

## **Come Join Us and Stay a While! (#JoinUs)**

**Overview:** Sutter County Health and Human Services (HHS) launched a multi-faceted, strategic project that successfully innovated and enhanced recruitment and retention strategies (#JoinUs).

**Challenge:** As a small rural county with limited financial resources and a high demand to continue providing quality services to our clients and community, HHS found itself faced with a challenging staffing crisis. We struggled to attract individuals to come and stay with our organization. With low staffing levels, we were on the brink of discontinuing public services. We needed to hire the right people, to not just fill vacancies but also to maintain productive and cohesive public services.

**Solution:**

Innovation born from collaboration: First, HHS needed to better understand why we were struggling to attract and retain talent. We gathered employee feedback through stay interviews, exit interviews, and an employee survey. Based on the information gathered, we looked for innovative ways to create a better workplace and raise awareness of the positive impact that HHS has on the community. We joined the CWDA HR Committee to fuel innovation through the pooling of ideas, resources and knowledge. In collaboration with the HR Department and the Auditor-Controller, we began to leverage our collective strengths, knowledge and common goals to develop an innovative solution.

Innovation born from employee communication and morale: To better educate the community and potential candidates about the positive impact HHS has on the community and the great work that we do, we created a recruitment video. By showcasing real employees and presenting the values and vision of our County and HHS, we were able to attract candidates who align with our core values. This helped ensure a good cultural fit, which is essential for long term employee satisfaction and retention. We participated in job fairs at surrounding colleges and professional and community events. We created a strong social media presence showcasing our open positions on LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook (#JoinUs).

HHS began communicating more broadly with staff through All Staff Meetings, Strategic Planning Discussions, and frequent email updates including Welcome Emails announcing new team members. We made inexpensive improvements in the work environment such as new carpet and paint and implemented

a Wellness & Resilience program for our CWS Social Workers who are often faced with trauma. The HR team created a wellness program that has provided multifaceted benefits for our employees, promoting self-care and wellness.

Innovation born from employee development: We looked at ways to “grow our own” through the enhancement of our internship, paid practicum, and licensure hours programs and prioritized employee development. We gathered state funds that would allow us to provide hiring and stay incentives. Through these funds, we provided incentive programs to over 15% of our HHS positions, including many of our most difficult to recruit and retain. Additionally, we highlighted State scholarship & loan repayment opportunities to staff and potential candidates through a widely circulated video.

Innovation born from onboarding processes: HR created a more efficient onboarding process which dramatically decreased our time to hire from weeks to as quickly as two days. We implemented innovative tools to allow us to process new hires electronically, began holding one day hiring events, and expanded the functionality of NeoGov.

**Replicability:** This program can be replicated as it does not require a large investment of dollars but rather an environment of open and innovative thinking along with collaboration between County departments. We found that by breaking down barriers and allowing ourselves to work together for the betterment of our community, we could spend more time fostering and building innovative solutions that didn’t break the bank. In doing so, we became a cohesive, high performing, motivated team looking for the next way to improve the experience for our employees and community.

**Results:** Since beginning this collaborative project, we have reduced our vacancies by a quarter, allowing us to maintain vital services to our community. We created a high functioning, happier workplace where innovation and collaboration is strived for and encouraged. With our positive reputation, HHS has become a sought after employer. **Come Join Us and Stay a While! (#JoinUs)**

**Contact:** Christa Flanery, 1160 Civic Center Blvd, Yuba City 95993; (530)812-3403; cflanery@co.sutter.ca.us

**Additional Materials:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxqAP\\_oYBwI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxqAP_oYBwI)