

# We're Here

for Every ...



Washoe County Department of Human Services

A Special Advertising Supplement

# Serving the Needs of Many

New department provides a continuum of care from infants to seniors

by Anne Stokes



Everyone has the same basic human needs. To survive, we all need clean food, air and water. We all need shelter. We all need to feel safe. In Washoe County, the Department of Human Services will strive to serve those needs for all of its citizens, from children to seniors and everyone in between.

“Meeting those basic needs and helping people rise out of whatever situations they’re in, these are valuable services that we need every single day. All those very basic needs [serve] as a foundation so that we can have jobs and healthy families and good relationships,” says Amber Howell, director of Washoe County’s Department of Human Services. “We are sometimes the last and only option for people who find themselves in need of any one of these services.”

Whether it’s providing meals to seniors or keeping families together, the department’s mission is to help citizens through a variety of programs and services. In order to better serve the community, it is in the process of merging both social and senior services into one unified department in order to maximize resources and streamline the process for clients.

“Once the merger happens, it will provide services and assistance to residents across the continuum of care to include children, adults and seniors,” she says. “We want to provide services to our citizens without age limitations.”

With social and senior services under one roof, the department will be better able to focus on helping families as a whole unit, rather than treating them as individual children, adults and seniors.

According to Howell, treating the family as a central unit can help minimize the separation of loved ones and disruptions, whether it’s keeping children and parents together or allowing seniors to age at home. In the end, healthier families can lead to stronger communities.

“Providing these services in the community is critical so that ... we can have healthier families, we can keep people out of the criminal justice system and we can create healthier lives and individuals,” says Howell. “We work really hard on trying to do all of those things that make for a healthier community overall.”

**Continue reading to learn more about how Washoe County’s Department of Human Services serves its citizens and community.**

**Meeting needs across all ages**

Washoe County’s Department of Human Services will house both social and senior services under one roof. Here’s an overview of how the new agency will allow clients easier access to resources.

## **Children’s Services**

Children’s Services strive to keep children safe, whether through foster care or enabling families to stay together through wraparound services. The department conducts investigations into reports of abuse and neglect, provides child-care licensing and teaches independent living skills for older youths in foster care.

## **Adult Services**

Offering help addressing issues of homelessness or substance abuse, Adult Services programs help clients live healthy and productive lives. That includes connections to supportive housing, medical or mental health care and Adult Protective Services for those vulnerable to abuse and neglect.

## **Senior Services**

Whether it’s home-delivered meals or help with housekeeping, the goal of Senior Services is to keep Washoe seniors in their homes and as independent as possible. Services also include Daybreak programs for those with memory care needs, as well as assistance with things such as transportation, housing and access to medical care.



For more information on services offered and how to see if you qualify, visit [www.washoecounty.us](http://www.washoecounty.us).

“I’m a stronger woman today than I’ve ever been. CPS made me stronger.”

ASHLEY KEARNEY  
Client, Washoe County Children’s Services Division



Ashley Kearney, center, with her youngest two children, found help creating a healthy and stable home for her family through Washoe County’s Child Protective Services. The department’s new approach, or SAFE model, takes a proactive approach to helping families sustain healthy change.  
PHOTO BY ERIC MARKS

## Children’s Services

# Creating Safe Families

Children’s Services works with parents, not against them

by Anne Stokes

Growing up around rough neighborhoods in both Reno and Sacramento, Ashley Kearney was introduced to drugs at the age of 13. She stopped using for a while, but by her mid-20s, she found herself a single mother who was again on drugs. She needed help and found it where she least expected – Washoe County’s Child Protective Services. When CPS first became involved in her life, she never guessed they’d be her lifeline.

“I didn’t believe that they were trying to help me,” she remembers. “I thought they were against me.”

Things started to turn around for Kearney when she landed on social worker Melissa Ready’s caseload in 2011. Around that time, Washoe County Children’s Services Division implemented a new method for cases such as Kearney’s. The Safety Assessment Family Evaluation, or SAFE, model takes a proactive approach to helping families sustain healthy change.

“The old approach was, ‘Look around, look at your life. Give me a break, do you think I’m going to return your kid to this?’” Ready says. “The new paradigm shift is, ‘I’m going to meet you where you’re at and you and I are going to work this together.’ Now our case goals are their words. The safety plans are their plans.”

While there are misconceptions that CPS exists solely to remove children from homes, Ready says nothing could be further from the truth. Preventing issues rather than reacting to them is the goal, and when children are removed, they’re returned home as soon as safely possible. The agency collaborates with other agencies, organizations and providers to connect families with support such as financial assistance or mental health services. In Kearney’s case, that included rehab and job placement assistance, among other resources.

In September of last year, her two youngest children returned home.

“I’m very thankful that CPS did come into my life,” she says. “They’ve helped me through my struggles. I hated them, but [it’s something] I really appreciate now because I do have my kids and we are healthy. I’m a stronger woman today than I’ve ever been. CPS made me stronger.”

Ready says that Kearney’s success has been a dramatic turnaround and her story proves an intervention can be a blessing in disguise.

“She’s starting to see the payoff ... being sober, having her kids – that’s her new high,” Ready says. “They’re now in the best position they need to be to reach their true potential, because they’re home with family, and that’s where kids need to be. They’re happier ... and they look to her as their protector. They know that woman is there to keep them safe.”

Washoe County Children’s Services Department cares for the entire community. While the name implies its services only apply to the young, the department’s overall goal is to create healthy contributors to society.

“We’re here to help parents do a good job at raising their kids, to create a stable environment and do the best that they can to get their kids to be healthy adults,” says Alice LeDesma, Children’s Services division director. “We do that in a number of different ways in the services that we provide.”

### How we help

#### Child Protective Services

Investigates reports and allegations of child abuse and neglect.

#### Adoption Services

Provides children with permanent homes.

#### Foster Care

Nevada’s Quality Parenting Initiative provides comprehensive training and support for foster families.

#### Independent Living

Gives foster care youths the skills they need to live independently, such as budgeting, cooking and connecting to community resources.

#### Clinical Services

Provides mental health services and clinical case management to families.



For more information, call 775-785-8600 or visit [www.washoecounty.us/socsrvc/childrens\\_services/index.php](http://www.washoecounty.us/socsrvc/childrens_services/index.php).



John Marriage (center) spent 14 months in the Crossroads Program and is now in recovery for substance abuse. Today he leads a Bible study at the transitional living facility.  
PHOTO BY ERIC MARKS

# A Home of Healing

Transitional living that makes an impact

by Kate Gonzales

**T**here are many paths leading to Crossroads, and the men and women who are successful in the housing program leave on solid footing.

The Crossroads Program is a transitional living facility that offers a safe and sober environment for people who are homeless or are ordered by a county court to enroll. The program has been a partnership between Washoe County Adult Services and Catholic Charities of Northern Nevada since 2011 and now serves around 160 men and women on four sites.

Crossroads is one of several Adult Services programs that supports the county's vulnerable adults under age 60. Adult Services offerings are part of the Department of Human Services' commitment to make a critical safety net available for people of all ages and backgrounds.

John Marriage entered the Crossroads Program in spring 2014 after he was charged with driving under the influence of alcohol. He had tried living as a functional alcoholic, but knew he had to change after the DUI. Crossroads became his lifeline.

"Getting a safe environment to start rehabilitating is huge," Marriage says. "It was my opportunity to take care of things."

Crossroads offers countless services and opportunities for residents to build a better life. The starting point for each client is an assessment of needs. From there, Crossroads staff refer clients to social services, and help gather and submit application paperwork.

The program also provides counseling, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and self-help groups every day. In addition to helping treat substance abuse, these classes help with self-esteem, conflict management and communication.

The Learn to Earn employment program helps residents build skills to find a job and work toward self-sufficiency.

Marriage says Crossroads gave him the tools to take responsibility for his unhealthy behaviors and change them. He believes people are not defined by their mistakes.

"You take out all the drugs or alcohol, or whatever their situation may be ... and it's really not who they are," he says. "Soon as I knew that and identified it, I was able to persevere."

Residents preparing to leave the program create an exit plan to foster a smooth transition. Marriage left Crossroads in May 2015 and today, he is a busy man. He works full time as a commercial maintenance technician at a casino and is in school for mechanical industrial engineering. He

also recently marked two years being sober.

He is still a familiar face at Crossroads. Each Wednesday, he leads a Bible study for residents at the main campus. He hopes that by giving back and sharing his experience he shows Crossroads residents their strength.

"You can overcome anything that might take you off course," he says.

**"You can overcome anything that might take you off course."**

JOHN MARRIAGE  
Former Crossroads resident

## Adult Services

The Washoe County Department of Human Services believes that a community is strengthened when built on empathy. The department's Adult Services runs several programs for adults under 60, with partial funding through Indigent Services, which reimburses medical and institutional facilities for certain services provided to those ineligible for federal, state or community programs.

### How we help

#### Adult Group Care

Reimburses costs of room and board for individuals who are homeless and who require a temporary, structured setting to stabilize a medical condition.

#### The Extended Care Facility program

Reimburses medical costs for adults placed in a nursing home.

#### The Burial/Cremation program

Reimburses the basic costs of burial or cremation for those who cannot afford to pay for final expenses.

#### Adult Protective Services

Offers information, referrals and limited case management to people ages 18 to 59 who are in danger of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

#### The Supportive Housing program

Reimburses housing costs for individuals who are homeless or suffering from drug, alcohol or behavioral health conditions.



To connect with Adult Services, call 775-328-2700 or visit [www.washoecounty.us/socsvr/adult\\_services/index.php](http://www.washoecounty.us/socsvr/adult_services/index.php).



Harvey Salinger (right) receives 14 meals a week through Washoe County Senior Services' partnership with Meals on Wheels. He estimates the program saves him about \$300 a month in food costs.

PHOTO BY ERIC MARKS

# Delivering Meals and Much More

## Senior Services is a lifeline in Washoe County

by Kate Gonzales

**H**arvey Salinger always knows where his next meal will come from.

Salinger, a 70-year-old widower, does not have any family members near his home in Reno and has been partially homebound for nearly a decade. He is one of 3,600 seniors who in 2015 had meals delivered straight to their doors thanks to Washoe County Senior Services' partnership with Meals on Wheels.

In addition, the county's Senior Nutrition Program distributes congregate meals at 10 locations every weekday. It's part of the county's commitment to keep senior services on pace with the growing senior population. Leslie Williams, former Senior Services administrative assistant, says the Meals on Wheels program is expected to serve even more people in 2016.

Like many other Meals on Wheels clients, Salinger has seven meals

delivered twice weekly. He receives a hot meal the day of the delivery and six that are frozen. The grant money the county uses to fund the program only covers one daily meal. Recognizing a widespread need for healthy, accessible food for seniors, the county decided to fund a second meal.

"What we found is that [for] a number of our seniors, that was the only meal of the day that they were receiving and eating," Williams says. "So the county chose to expand the program."

Salinger says it really helps to have two meals a day covered, as his only income is through Social Security. He estimates that the program saves him about \$300 a month on food.

"It's a lifeline," Salinger says. "It takes so much stress off my life because I don't have to worry about where my meals are coming from."

Every Senior Services program aims to help seniors age independently and comfortably in their own homes. Through Meals on Wheels deliveries, Senior Services has drivers out in the field who regularly check on those who live alone and can identify the potential need for additional services.

These services can stave off health issues down the line, helping the resident and the county over the long term.

"By investing early on in those fundamental needs we're actually working toward saving money in providing care and services in the long run," says Williams.

For Salinger and the growing number of seniors who rely on Meals on Wheels in Washoe County, the deliveries are more than a meal — they are a connection to neighbors.

"I enjoy seeing a friendly face coming in the door," he says.

**"It's a lifeline. I don't have to worry about where my meals are coming from."**

HARVEY SALINGER  
Meals on Wheels client

## Senior Services

Seniors have diverse needs. Washoe County Senior Services has a commitment to helping the county's fastest-growing community age independently. Guided by the vision of "Live well, age well," Senior Services offers resources to support seniors and their families.

### How we help

#### Senior Nutrition program

Offers seniors meals in two ways — at 10 locations throughout Washoe County or straight to their doors through Meals on Wheels.

#### Daybreak program

A respite program where caregivers can leave their loved ones in caring, capable hands for the day at the Washoe County Complex, 1155 E. Ninth St. in Reno. Call 775-328-2591 for more information.

#### Homemaker program

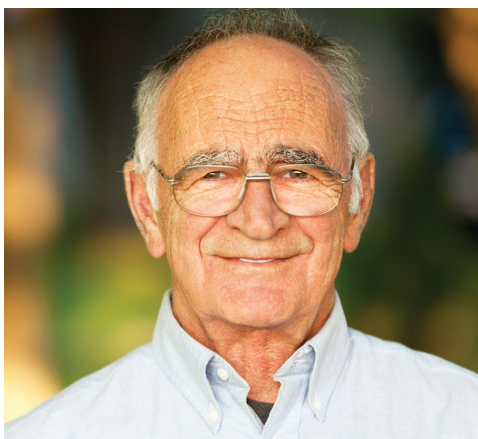
Provides light housekeeping and chore assistance to residents over 60 who are unable to perform tasks themselves.

#### Case Management

Offers assistance in care coordination for seniors and/or their caregivers who have conditions which require need for services by formal service providers.



Connect with Senior Services at [www.washoecounty.us/seniorsrv/](http://www.washoecounty.us/seniorsrv/)



# A Shared Vision of a Stronger Community

In Washoe County, caring for one benefits all

by Kate Gonzales

**W**ashoe County Department of Human Services is founded on the belief that everyone has a right to be treated with dignity and respect and given the opportunity to thrive, no matter their circumstances.

Department of Human Services staff work to help meet the basic needs of every resident, from ensuring children are in a secure and loving home to providing seniors with warm, healthy meals. By offering support services to local families, the community as a whole is strengthened.

The department is a lifeline for those who may be struggling, which is particularly important in a time of local economic development.

“We have to keep up with an infrastructure on the human services side, so people can live successfully,” says Assistant County Manager Kevin Schiller. “[It’s] about providing service to people, and the people are what we value highest.”

As the cost of living rises, families with stagnant wages or seniors on a fixed income can get caught in a financial balancing act, where paying for rent, food, transportation and other necessities becomes a challenge.

The agency wants to help families through tough times to avoid greater social and monetary costs down the line.

“It’s our families that are in need. It affects all of us.”

KEVIN SCHILLER  
Assistant County Manager,  
Washoe County



“It’s our families that are in need,” Schiller says. “It affects all of us.”

Getting a strong start in life is key, and investing in children is essential. When children’s basic needs of shelter, food, education and love are met, they are better suited to grow into productive adults. If parents are struggling with job loss or homelessness, their children suffer the consequences. The Department of Human

Services provides a much-needed safety net for this vulnerable population. Schiller says Child Protective Services’ record of reuniting families is evidence of the agency’s strength. More than half of child protection cases end in reunification with the family.

Providing support services to seniors is also vital, as they are the county’s fastest-growing population. The agency aims to keep seniors living in their homes independently, and their unique needs directly impact those who care for and about them. This makes such support services vital to their families as well.

According to a recent survey of Washoe County employees, about 30 percent of public sector workers provide some level of caregiving.

“It’s not just about the client, it’s about the family around them,” Schiller says. “It’s about how it impacts everything they do in their daily living.”

The Washoe County Department of Human Services is built on the understanding that when one person’s life is enhanced, the whole community ultimately wins.

## The Department of Human Services’ impact

Those who deliver services to Washoe County residents through the Department of Human Services know it’s the right thing to do for our families, neighbors and friends. They also know that it makes financial sense. Here’s a look at those the department serves, by the numbers, and some cost savings for taxpayers:

Each month a child is in foster care costs approximately \$700.

**952 children** are currently in foster care in the county.

**More than 50 percent** are successfully reunited with family.

In five years, the transitional housing program Crossroads has saved the county

**millions of dollars**

in law enforcement, incarceration, hospitalization and other costs.

Nevada has the

**third-fastest growing senior population**

in the nation. It’s never been more important to meet seniors’ needs, and Washoe County has made that a top priority.

The Senior Nutrition Program, which provides the county’s seniors with meals, served

**3,600 people**

in 2015. That number is projected to rise to

**3,800 in 2016.**

# Making Better Futures for Everyone

## Q&A with social worker Kacie Schwin

by Anne Stokes

Licensed social worker Kacie Schwin has been with Washoe County's Department of Human Services for the past 10 years. She has helped countless children and families deal with hardships including substance abuse issues and financial struggles. As an assessment worker for Child Protective Services, she is the first contact with families, offering help and connecting them with needed resources. Schwin shares what keeps her motivated to help the community.



Kacie Schwin, social worker with Washoe County Child Protective Services, works diligently to connect children and their families with the resources to help them succeed.  
PHOTO BY ERIC MARKS

**“We’re all part of the community. We can’t just ignore people who are struggling.”**

KACIE SCHWIN  
Social worker, Washoe County Department of Human Services

### What are some of the rewarding aspects of your job?

When I’m able to step in, listen to somebody’s problems and help them find a resource to pay their rent, or get the care that they need for their child, or work with a parent in an abusive relationship and help get them out — those are the really rewarding times. When the parent is able to say, “I couldn’t do it and I’m glad to have this opportunity to make things better for my child,” that’s really rewarding.

### What motivates you to help community members?

The little kids are what keeps me motivated. Focusing on the fact that what I do is to hopefully make their lives better keeps me going. I also work with a great team. We all share our victories, [so] even if I feel like I haven’t been able to do something positive today, somebody else in my group has and we can all share those wins together.

### What should people know about CPS social workers?

We want kids to stay in their homes if it’s safe to do so and we work really hard to try and get that to happen by using relatives, neighbors and other community resources to keep the child safe in their homes if we can. The decision to remove a child is a tough one and it’s not made lightly.

### Why is it important to provide a safety net of services to community members in need?

We’re all part of the community. We can’t just ignore people who are struggling. If we don’t help them, they’re not going to get help and the situation is just going to get worse. Kids are going to grow up and be community members, and wouldn’t we much rather have community members who are well-adjusted, educated and who have learned to be responsible?

### So in that way you serve the whole community, not just those families in need, right?

Right! We know so much about adverse experiences in childhood. The more they experience that’s negative, the more likely that they will struggle as adults — whether they become involved in drugs, crime, violent relationships — those things all impact the community. If we can get involved and stop or minimize those experiences that children are having, then it’s less likely that they’re going to be involved in crime when they’re older.

### What would you tell a family who is struggling to make ends meet but who may be hesitant to ask for help?

That they’re not alone. Things are tough and there are services out there for them. There are so many types of assistance and you don’t know about them until you start investigating and asking. That can give families just the little extra support they need to get back on their feet.

For more information on all of Washoe County’s social services, visit [www.washoecounty.us/socsrv/index.php](http://www.washoecounty.us/socsrv/index.php).

# Helping Our Neighbors Thrive



**W**hen all families and individuals in Washoe County have the tools and support they need to flourish, our whole community is safer, kinder and more prosperous. Washoe County's Department of Human Services believes in meeting the needs of our neighbors of all ages and backgrounds, with a particular focus on our most vulnerable residents. Connect with the department for support or to reach out and lend a hand to others. Because together, we're stronger.

## Washoe County Department of Human Services

### Washoe County Social Services

[www.washoecounty.us/socsrv](http://www.washoecounty.us/socsrv)

775-785-8600

[socialsvs@washoecounty.us](mailto:socialsvs@washoecounty.us)

### Washoe County Senior Services

[www.washoecounty.us/seniorsrv](http://www.washoecounty.us/seniorsrv)

775-328-2575

[sr\\_info@washoecounty.us](mailto:sr_info@washoecounty.us)

## Get the help you need

You or a loved one may be eligible for services to improve your quality of life. Here's how you can find out:

### Children's Services

Grow your family while making a life-changing impact on a young person through fostering or adoption. To see if foster care or adoption is right for you:

- 1 **EXPLORE** services online: [www.washoecounty.us/socsrv/childrens\\_services/index.php](http://www.washoecounty.us/socsrv/childrens_services/index.php)
- 2 **CALL** 775-785-8600
- 3 **VISIT**: 350 S. Center St., third floor, Reno

*To report abuse or neglect of a child, call Child Protective Services at 775-785-8600 or email [CPS@washoecounty.us](mailto:CPS@washoecounty.us).*

### Adult Services

Adult Services staff suggest taking three simple steps to access income-based housing, health and general assistance services. Be sure to follow up the first steps with an in-person visit to meet staff knowledgeable on local, state and federal programs.

- 1 **EXPLORE** services online: [www.washoecounty.us/socsrv/adult\\_services](http://www.washoecounty.us/socsrv/adult_services)
- 2 **CALL**: 775-328-2700
- 3 **VISIT**: 1001 E. Ninth St., Reno

### Senior Services

Eligibility for nutrition, care and support services varies by funding source. Follow these steps and get connected:

- 1 **EXPLORE** services online: [www.washoecounty.us/seniorsrv](http://www.washoecounty.us/seniorsrv)
- 2 **CALL**: 775-328-2575
- 3 **VISIT**: 1155 E. Ninth St., Reno

## Lend a hand!

Do you have a passion for helping people? The Department of Human Services has countless opportunities for residents to offer their time, resources and unique skills in a meaningful way.

**Here are some ways to get involved:**

### SHARE YOUR SKILLS

Have a talent in art, gardening, dance or other areas? Teach a class to children or seniors! If you have great job-hunting skills, volunteer to help adults build their résumés and search for jobs at the Crossroads Program.

### TAKE SOME TIME

Volunteer to read to children at the Kids Kottage Emergency Shelter.

### PROVIDE A MEAL

Volunteer to help distribute congregate meals to seniors, or help out a foster family with a home-cooked meal.

### DONATE

Several programs are partially funded through donations, such as the Senior Nutrition program and the Children's Services Have a Heart program.



Connect with these departments and programs to learn more:

### Children's Services

775-785-8600; [www.washoecounty.us/socsrv/childrens\\_services](http://www.washoecounty.us/socsrv/childrens_services).

### Crossroads program

775-785-4006;  
395 Gould St., Reno

### Senior Services

775-328-2588;  
[sr\\_info@washoecounty.us](mailto:sr_info@washoecounty.us)