

HUMAN *Services* AGENCY



COUNTY *of* VENTURA
Human Services Agency

Annual Report
2020-2021

This past year, HSA served an all-time high number of families during a continued period of pandemic-related hardship and uncertainty, working with other government agencies and community partners to ensure access to services while striving to offer support, hope and opportunity for improved well-being.

Below is a snapshot of just some of the coordinated response and continuing services provided by HSA in collaboration with our partners.



Human Services Agency

- Helped **238,790** clients receive Medi-Cal health coverage benefits
- Helped **63,334** individuals supplement their diets with CalFresh benefits
- Assisted **7,620** individuals who receive In-Home Supportive Services
- Investigated **2,914** reports of suspected child abuse or neglect
- Responded to **4,625** allegations of adult abuse
- Facilitated **76** adoptions for children
- Enrolled **1,297** individuals into workforce development programs
- Filed **\$17.3 million** in compensation and pension claims on behalf of veterans and their families
- Supported **\$100 million+** in local funding requests through participation in the state's pandemic rental relief program

County of Ventura Board of Supervisors

- District 1 – *Matt LaVere* | District 2 – *Linda Parks*
- District 3 – *Kelly Long* | District 4 – *Bob Huber*
- District 5 – *Carmen Ramirez*

County Executive Officer
Michael Powers

Human Services Agency Director
Melissa Livingston

Human Services Agency Revenue & Expenditures

2020-2021 Revenue

Federal & State Funds	\$252.9 million
County Funds.....	\$44.2 million
Total.....	\$297.1 million

2020-2021 Expenditures

Staff Salaries & Benefits	\$143.2 million
Direct Client Assistance.....	\$99.8 million
Services & Supplies.....	\$54.1 million
Total.....	\$297.1 million

New Vision for a New Era

With the pandemic ushering in new norms and accelerating global trends, with race and social injustice at the forefront of conversations nationally and locally, and with a new era for the public sector undeniably on the horizon, HSA engaged in foundational planning for transforming our systems and strategies to serve our county's diverse population in a more collaborative, human-centric, effective and equitable manner.

Through a series of surveys, discussions and strategy sessions, HSA elicited over 1,000 ideas from clients, community partners, stakeholders and staff regarding a refreshed framework for HSA—*what we do, why we do it, and how we do it*—as we endeavor to transform our Agency in service to our community.

Mission

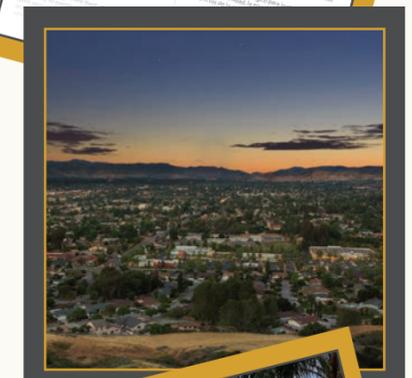
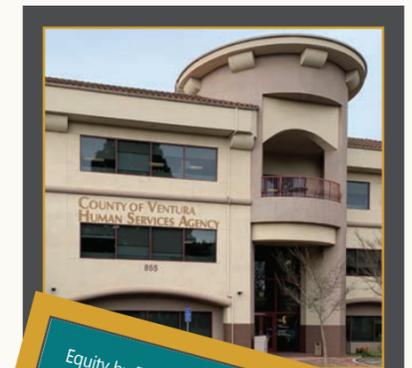
Working together in every community to offer support, hope and opportunity for improved well-being

Vision

Empowered and thriving communities where all have opportunities for better futures

Values

- Respect for Community Voice
- Equitable Services, Policies & Practices
- Employee Engagement
- Collaborative & Integrated Services
- Healing-Centered Best Practice
- Continuous Learning & Improvement



Frontlines Fighting the Pandemic

As Ventura County residents experienced hardships due to the pandemic, HSA acted quickly to respond to the demand, moving 800 employees to virtual service capabilities to assist clients seamlessly and safely by phone. Further, HSA introduced a new online submission portal to ensure clients could more easily submit documentation necessary to support their eligibility for food assistance and other critical programs.

New in-office protocols as well as safety measures in the field were quickly established so that our frontline workers could serve clients outdoors and in clients' homes.

While most HSA employees ensured the continuity of HSA's essential services for the public, some were redeployed as Disaster Service Workers to make calls to vulnerable residents; assist with phone registration for vaccination appointments; work in pop-up clinics to assist with vaccination and testing efforts; and help to house those experiencing homelessness who were most at risk of being exposed to the virus.

Meeting the COVID-19 challenge, our Agency:

Redeployed **91** HSA employees to serve as Disaster Service Workers

Placed **26,000+** calls to vulnerable seniors to offer resources including food assistance

Answered **40,000+** calls for assistance at the Vaccination Registration Call Center

Supported **56,411** local children in receiving pandemic-related benefits to purchase food

Delivered **\$152 million** in CalFresh payments, with an additional **\$88 million** in Supplemental CalFresh support

Paid **\$29 million** in CalWORKs benefits, with an additional **\$1.9 million** from Golden State stimulus

Provided outreach to nearly **100** employers that laid off or furloughed upwards of 6,000 employees, while offering on-the-job training and job placement assistance to job seekers

Project Roomkey

HSA worked in partnership with the County Executive Office, Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services, Public Health, Behavioral Health, and a large network of community partners to provide onsite oversight for Project Roomkey, a program established to maintain the safety and well-being of vulnerable residents experiencing homelessness.

Project Roomkey helped to prevent a COVID-19 outbreak among this vulnerable population by providing temporary housing at four motels across Ventura County and wraparound services, such as medical attention, mental health care, testing resources, laundry services, three meals each day, onsite security, and opportunities for transitioning into long-term housing.

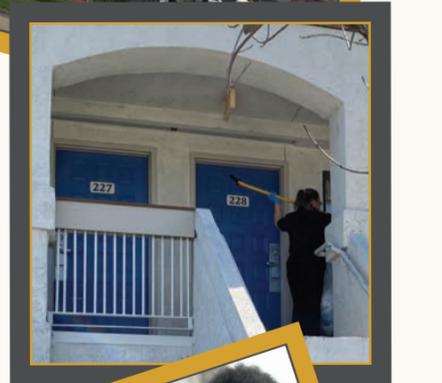
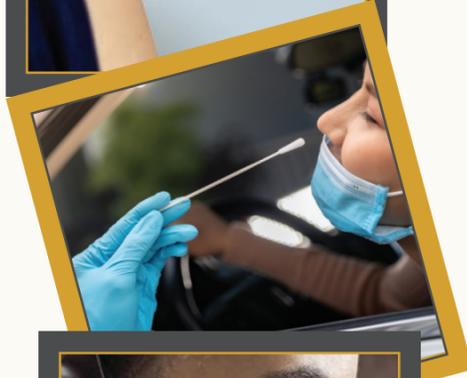
Housed **650** homeless individuals at Project Roomkey while providing support to transition into long-term housing

Made available up to **320** beds for Project Roomkey

Emergency Rent & Utility Payment Relief

For landlords and renters who have faced COVID-related financial hardships, the California COVID-19 Rent Relief Program provided needed rent and utility payment relief to thousands of Ventura County families. HSA implemented a robust local outreach campaign for this state-administered program, partnering with more than a dozen local community-based organizations to help income-eligible households access the program through application and legal assistance to prevent eviction.

Supported **\$100 million+** in local funding requests from **10,000+** households through participation in the state's pandemic rental relief program



Outreach & Services to Farmworkers

The Farmworker Resource Program (FRP) is now entering its third year providing targeted assistance to farmworkers, building trust and relationships among the agricultural community and assisting with prompt resolutions to workplace concerns. This year, FRP launched its own Facebook page, which now reaches thousands of farmworkers and their families with critical communications about COVID-19 testing and vaccination as well as available services. The FRP team uses this new page with WhatsApp and other platforms to share information in English, Spanish, Mixtec and Zapotec using a mix of photos, graphics, voice messages and videos.

A group of local agricultural employers, farmworker advocates and community-based organizations formed the Ventura County Farmworker Health Collaborative to expand its commitment to support the safety and health of farmworkers in our community. With support from the Board of Supervisors and County Executive Office, the group helped to provide financial aid to farmworkers struggling from the impacts of the pandemic through a second round of the Farmworker Household Assistance Program by using a combination of private and Federal Coronavirus Relief Funding. HSA was engaged in the administration and support of the program.

Administered **\$7 million+** to **3,500+** families through the Farmworker Household Assistance Program

Additionally, HSA, including our FRP, Public Health, Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services, and UFW Foundation, collaborated to administer the state-funded Housing for the Harvest program, which met the needs of farmworkers who tested positive for or were exposed to COVID-19 by providing self-isolation and quarantine support through temporary housing and financial assistance as well as delivery of meals, personal protective equipment and comfort kits.

Expecting to serve **100+** farmworkers through the Housing for the Harvest program by the end of 2021

To further support the agricultural community, FRP partnered with the County Health Care Agency and created Cultivating Health in Agriculture, a program where doctors volunteer their time to provide health education at the farms. FRP was essential in establishing partnerships with growers to offer vaccines at their workplace.

Coordinated vaccinations for more than **25,000** members of the farmworker community

Living-Wage Jobs & Economic Supports

Even with the unemployment rate now less than half of the 13.9% it was in April 2020, the prospect of long-term unemployment or under-employment remains disproportionately high for those individuals who have limited educational attainment or opportunities to gain skills, or those who may face bias as they strive to advance.

Ventura County Unemployment Rate

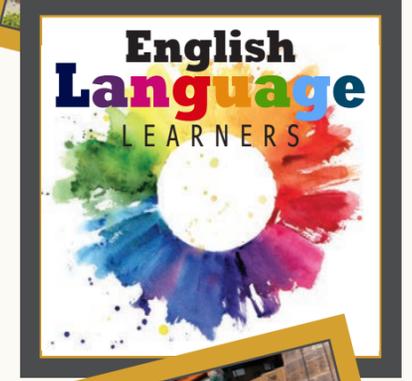
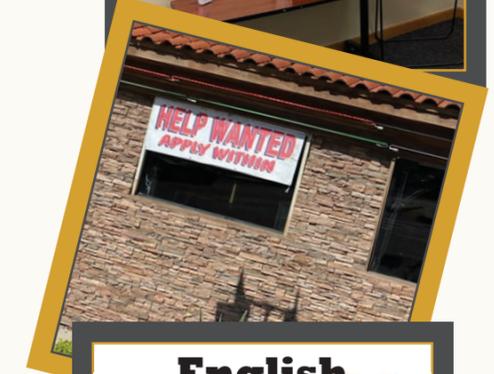
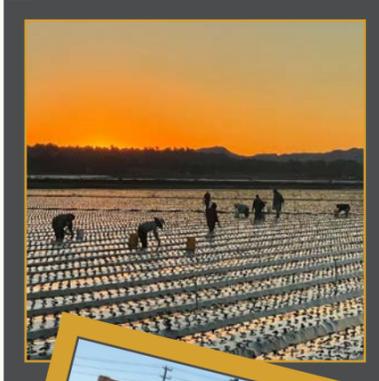


With new California Workforce Development Board grant funding, HSA has implemented an apprenticeship program with transportation and construction-related trade unions that targets participants who are historically underrepresented in these trades, including women, veterans, formerly incarcerated individuals and disadvantaged youth. HSA has also implemented a work-based learning program to support English Language Learners, aged 18 and older—including farmworkers who speak indigenous languages—in accessing services and building job skills to help increase employability.

Promoting Career Initiatives

HSA is working to reduce the digital divide by creating more opportunities for community members to connect with the America's Job Center of California through the Ventura County Library's mobile unit and supporting efforts of those competing in the current labor market to secure employment by providing greater access to devices and reliable Internet.

Recognizing the significant role of tax credits in reducing poverty by supplementing the earning of low-wage workers, HSA continued to partner with United Way to ensure that eligible workers in Ventura County could file tax returns free of charge through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. VITA helps boost family incomes through cash-back credit from the California Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, and Golden State Stimulus payments.



Enhancing Prevention Services to Keep Families Together

HSA programs strive to strengthen families so they have the best chance to provide their children with safe, healthy, nurturing environments. To that end, HSA has implemented evidence-based services across systems to ensure families are assisted at the first signs of child abuse or neglect, often through linkage to in-home services that allow children who might otherwise enter the child welfare system to remain safely in their own homes while their parents receive the supports needed to attain family health and wellness.

For example, the evidence-based Parents as Teachers program, launched as a partnership between HSA and the Ventura County Health Care Agency's Public Health Department, provides a comprehensive prenatal-to-3-year-old home-visiting and education program for parents or caregivers. This program views all family systems as having strengths and assets, with goals to prevent child abuse and neglect, increase parent knowledge of early childhood development, improve parenting practices, facilitate early detection of developmental delays and health issues, and increase children's school readiness and success.

Over the past year, the Parents as Teachers program has served **100** families, including **107** children, with **1,209** home visits and provided **23** group connections in English and Spanish

Importantly, with new federal funding forthcoming through the Family First Prevention Services Act, HSA will collaborate with service providers to implement additional evidence-based programs that help children remain safely in their homes and communities through services that enhance parenting skills and ensure access to much-needed economic and other supports.

Caring for an Aging Population

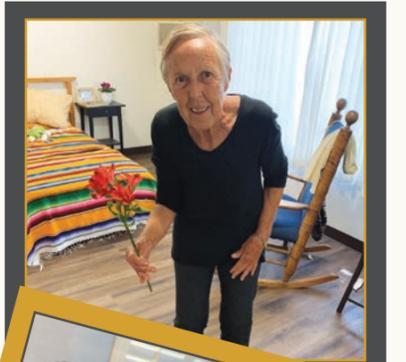
Over the past six years, the number of residents receiving In-Home Supportive Services, which are designed to help low-income seniors and people with disabilities (including children) stay in their own homes instead of moving to residential care facilities, has climbed by 42%. Recognizing the critical role of caretakers who provide In-Home Supportive Services, the Board of Supervisors and County Executive Office authorized a special one-time bonus to all qualifying providers as well as annual pay increases to boost wages for providers to \$17.25 by January 2023. New funding has also been allocated for the provision of personal protective equipment for in-home care providers and to bolster job-specific caregiver training.

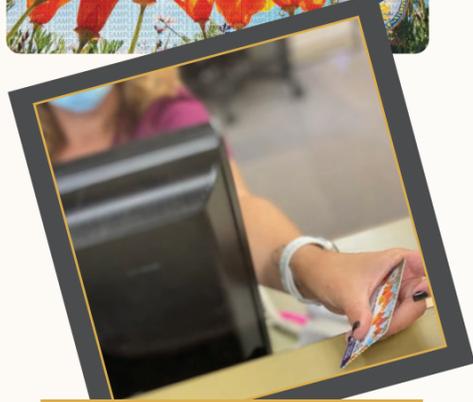
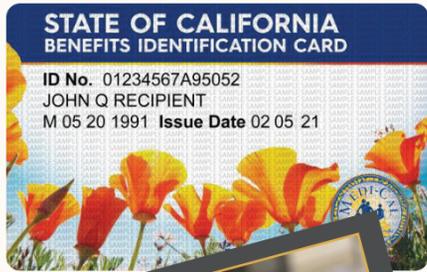
Administered more than **\$1.7 million** in bonuses to qualifying in-home care providers in recognition of their work during the pandemic

Serving Veterans

This past year, HSA's Veteran Services Office relocated its headquarters to the Agency's America's Job Center of California. This move facilitates veterans' access to comprehensive programs and support offered by HSA, the state's Employment Development Department, and other education and employment services partners.

Processed **569** California College Fee Waivers to help families of veterans offset educational costs





Advancing Equity in Meeting Basic Needs

Health Coverage & Social Determinants of Health

HSA has partnered with Interface Children & Family Services and Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP) to enhance outreach efforts and enrollment services aimed at helping residents obtain and retain Medi-Cal coverage using state funding that prioritizes underserved populations.

Reached some **58,000** people—including those who speak limited English, older individuals, people with disabilities and mental health disorders, and immigrants—with information about Medi-Cal via radio, social media, food pantries and other partner networks

Assisted **600+** young people of color with applying for Medi-Cal, renewing benefits, or troubleshooting to access or retain health care services

To better streamline the delivery of Medi-Cal benefits, Ventura County is implementing California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM), a multi-year statewide initiative aimed at improving quality of life and health outcomes by implementing broad delivery system, program and payment reform across the Medi-Cal program while reducing complexity and increasing flexibility. HSA will partner with the Ventura County Health Care Agency to educate and promote CalAIM in the community and provide services that address combined medical and social determinants of health needs, such as housing and associated support services.

Food Assistance for All Ages

Food insecurity continues to be one of the greatest hardships experienced during the pandemic. To help more community members purchase nutritious food at grocery stores and farmers markets using electronic benefits transfer cards, the state temporarily expanded CalFresh eligibility for college students. This year HSA also launched the Restaurant Meals Program, enabling CalFresh clients who are 60 years of age or older, those with disabilities—and their spouses—and those who are homeless, to use their CalFresh benefits to purchase lower-cost prepared meals at participating restaurants.

Ventura County has **34** participating restaurants displaying the Restaurant Meals Program sign

Nearly **1 in 5** of Ventura County residents who supplement their diets with CalFresh benefits are ages 60 years and older



Self-Service Platform

HSA continues to prepare for our 2023 transition to the CalSAWS (California Statewide Automated Welfare System) eligibility system, which will better support virtual service delivery and 24/7 self-service options for Medi-Cal, CalFresh and CalWORKs clients. To ensure the resulting system generates more equitable outcomes for clients, all accompanying business processes are undergoing review using an equity lens, with improvements to be incorporated using input from clients.

CalSAWS will positively impact some **225,000** clients and more than **750** staff

New Opportunities for Housing

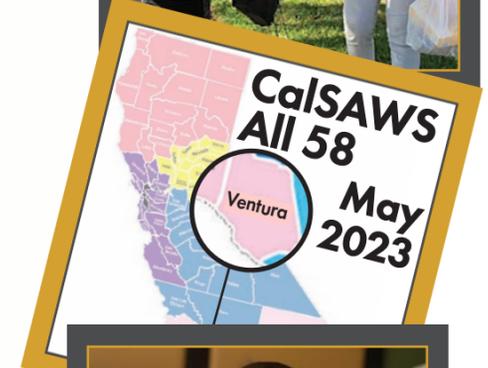
In addition to HSA's collaboration with state and local partners to help provide Ventura County residents access to the California COVID-19 Rent Relief Program, HSA's Homeless Services team continued to provide field-based case management services focused on housing and financial stability and other goals to promote self-sufficiency. HSA stands ready to support countywide efforts that optimize new state funding to address homelessness and affordable housing.

Helped facilitate housing for **134** families, permanently housing **370** individuals

Creating Access, Resilience & Equity

Responding to and recovering from natural disasters is difficult for all, but some groups are more likely to be significantly impacted by disasters both immediately and long-term, including people with disabilities, older adults, children, people with limited or no English proficiency, individuals with health vulnerabilities, and others who may need particular assistance or additional support during or after an emergency. To better understand and address the needs of these populations, HSA is launching a community needs assessment in collaboration with the County's Emergency Planning Council. This assessment will engage other County agencies as well as partner closely with community-based organizations to gather critical input from members of our community about their specific needs. With the information gained, HSA will build upon our planning, response and recovery initiatives in collaboration with partners to improve outcomes for those disproportionately impacted by disasters.

Secured **\$500,000** through a Community Development Block Grant to fund disaster planning efforts that promote equity



Creating Opportunities for a Second Chance

John joined the Army right out of high school and had served his four-year enlistment some 30 years before he was living out of his truck. Much had happened over those years, including marriage, becoming a father, and establishing a career in the construction industry. But when his wife and daughter moved away after their divorce, he turned to alcohol. That's when everything he had worked for started to fall apart.

A DUI a few years back was a turning point for John. To avoid jail time and hefty fees, he successfully completed the Veterans Court program, which provided treatment for substance abuse and mental health. He also participated in the Veteran College Fee Waiver program through HSA's Veteran Services Office, which he used to earn a wastewater treatment vocational certification from Ventura College, a longtime career goal. All the while his intense focus on sobriety made it too difficult to hold a job, and so John found himself homeless and too embarrassed to reach out for further help.

Concerned that John was in dire need of a place to stay and other supportive services, the Salvation Army referred him to HSA's Ventura County Veterans Employment Training for Success (VC VETS) program, a state grant-funded program providing employment and educational support services to veterans. Once enrolled, he was immediately approved for an emergency housing voucher, which covered the cost of a motel room for several weeks. This voucher was instrumental to his success, giving him stability and a place to rest and shower while attending job interviews.

"From there, we started aggressively looking for job opportunities," said Rebecca, employment specialist at HSA and 22-year veteran of the Air National Guard. "Within two weeks John was able to obtain temporary full-time employment as a Team Lead at Lowe's Home Improvement in Oxnard earning \$26 per hour. Everything afterwards fell into place."

Rebecca helped John utilize supportive services to get his truck registered and running again, which enabled him to go to and from work and attend future interviews. She also connected him with the Oxnard VA Outpatient Clinic for mental health services and to get a physical.

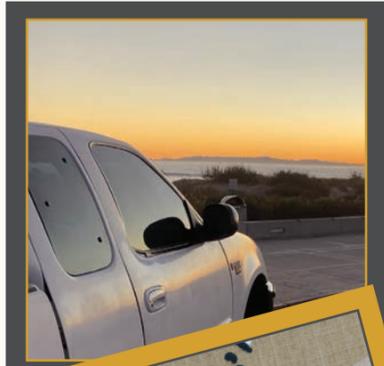
Because VC VETS specialists are often veterans themselves and have an extensive network with other military members who have transitioned into the civilian workforce, they often are able to refer veterans to unique opportunities. Such was the case for John. When Rebecca heard about an opening for a construction journeyman position in Northern California that included housing assistance, she asked John if he would be interested in relocating.

"He was eager to have a chance to start a new career and have housing assistance," Rebecca shared. "While still working at Lowe's, he attended an interview for the contracted state construction company and was offered a three-year contract for a position earning \$34 hourly plus per diem, which covered housing and living expenses when he relocated for the job."

John calls VC VETS his "guardian angel" and says he doesn't know where he would be right now if he hadn't been connected to the program. He has been sober for two years and continues with his sobriety because, he says, someone believed in him. John calls Rebecca periodically, giving updates about his life and new career. He recently reconnected with his daughter he had been estranged from for years and learned he is a grandfather. He now has plans for future family visits.

"There are lots of resources in Ventura County," added Rebecca. "I encourage other veterans to get involved with HSA and take advantage of these opportunities."

The VC VETS program provided employment and education assistance to **50** veterans during its operation. Although the VC VETS grant ended on March 31, 2021, these and other employment services remain available to veterans and other community members wanting to work toward a rewarding career through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and Bridges 2 Work programs at HSA's America's Job Center of California service center.



Strategic Focus Areas

In the year ahead, HSA will continue to work collectively with internal and external partners to develop and implement initiatives that advance our refreshed Mission, Vision and Values within the following strategic focus areas:

Learning & Growth

- » Recruit, hire, retain and continuously develop a diverse workforce whose members are committed to advancing the Agency's Mission, Vision and Values
- » Nurture a healthy, inclusive, future-oriented environment that offers opportunities for leadership at all levels of the organization

Internal Business

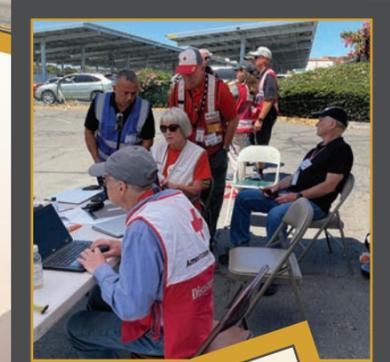
- » Strengthen internal and cross-system integration to better meet customers' needs for preventative, core and aftercare services
- » Sustain a continuous improvement culture and technology infrastructure that centers the customer voice and drives efficiency, effectiveness, equity and agility in meeting emerging needs

Financial Stewardship

- » Leverage and optimize Agency resources to ensure a return on investment that promotes innovation, flexibility, equity and sustainability
- » Strengthen public trust by ensuring integrity, transparency and accountability when sharing goals and results

Customer & Stakeholder Satisfaction

- » Exceed customers' expectations for services that are healing-centered, modern and comprehensive
- » Strengthen systems and partnerships that advance equitable access and outcomes as well as community resilience





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Human Services Agency

For more information about our programs, services, initiatives and results, visit

vchsa.org