NACo website: <https://www.naco.org/blog>.

CN JOB MARKET

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Membership Town Hall

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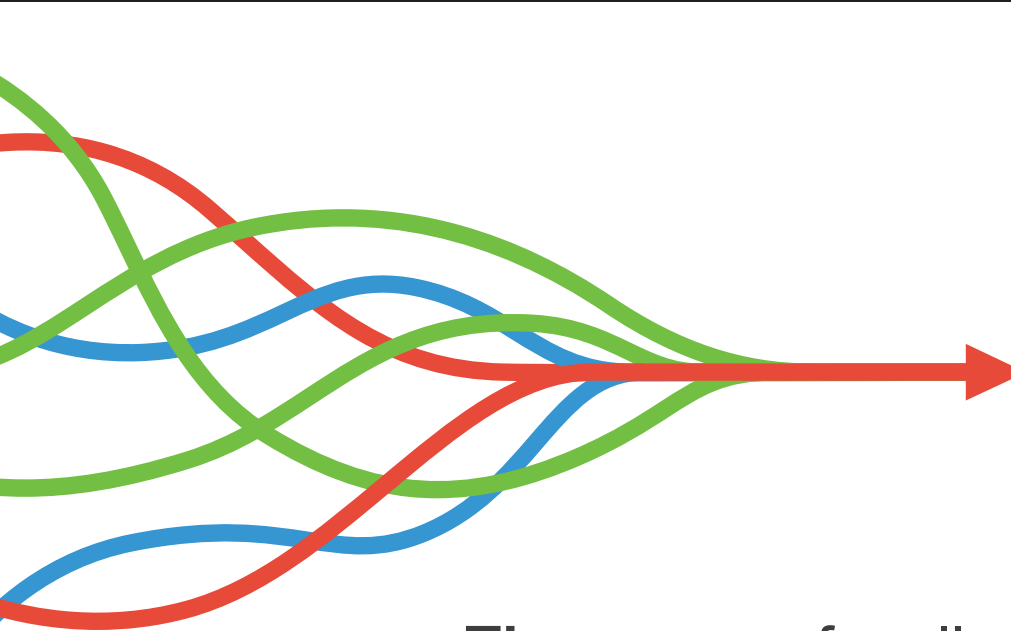


WORD SEARCH

JAMES CITY COUNTY, Va.
Created by: Mary Ann Barton


W D R H L X B G K N N Q E I I Y I G V X
Y D B P C M N C Q V W X B F Y G J A R V
I G V D E I N W U G O O D X R C W R P N
K B I P P O O M T U E Y T I S I Z D E K
B D T P S H I R E Y L B V S L C S E U D
G B O C N V O V P Y R E E L E J L N C B
U H C O L L E G E C R E I S O M B Y E D
S O Y T S D N K S S Y A N M T R A T B Q
N O I T A L U P O P M C X I Z F S J R J
O P P O L G H A P S E P L X W S D W A N
J X Q L G R O L B J D R P I P S R O B Q
S E B I R T U U Q V W B E I N G I O V B
X C W Y O L R A G R K P R K N G B Q O A
Z N I Q O G S E A A U Y U P R O R B C E
J M M D H G V Y U O I K T W L J G O X K
A Y B C J B D K O A T K I M F R T U X E
S W S F X B P W P H E Q Z E T I X W O Q
B U C X X V R U J E L N M D Y T Q L C O
B V D I A F X P V Z D J I O U T O W Y E
Y D C A U S I S J C C A A N T M S N W F


- BARBECUE:** Next time you're in James City County, be sure to try Pierce's Pitt Bar-B-Que, in business since 1971.
- BEST:** *Southern Living* named Williamsburg (the county is part of Greater Williamsburg) the South's "Best Small Town."
- BIRDS:** More than 200 species of birds are located in the county's Greensprings Interpretive Trail park.
- BUSCH:** The 383-acre Busch Gardens Williamsburg theme park is located in the county and has been named the most beautiful park for three decades by the National Amusement Park Historical Association.
- COLLEGE:** Higher education opportunities in the area include the College of William and Mary, the second oldest college in the country, founded in 1693.
- CYCLING:** The Virginia Capital Trail offers more than 50 miles of paved trail for hikers and cyclists.
- GARDEN:** The Williamsburg Botanical Garden is located in Freedom Park, a county-owned property.
- JAMESTOWN:** Settled in 1607 by English colonists, the historic site is now a living history museum in the county.
- POPULATION:** More than 70,000 residents call the county home.
- RIVERS:** The county is located between the James and York rivers.
- SHIRE:** The county was created in the British Colony of Virginia in 1634 as James City Shire by order of King Charles I; it was named for his late father, King James I.
- SHOPPING:** The county is home to some prime shopping, with 135 outlet stores.
- TRIBES:** The Native Americans who first lived in the area were from the Algonquin and Powhatan tribes.
- WILLIAMSBURG:** The county is adjacent to the city of Williamsburg, home to Colonial Williamsburg.
- WINERY:** The Williamsburg Winery, the largest in Virginia, is located in the county and includes lodging and dining.



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BRIGHT IDEAS | MONTGOMERY COUNTY, Ohio

County Provides Mental Mealth Support Following Tragedies

PROBLEM:

Back-to-back tragedies took place within 90 days leaving residents in need of trauma response and support.

SOLUTION:

Establish centers to provide emotional and mental health resources to victims.

by Rachel Looker
staff writer

Last year, 2019, was a difficult one for Montgomery County, Ohio.

The county faced two significant tragedies — 15 tornadoes and a deadly shooting — over the course of three months. Following both crises, Montgomery County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) knew they needed to provide emotional and mental health support to the victims.

Days before the tornadoes touched down, ADAMHS Executive Director Helen Jones-Kelley said there was a hate group rally held at the downtown courthouse square. She cites this as the start of a sense of devastation in the community.

“You can imagine the frame of mind people were in,” she said.

Two days later on Memorial Day, 15 tornadoes touched down throughout the county with winds up to 170 mph, the strongest categorized as an EF4. The tornadoes severely damaged more than 2,200 structures and displaced 1,100 households.

ADAMHS led the efforts with other agencies to establish the Family Assistance Center to serve county residents impacted by the tornadoes. The center, housed in a large church, operated for 24 days and helped more than 1,600 households. The drop-in facility allowed individuals to receive services without making an appointment.

“There’s nothing like your house blowing away and you come out of the basement and



Following the 2019 tornadoes that touched down throughout Montgomery County, Ohio, survivors visit the Family Assistance Center established by the Montgomery County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services to receive physical resources and mental health and emotional support. Photo courtesy of ADAMHS

you have no idea where to start on how to put your life back together,” Jones-Kelley said.

The center served as a mental health and disaster recovery hub that provided emotional support, trauma debriefing, crisis services and basic needs to the community. Services provided at the center by various agencies and departments included Social Security card replacements, driver’s license replacements, mental health resources, immunization records, birth certificate replacements and legal services.

Tornado survivors could enter the center and meet with a crisis worker who would walk them from station to station to help make referrals and assess their level of stress.

“The neat thing about this community, and it really showed itself during that tragedy, is we have a spirit of collaboration so while there is that natural healthy competition that sometimes occurs, when it comes down to a crisis or a community challenge we work very well to-

gether,” Jones-Kelley said.

She added that the outpouring of support from the community was overwhelming.

“We reached a point where we had to tell people to stop bringing us water,” she said.

The county, which includes the city of Dayton, faced its second tragedy later that summer on Aug. 4 when a gunman killed nine people and wounded 17 others in the entertainment district in Dayton.

ADAMHS and community and governmental agencies worked together again to establish the Recovery and Resiliency Center within three hours of the shooting. The center was focused on minimizing the amount of stress and trauma experienced by community members.

Jones-Kelley said crisis workers were on standby for people to drop in, speak with a trained counselor and discuss some of their immediate feelings following the tragedy. The center offered walk-in individual crisis appointments, group crisis

interventions and educational sessions.

“People were simply just walking the streets of where that occurred, just walking days and days and I know that it sounds kind of silly, but for them they were just trying to get their heads wrapped around ‘How could this happen?’ and ‘How could this happen again?’” she said.

Crisis responders reached out to businesses and employees of the entertainment district to provide individual and group crisis interventions if needed. ADAMHS also brought in a psychiatry group with a mobile service to provide employees who worked in the entertainment district with support 24/7.

Jones-Kelley said these tragedies not only left a lasting impact on the county, but on how it will operate in future crises.

“We had not had a great deal of prevention services available up until that time and so we were able to bring about \$6 million in additional prevention services online which is very helpful for

addressing tragedies like these,” she said.

ADAMHS now offers an app with resource information that helps residents navigate through a crisis and has partnered with the National Office of Victim Assistance, which trains community members on how to respond to a crisis.

“I think we’re all at a place in our lives where we don’t want to just be living waiting for the other shoe to drop, but we need to understand how times have changed and the crises are going to occur,” Jones-Kelley said. “The best way to address them is not to be reactive to them but to have a response prepared.”

For more information on Montgomery County’s tragedy efforts, contact the ADAMHS at 937-443-0416. [CN](#)

Montgomery County’s Spread Our Wings During Tragedy program is the recipient of a Best in Category 2020 NACo Achievement Award in the Health category.

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

CALIFORNIA

Supervisors in **SAN DIEGO COUNTY** voted to create a pilot program that provides **housing interventions** for former foster care children and homeless youth. The Housing Our Youth program focuses on youth under the age of 24 and provides housing and wraparound services, *The San Diego Union-Tribune* reported. The program is funded by the state.

With childcare providers facing economic challenges from the COVID-19 outbreak, **SANTA CLARA COUNTY** supervisors passed a proposal to utilize more than \$2.5 million from the CARES Act for **child-care programs**. The proposal aims to keep childcare facilities in business and help reopen closed locations, the *San José Spotlight* reported. Funds will also help childcare providers with additional costs that come with increased cleaning and disinfecting.

MARYLAND

BALTIMORE COUNTY launched an initiative to shut down certain streets to allow restaurants to **expand outdoor seating**. The "Seats on the Streets" initiative encourages residents who are dining outdoors to follow social distancing guidelines and wear masks when not eating, *The Avenue News* reported. The initiative aims to support the economic recovery of local bars and restaurants.

The Office of Workforce Development in **HOWARD**

COUNTY launched a **virtual summer youth program** to connect 14 to 24-year-olds with jobs throughout the county. The paid program lasts for five weeks and provides job readiness skills and career exploration virtually for youth with limited income who have had challenges finding employment, *Patch* reported.

MICHIGAN

WAYNE COUNTY launched a program to help **connect residents who lost their health benefits with medication** during the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 RX Support program is a partnership with the SGRX Pharmacy benefit management company and provides medication case management and health benefits for those who are not insured, Click on Detroit reported.

MISSOURI

ST. LOUIS COUNTY Exec-



GEORGIA

DEKALB COUNTY is aiming to combat food insecurity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic by distributing **COVID-19 Care Baskets**. The county has held multiple drive-through food distribution events to hand out the care baskets, which have included 20-pound boxes of Georgia-grown fruit and vegetables, two-pound bags of pork sausage and 10-pound bags of chicken. The food distributions are in partnership with local organizations and the Georgia Department of Agriculture's "Buy Georgia Grown, Now More Than Ever" campaign. The county is purchasing the food with funds received through the CARES Act. According to the Atlanta Community Food Bank, DeKalb County experienced a 40 percent increase in the number of individuals suffering from food insecurity during the pandemic.

utive Sam Page announced a **mental health initiative** to provide help to county residents going through difficult times. The program involves a 211 line that connects callers to

mental health resources. The United Way of Greater St. Louis and St. Louis Mental Health board partnered to create the resource for individuals who want to speak with a mental health professional.

GEORGIA

Residents of **GWINNETT COUNTY** may spot some prehistoric creatures the next time they take a walk in the park. As part of the county's "Meet Me in the Park" program, park patrons can solve clues posted on social media and complete a scavenger hunt to find the locations of eight dinosaurs that have been placed throughout county parks. The Parks and Recreation Department encourages visitors to take selfies with the dinosaurs and share them on social media.



NEW JERSEY

ESSEX COUNTY is partnering with ride-hailing company Lyft to help **deliver emergency food boxes** to homebound and vulnerable senior citizens, as part of Lyft's new Essential Deliveries pilot program. The county had been delivering food through drivers and buses from its Special Transportation Program; this program will allow private citizens to earn money making deliveries.



NEW YORK

With more than 11,000 people showing up for local protests against police brutality, **ALBANY COUNTY** has been offering **COVID-19 testing** for anyone who was part of the large crowds, demonstrators and law enforcement alike.

"For the most part, not all the time, people had masks on, they

FLORIDA

LEON COUNTY officials are turning to superhero social media selfies to encourage county residents to wear face masks. The county launched the "It's Not Too Much To Mask" campaign to help reduce the spread of the coronavirus. Elected officials, county staff and community partners participated in the campaign by wearing masks in photos posted on social media with the hashtag #MaskOnLeon. Photo courtesy Leon County



were social distancing,” County Executive Dan McCoy said.

OHIO

SUMMIT COUNTY has launched a new smartphone **app for people on probation** that will help them check in with their probation officers. Within a week, more than a quarter of the 4,000 people currently on probation were using the app. The county is the first in Ohio to use the app, though the *Akron Beacon-Journal* reported that **CUYAHOGA COUNTY** could soon begin using it, too.

OREGON

An investigation by *The Oregonian*, ProPublica and Oregon Public Broadcasting found that tax cuts and relaxed environmental protections on **privately owned forestlands** have cost 18 counties in the state’s timber-dominant region at least \$3 billion in the past three decades.

The investigation found that half of the 18 counties in the timber region lost more money from tax cuts on private forests than from the reduction of logging on federal lands. For example, since 1991, **POLK COUNTY** has lost approximately \$29 million in revenue from timber sales on federal land, but the elimination of the severance tax and lower property taxes for private timber companies have cost the county at least \$100 million.

PENNSYLVANIA

As the state reopens businesses, **ERIE COUNTY** has offered a **free workflow for its restaurants** to have a specific and clear understanding of the requirements for reopening on-premises dining operations. The workflow includes mobile-responsive forms for restaurant owners; clear, specific descriptions of required safety precautions for staff and customers; an option for the health department to review and give feedback on reopening plans; an option for restaurants to download their reopening plan for reference at the end of the workflow and the ability to upload an ex-

NEW YORK

- Without a fair this summer, the **CLINTON COUNTY** Fairgrounds will still get some use. The facility will be repurposed this summer as a **drive-in theater**. The new setup debuted with showings of “Grease” on Saturday, June 13 and Sunday, June 14. Fair Manager Mike Perrotte was considering adding more movies; the closing of movie theaters during the pandemic has made drive-ins a lot more attractive.



isting list of licensed restaurants and have information pre-populated in the forms.

TEXAS

In hopes of helping residents better understand health conditions, **HARRIS COUNTY**

is introducing a coronavirus “**public threat level system**.” The system mimics the DEFCON alerts, measuring the virus’ threat on a numerical scale with Level 1 or red representing the highest threat and Level 4 or green being the lowest threat.



MASSACHUSETTS

The sheriff’s department in **HAMPDEN COUNTY** handed out more than 100 **face shields and cloth face masks** for salon and barbershop owners. Students from a local high school donated the materials for the masks through the Western Massachusetts 3D-Printing Collaborative, WWLP-22News reported. The masks were assembled through a manufacturing training program at the Hampden County Jail. The sheriff’s department plans to hold future face mask distribution events.

Photo: Hampden County, Mass. Sheriff Nick Cocchi distributes face masks and face shields to salon and barbershop owners. Photo courtesy Hampden County Sheriff’s Department

County Judge Lina Hidalgo told KHOU News that the county was recently at Level 2/orange, which means there is a significant threat and virus spread is uncontrolled, despite government efforts. Level 3/yellow represents a moderate but controlled threat. The county’s stay-at-home order expired June 10, but restrictions on businesses and gatherings remained in effect. Hidalgo said the system is a long-term solution for monitoring the coronavirus that will outlast any federal, state or local executive orders.



WASHINGTON

KING COUNTY Executive Dow Constantine submitted a \$70.4 million emergency supplemental budget to the County Council that includes **purchasing 25 million face coverings** to help reopen businesses across the county.

That also includes investments to increase food security and purchases of hand sanitizer for county residents and busi-

nesses. The proposed budget would provide each county resident with two reusable cloth face coverings and disposable non-medical face coverings to governmental agencies, non-profits and businesses to distribute to customers or clients who show up without a mask.

WISCONSIN

MILWAUKEE COUNTY is putting \$10 million in CARES Act money into **measures designed to keep people in their homes**.

The county will allocate \$7 million toward eviction prevention, \$2 million toward temporary housing and \$1 million to mortgage assistance, all through the county’s housing division, which will work with local organizations, including Community Advocates, Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee and Legal Action of Milwaukee, *The Journal-Sentinel* reported. The county courts processes almost 250 evictions per week and the increase in evictions has overwhelmed the homeless shelter system.

News From Across the Nation is compiled by Charlie Ban and Rachel Looker. What’s happening in your county? Let us know at cban@naco.org and rlooker@naco.org.



Our national and individual tolerances for serious disruption is limited — perhaps to 100 days. We respond to a plague with lockdowns, quarantines, social distancing and mask-wearing. Yet still, well over 100,000 people have died and well over 1 million people have become infected by a sub microscopic monster.

However, we are also witnessing a second pandemic fracturing the social fabric of the country. We struggle about how to defeat COVID-19 but at the same time we see other plagues moving in on us like hungry carnivores. The unemployment has moved from amazingly and wonderfully low to staggering and higher than it has been in multi-generations of the past.

Economic distress and business disruptions create food distribution lines, and put many more people at risk of homelessness. This second pandemic is fundamentally a loss of patience fueled by loud and increasing calls for “returning to normal” and “reopening America.”

When loss of patience crashes into critical incidents, such as the death of an innocent person at the hands of excessive police action, the result can be — and currently is — explosive. Another casualty of what is going on is a steep rise in worries about fear and insecurity in the future. “America the Optimist” appears as though it is very much in need of counseling and emotional support as it seeks out a path to regain its spirit of joy and passion for life.

In short, we have plagues compounding plagues. All of this ugliness conveniently unfolds second by second courtesy of social media on our 4k TVs, phones and other “smart” devices to which we are already addicted. In the long run, this addiction may prove worse for our future as a species than the current virus.

Any society has underlying vulnerabilities which may not

Returning to Abnormal



emerge in more comfortable, familiar times. However, when things stop being what we previously considered “normal,” pressures build like a pressure cooker without a steam release valve.

The “Minneapolis event,” broadcast around the world, showed a totally unnecessary and very arguably murderous execution of one of our fellow human beings. Such an event, on a nameless street corner in one city in the middle west of one country, is suddenly a worldwide basis for violent destruction. It becomes an excuse for those who not only are frustrated and enraged by what occurred, but also those who may have a sinister agenda to harm and tear what is our delicate social fabric by lashing out at law enforcement, government, those in authority, the “1 percent” and, thereby ironically, their own personal life situations. They will blame “others” in an effort to find some personal catharsis.

The convergence of all of these forces provides an answer and a challenge when we look at the question of returning to “normal.”

This article offers one perspective on what “normal” means and what it will no longer mean. We will not be returning to “normal” if normal means the way things have been embedded in complacency, inertia and proclaiming how much we care without really acting. Our past version of “normal” has included a reluctance to make changes and to look beyond short-term circumstances to take a strategic view of what our families, our nation and our world need. That version of “normal” will not

return unchanged, nor should it.

Pretending that things will blissfully be back to what they once were is a fairy tale. Our next “normal” perhaps is better described as a “new abnormal.” It will have some important differences. Those changes in the way public administration functions will be the subject of a subsequent HR Doctor article in terms of workplace and governance behaviors.

Sometimes being wealthy and powerful and full of resources and capabilities ironically leads to the worst plague of all. That is excessive pride and arrogance or, more scholarly, the Greek word “hubris.” Hubris means arrogant pride. It blinds to our survival as a family, as an individual and as a nation and world. Arrogant pride leads directly to the harm of innocents, to disintegration of stability and to permanent loss of opportunities.

When we lose “what could have been” it is most likely because we have failed to come together in pursuit of a future of promise and inspiration. It means our leadership has done the opposite of what it should do. It has led us and focused us on negative and on blaming “others” for things which in large part are of our own individual and collective making.

It is most often wrong — Pearl Harbor notwithstanding — to argue that our harm was caused by another country or people of another religion or political party. It is right to speak the truth, speak it often and use it to inspire and rally people toward a positive goal.

Until we figure out how to return to that inspiration in our own individual conduct — to

return to being positive role models of caring and service to others — the new abnormal will feature more plagues and more disruptions.

Unrest, insecurity and hubris will have terrible consequences. Representative governments will evolve into tyrannies. Rules we hold as sacred, such as a Constitution, will be relegated to museum artifact status and “interpreted away” into something far less meaningful.

We may take a lesson from what has changed in our own lifetimes. America, for over a generation, seems to always be at war, but not ever completely winning, despite overpowering technology and wealth. Our continuing engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan — a generation old — is a case in point. That situation of not knowing how to win strategically or for that matter, knowing what winning really means, is the result of the growing concept in our lives of “asymmetry.” That is, battles, or competing forces may appear to be “mismatched” in capabilities but with the addition to one side, usually the “weaker side,” of inspiring leadership, instant communications worldwide of individual events, and unexpected tactics, the “stronger” power can be frustrated and eventually overcome or held to a seemingly endless stalemate. An “upstart” guerrilla fighter such as Ho Chi Minh, Fidel Castro, even Hitler, can emerge as the major changemaker in a conflict.

So, beware! “Returning to normal” based on a world of increasing asymmetry will not be pleasant. However, just as public health experts tell us about COVID-19, if we consciously

focus on creating policies and actions deliberately designed to “flatten the curve” (i.e., reduce the spread of asymmetry) plagues can be redirected into positive outcomes for us as individuals and for the country and the world.

The curves to be flattened will first and foremost be “disparities.” The lack of equity in our current healthcare system creates great disproportionality in access to and quality of care for senior citizens, persons who are poor or persons of color. That disparity and most of the others underlying our difficulties is access to education. In turn, that means access to fast Internet connection. So too is how we create a society in which homelessness and hunger are studied by historians rather than something many people deal with. We cannot rely on police as the number one provider of acute mental health care in America or as the number one intervenor in attempting to resolve problems like failures of parenting or domestic violence. We must create better processes than asking law enforcement officers to be our social mothers and fathers while we want to run the other way and blame others. Instead, our “better, more caring selves” need to move toward the problem with creativity and commitment.

Isn’t that what we expect of our best first responders? A final suggestion to flatten the curve of mistrust and societal danger comes from the amazing HR Doctor Daughter, Elyse — a manager in the government of the vibrant City of Portland, Ore. The advice is simple yet profound. It is a strong tool against hubris. It is to listen to the views of others. The protestors have something important to tell us and teach us. The police officers have messages we should all hear. We can reduce anger and change its course if only we get a vaccine injection of respect for the dignity of life and each other.

We will not be returning to a prior version of normal. If we are not careful and thoughtful about reducing “asymmetry” and in reclaiming compassionate leadership, what will emerge will not likely be what we wanted to see. **CN**