



## 2026 Summit Awards

Each year, APHSA recognizes individuals and organizations for their exceptional contributions to the human services sector. Award recipients are selected by a review panel composed of APHSA staff, Governing Board representatives, organizational leaders, and human services practitioners. Nominations are evaluated based on the criteria outlined in each award's description.

Please be sure to submit your nominations by **Friday, April 24, 2026**. Award recipients will be honored at the [APHSA National Human Services Summit](#) and recognized on our website and social media platforms.

### **APHSA Excellence Award for State and Local Members**

APHSA is proud to continue its tradition of recognizing outstanding individuals and agencies that have made exceptional contributions to the human services sector through the *APHSA Excellence Award for State and Local Members*.

The APHSA Excellence Award for State and Local Members honors two recipients each year—one at the state level and one at the local (city/county) level. Each award may be presented to either an agency or an individual staff member in recognition of their significant impact on improving the well-being of children and families in their communities and advancing the human services sector.

Aligned with APHSA's vision of thriving communities built on human potential, these awards recognize state and local human services agencies/individuals that demonstrate exemplary innovation, creativity, and a strong commitment to improving outcomes for children and families. This recognition honors those who move beyond traditional service delivery by meaningfully engaging with their communities, understanding local strengths and needs, and co-creating solutions that promote well-being, opportunity, and the full realization of human potential.

*2025 State Recipient: Kelly Garcia*

*2025 Local Recipient: Debbie-Ann Anderson*

### **The nominator will be asked to answer the following for the nominee:**

- Why is this individual/organization deserving to be selected for the APHSA Excellence Award? (250 words or less)
- Provide examples of how this individual or entity contributed to significant improvements in well-being in the lives of children and families served by the human services sector.
- Provide additional comments (e.g. personal reflections, etc.) which would be important to consider when reviewing the nominations.

Begin your nomination [here](#).



**Jerry W. Friedman Human Services Impact Award**

Established by APHSA in 2016, the *Jerry W. Friedman Human Services Impact Award* honors the legacy of former APHSA Executive Director Jerry W. Friedman, whose work centered on ensuring all people have the opportunity to reach their full potential. The award recognizes individuals who have made significant, lasting contributions to the human services sector by advancing integrated, human-centered systems of service delivery.

Recipients have a proven record of improving human services at the local, state, or national level and exemplifying Friedman’s legacy of adaptive leadership and innovation. This may include advancements in system design, service integration, product development, or technology that strengthen outcomes and have long-term impact on the human services landscape. Honorees inspire others through bold leadership and a commitment to meeting changing needs to best serve communities nationwide.

*2025 Recipient: Fariborz Pakseresht*

**Selection Criteria:**

The Jerry W. Friedman Human Services Impact Award recipients will have a demonstrated history of impacting and improving human services programs. They will have shown a similar commitment to Friedman’s legacy of advancing the human services sector, made lasting contributions to the local, state, or national human services system, and demonstrated adaptive leadership, system design, product development, and/or technological advancements.

Honorees will have added value to an integrated service delivery system and contributed in sustainable and adaptable ways to changing environments and needs. They will also inspire others to lead boldly in the human services sector.

**The nominator will be asked to answer the following for the nominee:**

- Why is this individual deserving to be selected for the Jerry W. Friedman Human Services Impact Award?
- Provide examples of bold leadership which makes this individual stand above others for this award.
- Provide additional comments (e.g., personal reflections, etc.) which would be important to consider when reviewing the nominations.

**Begin your submission [here](#).**



**APHS Innovation Award**

APHS and its members are working toward a future of human services that is human-centered and community-driven, grounded in a workforce culture of safety and belonging, and aligned across systems to advance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities nationwide.

In recognition of bold, visionary leadership, the *APHS Innovation Award* honors public and private organizations, state and county agencies, or partnerships and coalitions that have achieved meaningful and lasting impact across the human services landscape. This includes transformative improvements to systems and services supporting individuals and families, as well as advancements in areas such as mental health, aging, disability services, and other critical dimensions of well-being. The award celebrates entities that leverage innovation to improve outcomes, address disparities, and foster human-centered, community-driven cultures of service.

*2025 recipient: Los Angeles County (CA) Department of Public Social Services, Promoting Language Justice for Indigenous Communities Project*

**Selection Criteria:**

To be eligible for this award, organizations, agencies, or partnerships must demonstrate leadership in one or more of the following areas:

- Innovation: Implemented new and effective strategies for improving service delivery and/or achieving positive outcomes for clients and communities
- Human-centered and community-driven culture: Created a culture that prioritizes the needs and experiences of clients and communities, and that values the input and feedback of stakeholders.
- Alignment with other systems: Worked collaboratively with other systems to foster thriving communities and to address complex social issues.

**The nominator will be asked to answer the following for the nominee:**

- Why is this organization deserving to be selected for the APHS Innovation Award? (250 words or less)
- Provide examples of how they have advanced innovative new strategies or initiatives that have improved outcomes for people served by the human services sector?
- Provide additional comments (e.g. personal reflections, etc.) which would be important to consider when reviewing the nominations.
- Upload additional support information further exemplifying the innovation(s) by the nominee.

**Begin your nomination [here](#).**

*If you have any questions, please contact [Sheila Poole](#), VP of Membership and Policy at APHS.*