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Kelly Garcia Receives APHSA Excellence Award for State Member at National Human Services Summit

Philadelphia, PA - The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) recognized Kelly Garcia, Executive Director of the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, as the 2025 recipient of the APHSA Excellence Award for State Member. The award was presented at the [APHSA National Human Services Summit 2025](#) to honor Garcia's exceptional leadership and lasting contributions to the human services sector.

Every year, this award celebrates state leaders who drive innovation across human services and improve outcomes for children and families. Garcia's visionary, prevention-focused approach has transformed Iowa's human services landscape and influenced national best practices.

"Director Garcia's data-driven public health strategy is proving enormously impactful—not just in Iowa, but across the country," said Charlie Brereton, Director of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. "Her leadership at APHSA has helped elevate the entire sector."

Since 2019, Garcia has prioritized organizational health, operational excellence, and equitable access to services. Her leadership is marked by a strong commitment to applied research, accountability, and engagement with the communities she serves. "Kelly's ability to co-create solutions by first listening and understanding the unique needs of those she serves is what sets her apart," said Kristi Putnam, Secretary of the Arkansas Department of Human Services. "She fosters dignity, opportunity, and the full potential of every individual she encounters."

Garcia's peers across the country consistently turn to her for guidance and support. "She's never too busy to take a call, talk through a challenge, or simply offer a kind word," said Fariborz Pakseresht, Director of the Oregon Department of Human Services. "Kelly brings compassion, positivity, and a deep sense of purpose to everything she does."

In addition to her role in Iowa, Garcia volunteers her time in a leadership capacity at APHSA as Chair of the Leadership Council and serving on the Executive Governing, embodying the spirit of service and collaboration that this award seeks to spotlight. APHSA congratulates Kelly Garcia on this well-deserved recognition and thanks her for her unwavering dedication to building thriving communities.

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About APHSA: The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) supports leaders from state, county, and city human services agencies to advance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities nationwide. As a bipartisan membership association, they work with their members to generate pragmatic solutions grounded in lived experience. Visit www.aphsa.org to learn more.