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Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services Receives APHSA Innovation Award

Philadelphia, PA - The Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) has been awarded the inaugural American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) Innovation Award at the [APHSA National Human Services Summit 2025](#).

This award recognizes bold, visionary leadership and honors public or private organizations that have demonstrated significant and lasting advancements in the human services landscape. DPSS was selected for its groundbreaking project, *Promoting Language Justice for Indigenous Communities*, an initiative that has greatly expanded equitable service delivery for Indigenous language speakers in Los Angeles County.

“The implementation of the *Promoting Language Justice for Indigenous Communities* project has paved the way for DPSS to improve services for the Indigenous language community of Los Angeles County,” said Sheila Early, Chief of the Research Evaluation and Quality Assurance Division at DPSS. “By working closely with these communities and incorporating their input, DPSS has prioritized their ideas and agendas throughout the development process, ensuring that our services are truly representative of their needs.”

Launched in April 2024, the initiative was designed to remove language barriers that have historically prevented Indigenous language speakers—many of whom do not speak English or Spanish—from accessing essential services. Through a partnership with the community-based organization Comunidades Indígenas en Liderazgo (CIELO), a comprehensive training introduced culturally and linguistically appropriate information and guidance. This partnership enhanced and strengthened the existing language access policy and created new resources for departmental personnel.

“DPSS was successful in providing services to historically unseen community members who are an integral part of the fabric of Los Angeles County and the state,” added Early. With a workforce of over 14,000 employees serving more than four million residents, DPSS is one of the largest social service agencies in the nation. Its innovative approach to language justice exemplifies the spirit of the APHSA Innovation Award—advancing community-driven solutions in human services.

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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.