

# NEWS

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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY  
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## County programs honored by state organization

SAN BERNARDINO – County programs aimed at helping former prison inmates lead productive lives, providing services to low-income families, and helping needy seniors receive proper nutrition were honored today as among the best county programs in the state.

California State Association of Counties Interim Executive Director Steve Keil was on hand at today's Board of Supervisors meeting to personally hand out CSAC Challenge Awards to the County Probation, Preschool Services, and Aging & Adult Services departments.

The annual CSAC Challenge Awards are a highly competitive recognition program that honors the best and most innovative programs and services among California's 58 counties. San Bernardino County claimed three of the 37 total awards bestowed by the organization for 2012.

"This is a proud day for San Bernardino County and for our dedicated employees," said Board of Supervisors Chair Josie Gonzales. "These coveted awards send a message to our residents that their county is among the best in the state in terms of working hard and working smart to create better communities where families and businesses can thrive and prosper."

The top award given by CSAC is the California Counties Innovation Award, and the San Bernardino County Probation Department claimed one of only two such awards handed out this year for its AB 109 Realignment Program.

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Assembly Bill 109 transferred state prison inmates deemed “low-level offenders” back to their home communities. San Bernardino County coped with this potential threat to public safety with a Probation Department program that provided one-stop health care and job training and placement to these released inmates.

The Probation Department formed a partnership with a variety of other county departments to provide these services at three Day Reporting Centers located throughout the county. The program also involves Probation and law enforcement monitoring of the former inmates.

The program is credited with lowering the recidivism rate for parolees in the county from 81 percent to 22 percent.

CSAC also honored the County Department of Aging & Adult Services with a Merit Award for its CalFresh Senior Outreach Partnership, which strives to assist eligible seniors in applying for nutritional benefits.

Seniors who are eligible for nutritional benefits, once known as Food Stamps, are less likely to apply for these benefits than other sectors of the population. Seniors have found the traditional application process daunting, and they tend to be sensitive about any stigma attached with receiving government assistance. As a result, they run the risk of going without the nutrition they need and for which they qualify.

The award-winning program involves Aging & Adult Services partnering with the County Transitional Assistance Department to bring the application process to places where seniors congregate rather than requiring them to visit a county office.

Before the project was launched, 7,135 seniors received CalFresh benefits through the county. One year into the program, 8,959 seniors were receiving benefits, an increase of more than 25 percent.

A CSAC Merit Award was also presented to the County Department of Preschool Services for working with the City of San Bernardino to reopen the Nicholson Park Family Learning and Community Resource Center, which the city had closed two years earlier in the wake of city budget reductions.

Since the reopening, the center has provided a place for 926 children to do their homework and 1,777 families to search for jobs in one of the city’s most depressed and dangerous neighborhoods.