



EMOTIONAL HEALTH & WELLNESS

ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year 19/20

“You can’t
simply put a
life on hold.”

THE STATE OF WELLNEST



It just doesn’t
work that way.”

“My first
thought was
It’s a whole new ballgame.”

Reyna Mendez, LMFT, Clinical Therapist II —





THE STATE OF WELLNEST



4,435 WELLNEST SERVICES

Unduplicated number of children, young adults, and family members that benefited from Wellnest's services.

“Our path and promise must never waiver.”

5

Our Mission

Through a holistic approach to emotional well-being, Wellnest offers **hope**, healing and opportunity to the children, young adults, families, and communities we serve.

Our commitment remains steadfast as we enter our second century of service.

Our Vision

That everyone has access to the support services needed to achieve the emotional well-being critical to reaching their full potential.



“We were all thinking about those who need us right now, including our own families.”



THE STATE OF WELLNEST

Our Core Values
Defining who we are and how we make a difference.



Excellence and Integrity We uphold a well-established standard of excellence and accountability by using best practices and continuous quality improvement. Our staff acts with personal and professional integrity to ensure every child, young adult, family and community member is provided the highest level of care available.

Empowerment and Respect We respect the culture and individuality of those we serve. We encourage the expression of their preferences, goals, and aspirations, as well as meaningful contributions regarding decisions about the services and support they receive.

Integrated and Accessible We strive to offer a comprehensive and growing array of services readily accessible to children, young adults, and their families whenever and wherever they are needed. We believe that an integrated approach to care is critical to creating positive outcomes that support long-term growth.

Family-focused Approach We offer a family-centered approach to care that addresses the unique circumstances of those we serve. We provide services and support that focus on each person's needs in the context of family, community and other key influences.

Life-long Wellness We focus on a 360-degree view of wellness, offering life-long skills for improving and maintaining emotional and physical health. We offer tools for children, young adults, and their families to help improve quality of all aspects of their lives; including social, educational, financial, intellectual, physical and spiritual.

Productive Partnerships We responsibly steward donor support and facilitate partnerships with agencies, community resources, schools and families, to deliver the highest quality services. By linking constituents with the appropriate forms of assistance, we expand and amplify our impact on those in need.

— Aisha Garcia, ASW, Clinical Therapist I

Dear Wellnest Friends

We hope this Annual Report finds you in good spirits and good health, in spite of the many challenges we are all facing. Here at Wellnest, we continue to serve, support, and promote hope, as well as compassion, for those affected by these tragedies. Let us be reminded that our capacity to heal others and ourselves is strengthened when we stand together to support those most affected by the global pandemic through our thoughts and prayers.

This devastating virus does not discriminate in regard to socio-economic status, age, or ethnicity. Unfortunately, it is disproportionately affecting communities with fewer resources. We're talking about the very families we serve. Our Wellnest families face many more disadvantages, including fewer resources, such as access to health care, good housing, solid wages/benefits, and healthy food.

At the same time, the families we serve have been impacted—directly and indirectly—by the loss and violence too familiar in communities of color due to historical and continued inequality and injustices felt by many. Our community is grappling with a complex, multidimensional set of needs—homelessness, racial injustice, unemployment, and the ravages of COVID-19.

We are witnessing first-hand the psychological impact the pandemic and civil unrest are having. The increased stress levels in parents can be overwhelming and, when transferred to children, can impact their safety and well-being. Stability is so important to enable families to thrive during this crisis.

For this reason, we are so very grateful to our loyal donors—the Everychild Foundation,

Atlas Family Foundation, US Bank, USC Village Ombudsman, Civic Engagement at University of Southern California, and, YOU—for the generous COVID-19 Relief Support you empathetically and lovingly provided to our families when they are absorbing more stress and trauma than usual.

Here at Wellnest, we are proud to report we have remained steadfast in our commitment to sustain our daily operations and services to our community. Throughout much uncertainty, we adapted with expediency to our changing reality and “new” normal with adjusted hours for emergency matters and telehealth/telepsychiatry appointments to increase efficiency and safety while maintaining emotional health outcomes for children and their families.

In spite of the pandemic’s intensifying socio-economic fallout, we expanded our vision in 2019-2020 to include our first housing development—The Nest on Florence—with the knowledge that men and women in their teens and early 20s can experience turbulent social, emotional, and physical change. The Nest on Florence will provide young people aging out of foster care with safe, supportive housing in which to gain the required experience to live successfully.

Change, adapt, rethink and react, these types of words have been part of our vocabulary from the beginning, but never before have they taken on such a huge amount of responsibility than they do today. The landscape has changed, our lens has been shifted. We see who we are, and who we need to be.

We believe these young people have huge promise, and we are nurturing that with our integrative approach to housing that includes mental health and health care services, life skills, mentorship, and guidance. With the opportunity to attend college, participate in job training and employment, and much more, these young people will change their own lives. More importantly, they will remain stably housed and engaged in their community, fostering resilience and social connectedness, which ultimately lead to better lifetime outcomes.

In honor of our longest-serving Wellnest Board Member David Hirsch and his lovely wife, Susan Hirsch, who have been major donors to the creation of our housing project, we are prominently displaying their names on this beautifully designed permanent supportive housing development.

In another significant achievement this past year, Wellnest was selected as one of only five organizations in the State of California by the Mental Health Services Oversight Accountability Commission for the expansion of integrated mental health youth drop-in centers to further enhance positive support systems vital to health, emotional well-being, and long-term success. The State’s initiative builds on internationally recognized programs in Australia and British Columbia, along with the work of Santa Clara County under the state Mental Health Services Act Innovation component, to debut the first U.S. implementation, known as the allcove program.

Both projects—The Nest on Florence and the allcove program— will be wonderful additions for our young people who visit our Avis & Mark Ridley-

Thomas Life Learning Center. Armed with the skills they learn there, they will experience success, gain independence and self-determination, and change their lives as they build resilience and social connectedness. We are lifting their voices because they matter. And we are lifting the voices and spirits of our Wellnest families, our neighbors... our community.

Let’s look to our better angels to find common ground and more personal engagement and continue every effort possible to touch the lives of the most vulnerable with empathy and understanding. At Wellnest we are ready for this challenge, and we know there is no better time than now.

Thank you for your continued generosity as members of our Wellnest Family. We hope that you will join us in our continued journey to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others. We wish you and yours the best of health!

Sincerely,



Charlene Dimas-Peinado

Charlene Dimas-Peinado
LCSW, EML
President & CEO

William Vasquez

William Vasquez
Board Chairperson



“Challenges are part of who we are, who we have been, and who we will be from here on. Challenges are part of our character, they are the foundation and platforms on which we stand. On which we deliver. They are ingrained in our promises.”





THE STATE OF WELLNEST

COVID 19 Wellnest Keeps the Doors Open – Virtually

As the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic spread this spring, Wellnest took immediate, proactive steps to ensure a Healthy Ready Culture for the emotional well-being of our Wellnest family and the community we serve. “This crisis did not change our standard of care as essential workers,” said Lisa Hirsch Marin, MSW, LCSW, Wellnest Chief Operating Officer.

For Wellnest, that commitment meant keeping essential programs and locations open with adjusted hours to provide urgent clinical intervention. At the same time, Wellnest innovated the use of Telehealth and Telepsychiatry services.

“It is our objective to provide critically needed, impactful services, while doing our utmost to protect the health of our employees and our clients,” said Paco Retana, MSW, LCSW, Vice President of Programs.

At the Access & Wellness Center, Wellnest welcomed clients in crisis for drop-in visits and encouraged safe-distancing appointments. The Avis and Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center (LLC), which serves at-risk young adults, responded to urgent and high-risk issues requiring in-person visits or clinical intervention. Intensive Services—offering Full Service Partnership, Intensive Field Capable Clinical



Services and Wraparound Services—held face-to-face visits for urgent and high-risk cases, while embracing Telehealth for most services.

The threat of COVID-19, school closures and heavy media coverage brought stress to children and adolescents and, with it, overwhelming feelings of sadness, confusion, anger and loss. At Wellnest, the goal as always was to help children of all ages develop the skills to make emotionally healthy adjustments to daily challenges and the current crisis.

Right: Jovanna Marsh, Receptionist, Mayra Nunez, IS Support Clerk, and Jose Cervantes, IS Support Clerk, providing a warm, safe welcome to all who enter our University Park Office.



“We found that a smile, even under a mask, is a smile that helps and heals.”



Gabriela Lizárraga, MSW, Case Manager, and Wendy Araujo, MSW, Clinical Therapist I, presenting on parent self-care during the COVID-19 pandemic as a part of our Facebook Live Series.



Wellnest reached out to kids and families via social media, with a fun Activity & Coloring Book, downloadable free on the Wellnest Facebook page and website. Families also received Wellnest's COVID-19 Support Guides and benefited from free food distribution days, thanks to a partnership with Para Los Niños.

Wellnest also moved our community wellness training program online. We recently launched an ongoing Facebook Live series in which our practitioners offer training, dialogue, and resources on important emotional health and wellness topics. These subjects range from trauma in adolescents to anxiety, boredom and depression in children to alternate socio-emotional growth and development and parent self-care.

Wellnest donors stepped up to support our pandemic efforts. The Everychild Foundation gifted Wellnest \$125,000, which funded COVID-related relief for Wellnest clients, including groceries, clothing, and rent/utilities assistance. In addition, the Atlas Family Foundation helped to underwrite our teletherapy services and U.S. Bank Foundation provided emergency funding to support young people engaged in our housing services.

Throughout the global crisis in 2020, Wellnest continued to put out messages of solidarity and hope. "Whenever there is a crisis in our lives, we are reminded of the incredible power of the human spirit to overcome, persevere, and experience emotional healing," said Charlene Dimas-Peinado, LCSW, EML, Wellnest President and CEO. "It is up to each of us to be supportive of those in need, especially our children, who are the most vulnerable. Let us continue to work together to care for our community."



“This crisis did not change our mission-driven standard of care as essential workers.”

— Lisa Hirsch Marin, Wellnest COO



Heaven Cisse, AMFT, Clinical Therapist I, providing a Facebook Live presentation on cultivating community to promote health and wellness.

“Wellnest deals on a daily basis with the profoundly traumatic consequences of violence perpetrated on communities of color.”

— Charlene Dimas-Peinado, President and CEO



Standing Strong for Social Justice

In spring 2020, widespread outrage and largely peaceful protests sparked across the U.S. and the world in response to the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and others unjustly lost to the hands of systemic racial violence.



The communities of South Los Angeles and Metro Los Angeles, served by Wellnest, were particularly hard-hit in terms of stress, depression and other emotional needs triggered by a history of sustained cultural disruption and community destruction.

“Wellnest deals on a daily basis with the profoundly traumatic consequences of violence perpetrated on communities of color,” said Charlene Dimas-Peinado, LCSW, EML, Wellnest President and CEO.

Institutional disparities in care are felt strongly in these underserved areas of Los Angeles. “Too many families and children of color involved in today’s child welfare and mental health systems experience worse outcomes as a whole,” said Lisa Hirsch Marin, MSW, LCSW, Wellnest Chief Operating Officer. Especially affected are traumatized children and youth in neighborhoods that have experienced historic inequities based on race.

Wellnest mental health providers jumped in to help clients—most especially our Black clients—with crisis intervention and trauma-informed care. Many clients reported feeling extreme stress, difficulty sleeping and concentrating, and problems with alcohol and substance abuse. “Our providers are trained to understand the impact of trauma on the physical, emotional and

mental health of individuals and families,” said Paco Retana, MSW, LCSW, Vice President of Programs. “This training also enables our providers to pinpoint services that are culturally responsive.”

Equally important, Wellnest providers are aware of “the complex systems our clients are a part of,” added Retana. In particular, L.A.’s Black community has been disproportionately affected by homelessness, incarceration rates, poverty and poor health outcomes.

In response, Wellnest renewed the organization’s commitment to be “a partner in the pursuit for justice, equity and answers to disparities in communities of color,” said Hirsch Marin. Among other steps, Wellnest created an internal committee to ensure Wellnest’s services are diverse, equitable and culturally responsive and offered additional training to employees in issues for communities of color.

In addition, Wellnest leadership increased efforts to broaden its already diverse workforce by proactively reaching out to various sources of talent for all vacancies. “We are promoting career opportunities on job sites, professional organizations and colleges where there is a higher percentage of candidates who are underrepresented in our organization,” said Laura Alvarez, PHR, SHRM-CP, Wellnest Vice President of Human Resources.

This multi-faceted committee continues. “Daily, our providers focus on safety, trustworthiness, transparency, collaboration and empowerment,” said Retana, “with consideration of cultural and historical issues that our clients from South and Metro Los Angeles have experienced for generations.”



Our Black brothers and sisters are disproportionately targeted and impacted by the loss and violence all too familiar in communities of color. This pattern represents a history of sustained cultural disruption and community destruction.

We at Wellnest stand in solidarity with our local community leaders to address the systemic and structural inequities that have existed, and continue to exist, in communities of color. Collectively, we are committed to creating opportunities of fundamental change in relation to social, racial, educational and health disparities.

Each day, we dedicate ourselves to working with children and families to build a better future and more just community. The families of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor are in our prayers. Let’s keep Martin Luther King Jr.’s voice on equality alive and continue to inspire peace, love and justice for all people:

“Make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for equal rights. You will make a greater person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in.”

Access to Healing

Wellnest's Access and Wellness Center is there for the community in all kinds of crises.

The mother was worried, even a little frantic, when she called the Wellnest emergency line late one evening. Her 16-year-old son was increasingly agitated, sleepless and reported hearing voices talking about him. Each day, he feared he was dying of a different disease.



Dr. Sternberg and part of the frontline team at the Access and Wellness Center. From left, Stephanie Mora, IS Support Clerk, Carla Herrera, Receptionist, Angela Perez, LMFT, Clinical Supervisor, Wilesha Pickens, Child Care Specialist, Adam Sternberg, PsyD, Director of Outpatient Services.

Adam Sternberg, PsyD, Director of Outpatient Services, Exposition Park Office, took the call. With the boy not in imminent risk, and his mother able to calm him, Sternberg advised her to come to Wellnest's Access and Wellness Center the next day. The family was there when the doors opened. The assessment by expert Center staff showed that the teen might be experiencing his first psychotic episode.

"I am honored to work with a team that considers the health of a client just as important as their own."

— Adam Sternberg, Director, Outpatient Services Exposition Park Office



services, such as crisis intervention, therapy and/or community resources.

The advent of COVID-19 upended those routines. The Access and Wellness team had to adjust to rapidly changing directives on best practices in dealing with the coronavirus. "When people accept a position in mental health, they feel called to provide compassionate care to those who are struggling with a lot of distress," Sternberg said. "But they might not have imagined themselves on the 'essential provider' list."

The Access and Wellness Center adjusted its hours and encouraged consumers to make appointments whenever possible to allow for safe distancing and protective equipment. But the work went on.

In 2020, Wellnest partnered with Good Hope Medical Foundation to offer the Wellness program at the Access and Wellness Center. This trauma-prevention effort covers the costs of counseling for youth 6-18 years old who have experienced significant traumatic events but might not meet criteria for insurance coverage. The goal: to ensure they don't develop more serious impairments. To continue to reach the most vulnerable youth, Access and Wellness also partnered with such institutions as Specialized Foster Care, Family Preservation and LA County 211.

The mother of that 16-year-old boy—and countless other families—are grateful for Wellnest's commitment to accessibility of care. "I am honored to work with a team that continues to balance a regard for their own health with care for our clients," said Sternberg.

Sternberg met with the mother and offered immediate support and ways to help her son cope. He contacted Wellnest's Avis and Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center, which identified a therapist to assist with the young man's case. More help came as the Access Case Manager coordinated evaluations for medication, therapy and possible admission at a local recovery center. By the end of the day, the 16-year-old had been prescribed anti-psychotic medication and admitted to a psychiatric hospital.

This immediate, full-circle approach is typical of Wellnest's Access and Wellness Center, Wellnest's primary portal for outpatient services, which moves mountains to get its consumers the care they need, however complex and urgent that care may be.

In "normal" times, the no-fee Access and Wellness Center at 3787 S. Vermont Ave. welcomes walk-in appointments Monday-Friday. Consumers typically meet to complete assessments on the same day with Wellnest staff, each trained in the impact of trauma on emotional health.

Once screened for their individual needs, each child, adolescent or adult is linked to the most appropriate

2,000+ ACCESS & WALK-IN SERVICES

The Access and Wellness Walk-In Center provided immediate, compassionate care to over 2,000 individuals.



THE STATE OF WELLNEST

Wellnest Leadership Say hello to Wayne Moore

Wellnest benefits from the guidance of a seasoned Board of Directors, whose members are leaders in government, financial and legal services, education, health care and social services. Among them is Board Treasurer Wayne Moore, who was invited to testify before Congress in 2019 on the importance of transparency in financial reporting.

When Wayne Moore entered the House of Representatives hearing room in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 19, 2019, and took his seat at the witness table, he saw assembled before him members of the bipartisan House Committee on Financial Services.

Moore, a 10-year veteran as a trustee of public retirement pension funds, had been invited to testify on new legislation that would impel the Securities and Exchange Committee to require private funds to publicly disclose their fees for investments. The bill, HR 3848, known as the "Stop Wall Street Looting Act," was introduced in the Senate by Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass) and in the House by Rep. Mark Pocan (D-Wisc).

It's an issue Moore can get wholeheartedly behind.

"With greater transparency about the cost of investing, you have better information to make better decisions," says Moore, who retired in 2012 as Chief Financial Officer of the Southern California Association of Governments. "We want to negotiate the best prices for our members and ensure they get the full benefit of their investments."

Currently, Moore is a trustee of the Los Angeles County Employee Retirement Association. With 171,000 members and a \$60 billion portfolio, it is the largest county retirement pension fund in the United States and the fourth largest fund statewide. He previously served on the Los Angeles City Fire and Police Pension Fund Board of Trustees.

In his written testimony, Moore told the House Committee that protecting public pension plan assets requires open and transparent relationships among all involved. Committee Chair Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA43) asked Moore to give a five-minute oral presentation. The committee members then peppered him and four other speakers with questions for three hours. "It was quite an experience," says Moore, a 15-year member of the Wellnest Board. "I am grateful I was able to represent the interests of public retirement fund members."

"We are proud of Wayne Moore, as we are of all of our Board members, for their contributions to our constituency and to the larger community," says Charlene Dimas-Peinado, LCSW, EML, Wellnest President and CEO.



Right: Mr. Moore with the Honorable Gregory Meeks, U.S. Representative for New York's 5th Congressional District.



Wayne Moore with his wife Elaine and sister Dianne Williams in Washington, D.C., where he testified in favor of the Stop Wall Street Looting Act.



“We saw people in need, anxious, fearful, and unsure...
And we saw what love, and kindness, and giving can
do as well. More clearly than we’ve ever seen it before.”

1,889 FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

The number of children and community members that engage with Family Resource Center, receiving food, clothing, diapers and other essentials.

Gerald Franklin, Employment Specialist —

“You see just
how much
people care
when so much
is on the line.”



Early Intervention and Community Wellness

Intervening early in a child's life can build resilience and confidence as it helps prevent future behavioral issues. Equally important, that intervention during the critical 0-5 years age period can help parents form healthy attachments with their children. Wellnest supports our clients through therapeutic and support services in classrooms, homes and our own locations.

Day Treatment Intensive

Wellnest's Day Treatment Intensive helps children ages 2-5 years old who have difficulties with aggression, temper tantrums, hyperactivity and impulsivity, as well as with managing their behaviors or emotions in a childcare or school setting. The structured therapeutic environment offers music, movement, art and play to support each child's self-expression and reduce challenging behaviors. Participation by parents and caregivers in family therapy and support groups is a fundamental part of the healing process.

Early Intervention Outpatient Services

In the Early Intervention Outpatient Program, we work to support and strengthen the relationship between child and caregiver, while simultaneously helping them both develop skills to manage behaviors. Many families we serve are coping with such issues as separation, loss, difficulty in school, relationship challenges, stress, or traumatic events. The children we see may be experiencing hyperactivity, inattention, difficulty following directions, temper tantrums, depression or anxiety. Developmentally appropriate play and art are used to create a space in which a child can explore and express underlying feelings. Case management services connect families to such community



resources as childcare, recreational activities and more.

Family Resource Center

Wellnest's free Family Resource Center provides drop-in center services and one-on-one support to individuals and families. Visitors access such basic essentials for children as clothing, shoes, hygiene products, and diapers. Also available are workshops in infant massage, budgeting and other useful topics. The Center links families to resources for childcare, employment, food banks, recreation and other support.

Healthy Families America (HFA)

The Healthy Families America home visitation program is based on the belief that early, nurturing relationships can instill lifelong healthy development in a child. Our free, accredited program serves prenatal families and families with children from newborn to five years old in South Los Angeles and Metro Los Angeles. Wellnest's trained Home Visitors engage families in parent-child activities, teach healthy development and make referrals to community services. Also available are infant massage and lactation support.



Left to Right - Playground, Eberto Portugal, Mental Health Rehabilitation Specialist, Noell Carter, Mental Health Rehabilitation Specialist, Sarah De Santis, Milieu Aide • Left to Right - Bottom, Lori Campbell, PhD, LCSW, Assistant Director of Day Treatment Intensive, Vivian Tin Lieu, Milieu Aide, Reyna Mendez, LMFT, Clinical Therapist II, Vanesa Cardona, AMFT, Clinical Therapist I, Zabela, Mental Health Rehabilitation Specialist

Multidisciplinary Assessment Team

Our Multidisciplinary Assessment Team (MAT) collaborates with the L.A. County Department of Children and Family Services and the Department of Mental Health. Assessments encompass mental health, developmental needs and medical concerns of children entering the foster care system, along with each potential caregiver's ability to provide optimal care. The program seeks to decrease the likelihood of multiple out-of-home placements for children and support families as they seek a range of community resources.

Intensive Services

For youth who need more focused help, our Intensive Services Division provides a higher level of behavioral health care. Families with children who have severe emotional or behavioral difficulties can receive individually designed services at Wellnest or at home, in school, and in the community—all depending on the family's needs.

Specific programs include:

Full Service Partnership

Our Full Service Partnership (FSP) gives families with children experiencing serious emotional and behavioral problems the opportunity to receive an individually planned, coordinated array of services, which can include therapy, skill-building, case management, and medication. Wellnest's FSP team includes clinical therapists, parent partners, case managers and psychiatrists. FSP also funds less-traditional services, such as a family's costs associated with supporting their child's mental health and pro-social behavior. Family involvement is required to effect change. Parents are assisted in navigating through systems of community resources.

2,912 DAY TREATMENT

Number of days Day Treatment Intensive team provided nurturing, trauma-informed care to children with behavioral issues.



Intensive Field Capable Clinical Services

Families throughout Los Angeles County with child welfare involvement can get help for their child's serious emotional disturbances through the Intensive Field Capable Clinical Services (IFCCS) program. Wellnest staff collaborate with child-serving providers in a strengths and needs-based approach, with child and family at the center. In addition to behavioral health interventions for the child, help is available for parents/caregivers in addressing their own trauma, which impacts both family and child stabilization. IFCCS also provides case management, psychiatry services and links to such community resources as housing, financial, and health services. Our staff responds to crises 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Wraparound Services

This nationally recognized model of service delivery serves children and youth at risk of experiencing an out-of-home placement. An individual plan of care is developed for each child, driven by family-designated teams that include their treatment team, child welfare and/or juvenile justice workers, educators, natural supporters and other community members. Wraparound's flexible funding allows teams to do "whatever it takes" to assist in keeping a child in the community and in their home. Interventions tailored to the needs and strengths of each family can include trauma-informed therapeutic services and other support services, as well as activities that nurture the child's optimal functioning.

Avis and Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center

The Avis and Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center (LLC) is dedicated to serving transition-age youth, ages 16-25. Within this vibrant, accessible center, young people connect to a variety of supports, including therapy, case management, employment, education and career guidance, life skills, substance abuse counseling and housing.

The 10,000-square foot drop-in center at 5054 Vermont Ave. provides a safe place for recreation and creative exploration, along with a chance to build personal strengths and a sense of community. Youth are able to engage in a number of therapeutic and support groups, community-building opportunities and focused individual therapy.

Case management ensures that each person is linked to the community services they need. Life skills training teaches LLC participants to

live successfully and self-sufficiently, while employment services allow for them to expand their abilities, knowledge and experience on the job. For many, this service helps them find and adhere to a career pathway.

Wellnest's community partnerships open doors for young people to develop a sense of community and build on it. Among other impacts and settings, such partnerships have enabled young people to improve social emotional well-being at a community garden, work through depressive symptoms while hiking, transition into their own apartments and engage in healing circles.

Hope for Housing LA

Wellnest also serves the vulnerable transition-age population through our Hope for Housing LA Program. In this scattered-site housing program, which launched in 2017, former foster youth are eligible to obtain furnished apartments in South Los Angeles and Metro Los Angeles. They also connect with a support team that provides tools for learning to live independently. Each young person receives focused support to prepare them for permanent housing at the program's completion. The program is growing. Initially, we served youth ages 18-21; in 2020, we expanded and began welcoming young adults up to the age of 25.

149 HEALTH FAMILIES AMERICA

Families with newborn babies benefited from Health Families America's supportive services

Outpatient Services

Wellnest Outpatient Services take place where people need us—onsite at our facilities, in schools and client homes, at the park or other community locations. Behavioral Health Services, offered in English and Spanish, encompass individual, group, and family therapy, along with case management and psychiatric services. In group work, our clients are guided in using art, music and other modalities to encourage healing and growth. With the unprecedented global event of COVID-19 in spring 2020, Wellnest Outpatient Services quickly adapted—almost overnight—to providing telehealth and telemedicine services to our clients.

The following services continue to be provided safely using teletherapy:

Integrated Service Management

Our Integrated Service Management Program called “Mind, Body and Heart” combines support for mental and general health in a holistic model of care. The program is conveniently located in a Federally Qualified Health Center to enable consumers to access all health care needs in one place, often on the same day. Participants also build wellness with such “non-traditional” health services as yoga, stress relief, art classes, and cooking.

School-Based Services

Wellnest partners with the Los Angeles Unified School District to bring onsite behavioral health services to 35-plus schools, including charter schools. Our expert staff reach out to children and teens with emotional and behavioral issues that may significantly interfere with their ability to learn. We work with students facing possible suspension and expulsion or struggling with attendance and performance. Services include individual therapy and family counseling.

Clinical Training and Intern Development Program

The Clinical Training and Intern Development Program provides comprehensive training in a supportive learning environment for Master’s Level students pursuing degrees in social work. Our goal is to develop well-rounded, skilled therapists who can work with a diverse population in various mental health settings. Interns/ Trainees receive a best practice curriculum with an emphasis on culturally responsive client engagement that includes assessment, diagnostic and treatment skills in all therapeutic settings—individual, family and group psychotherapy.

All of our practices in documentation responsibilities align with the California Board of Behavioral Sciences, the National Association of Social Workers, and ethical and legal guidelines. Individual and group supervision is provided. We currently have partnerships with University of California, Los Angeles; University of Southern California; Cal State University Dominguez Hills; Azusa Pacific University; Cambridge College; and Columbia University.



291 EMERGENCY RELIEF

Wellnest provided emergency COVID-19 relief to 291 children and household members to help supply food, rental and utility assistance, and other basic needs.



HFA Home Visitors, Stephanie Plancarte, Xochilth Ruiz, and Stacey Roldan, along with HFA Program Supervisor, Claudia Hernandez.



Seeds: Cultivating Connections

Giving young people opportunities to lead, immerse themselves in community and give back helps them hone their individual strengths, find new talents and develop a stronger relationship with their community.

Wellnest Case Manager Emme Paige was inspired by her work with young people at the Avis and Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center (LLC), to make new community connections happen in 2020, by forming a new LLC group called Seeds.

The group kicked off with one LLC client sharing his gardening knowledge with his fellow Seeds participants. Taking on an unfamiliar leadership role empowered him to want to do more. Then COVID-19 hit.

“It became important for us to understand the community was in crisis,” said Paige. Seeds broadened its activities to embrace culture, food and land, and gave each participant a chance to make a difference.

Wellnest partnered with CultivaLA, a nonprofit dedicated to transforming access to healthy food and wellness through people, social enterprise, and environmental justice. Led by Paige and LLC Clinical Therapist Heaven Cisse, AMFT, the Seeds crew began volunteering at a local community garden and farmer’s market every

Thursday. “Each young person was able to find their own helpful, empowering role during the pandemic, when so many community members were experiencing isolation and hopelessness,” said Cisse.

Each Seeds member took on a specific role within the community garden and a weekly farmer’s market. Cultivating the earth and learning other new skills opened unexpected doors to social and emotional growth. The volunteers were able to interact with community members, be mentored by CultivaLA’s founder, José Miguel Ruiz, MSW, and build community “outside the traditional clinical setting,” said Paige.



One young man who felt uneasy leaving his house was transformed by his deep connection to the garden to where he was able to feel comfortable and get outside more often. Another took what he learned and taught his family new recipes with the produce he had helped tend. He even started a recipe book. A third participant, who had been working with an LLC employment specialist, discovered the value of volunteering in building his resumé.

Every week, each young person was able to contribute to their own family by bringing home a bag full of fresh produce—much of which they had cultivated themselves.



“We are delighted to have a partnership with Wellnest in providing hope and community well-being to those disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and beyond. From the onset of the pandemic, CultivaLA responded by creating a weekly COVID-19 Emergency Produce Distribution, a community approach where Wellnest staff and youth were instrumental in distributing over 90,000 pounds of fresh fruit and vegetables.”

—Jose Miguel, Founder and CEO of CultivaLA





We Celebrate and Build Community

Wellnest also nurtures emotional health and wellness

in our community by sponsoring events throughout the year. These occasions provide opportunities to celebrate, to gather, to access community resources and to learn.

Holiday Fest

In December 2019, Wellnest hosted our joy-filled annual Holiday Fest. Over 800 children and families joined 140 Wellnest volunteers for games, arts & crafts, a warm meal and entertainment. Guests enjoyed learning more about their health at our Wellness Fair. Among the community partners in attendance were the Community Coalition, L.A. County Department of Mental Health, El Nido Family Centers, Maternal Mental Health NOW, L.A. County Library, PHFE WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children), World Harvest Food Bank and Peace Over Violence. Santa made a visit and, with his elves, ensured each child left with a toy in their hands and joy in their heart.

Back-to-School Fest

In August 2019, Wellnest hosted a Back-to-School event—providing children with much-needed supplies as they excitedly prepared for the new school year. Families went home with free backpacks, school supplies and diapers. All attendees enjoyed healthy snacks, arts & crafts and interactive games.



5,000 COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Wellnest engaged more than 5,000 attendees in its various wellness-centered, community-building events.

200 VOLUNTEERS

the number of volunteers who generously gifted their time and energy to Wellnest.



Community Alliance Conversation and Youth Mural

In partnership with Blue Shield of California, and Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Los Angeles, Wellnest hosted a community conversation focused on the impact of trauma on youth and our collective efforts to build resiliency solutions in South Los Angeles. We brought together leading experts for a panel discussion and hosted an interactive session to help design an actionable, collaborative initiative to connect community resources.

In August 2019, Wellnest celebrated the unveiling of an inspiring mural at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Los Angeles Challengers Clubhouse in South Los Angeles—the culmination of a collaborative art therapy program that helped local youth ages 11 to 17, some of whom were Wellnest clients, cope with everyday trauma in a safe place. To develop the 20-foot by 60-foot mural, the Challengers members worked with community muralist Moses Ball to design an artwork based on their hopes and aspirations. In keeping with its theme, the mural reads, “Believe in the Promise.”

The project was also sponsored by Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan. The special inaugural event included entertainment from a local DJ, a Challengers Club youth stomp troupe and the signing of the mural.

Beyond the Schoolhouse

Wellnest was honored to host the convening and release in October 2019 of a UCLA Policy Report, “Beyond the Schoolhouse: Overcoming Challenges and Expanding Opportunity for Black Youth in Los Angeles County.” The comprehensive study examines both in-school and out-of-school risk factors that impact Black children’s educational success in the County of Los Angeles. UCLA researchers and local education leaders came together at the Wellnest Avis and Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center to discuss the report’s findings.



Top photo: Dr. Greg Buchert, President and CEO of Blue Shield Promise. Middle photo: Dr. Pedro A. Noguera, Founder of the Center for the Transformation of Schools at UCLA. Right photo: (left to right) UCLA Professor Tyrone C. Howard, UCLA Professor Kelly Lytle Hernandez, LA County Superintendent of Schools Debra Duardo, Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Wellnest President & CEO Charlene Dimas-Peinado, Dr. Shani Byard, Senator Steven Bradford, and UCLA Professor Joseph Bishop.



Building Success

The Avis and Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center debuts to meet an urgent need.



Wellnest opened the Avis and Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center (LLC) in Spring 2019, supported by the Building Success Capital Campaign, which came to a winning conclusion in December 2019, having raised \$4.2 million to create the newly reimagined center.

“The Avis and Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center symbolizes hope and a brighter future for our youth and young adults,” said Charlene Dimas-Peinado, LCSW, EML, Wellnest President and CEO. “This is the right time for us to focus our attention on the social and environmental concerns impacting this population and make a meaningful difference.”

The 10,000-square foot drop-in center is designed to engage at-risk transition-age youth, ages 16-25, to access expert, innovative trauma-informed mental health services and resources.

The goal: to help them foster their emotional well-being and health, enhance lifelong economic stability and build strong connections to positive support systems.

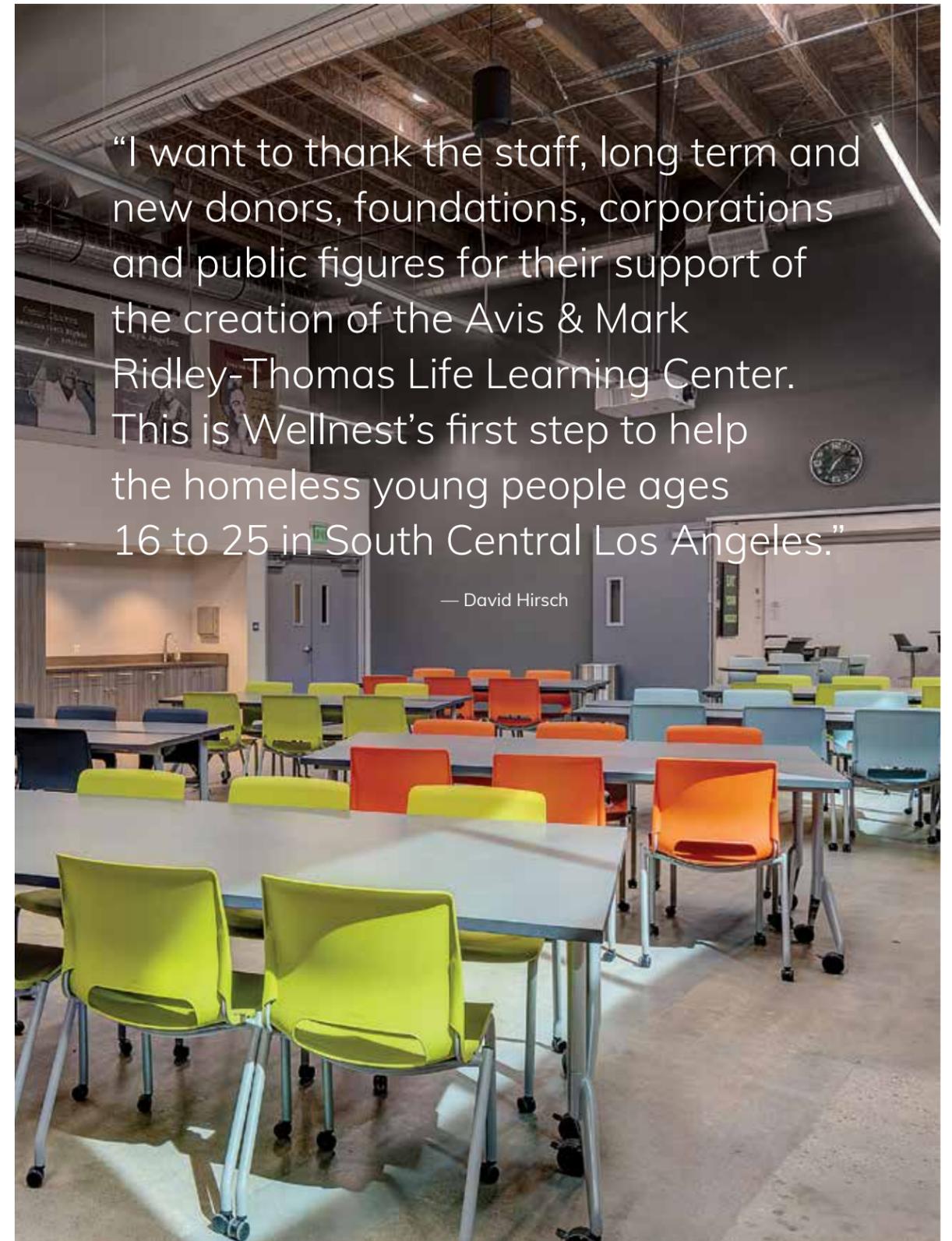
About 1.4 million transition-age youth live in L.A. County. Many of these young adults transition into adulthood successfully, however, estimates are 1 in 5 transition-age youth will experience a mental health issue, but only 11% will get needed services.

In 1992, Wellnest (then known as the Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic) founded the Life Learning Program. In 2014, the program was renamed the Avis and Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Program in honor of two L.A.-based activists who represent community empowerment and social justice.

Seeing an urgently growing need, Wellnest launched the Building Success Capital Campaign in 2017, inspired by a vision of a new building—the organization’s third—that would house a welcoming, standalone center for transition-age youth.

The expanded facility at 5054 S. Vermont Ave. provides formal clinical services, plus recreational and social activities, along with access to housing and educational resources, substance abuse counseling, therapy and career training.

“We are delighted that the Building Success Capital Campaign received such tremendous response, and we are grateful to all of our donors who contributed,” said Wellnest Board Director Gail Kennard. “Thanks to all, we can now reach out to at-risk youth with added resources.”



“I want to thank the staff, long term and new donors, foundations, corporations and public figures for their support of the creation of the Avis & Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center. This is Wellnest’s first step to help the homeless young people ages 16 to 25 in South Central Los Angeles.”

— David Hirsch

Housing for Promise

the Nest on Florence DAVID AND SUSAN HIRSCH



In building The Nest on Florence, we are changing the narrative of homelessness for young adults in Los Angeles from neglect, struggle and depression to resilience, strength and promise.

In March 2020, Wellnest broke ground on our first permanent supportive housing project—The Nest on Florence—and changed the landscape for young adults in South Los Angeles and Metro Los Angeles.

The centerpiece is a five-story, 40,848-square foot facility, named the David & Susan Hirsch Building, in honor of two of our founding donors. It will offer 51 fully furnished units and access to tenant-driven support services for transition-aged youth (TAY), ages 18-25, and TAY families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and are impacted by a mental health issue, which may inhibit their ability to maintain stable housing.

“Our community is grappling with a complex, interwoven set of needs—including homelessness, racial injustice, unemployment, violence and deep-seated trauma. Against this backdrop, we are building a place of promise, a place of possibility.”

said Charlene Dimas-Peinado, LCSW, EML, Wellnest President and CEO.

On The Nest on Florence campus, at 410 E. Florence Ave., residents will find a sense of community. The Hirsch Building will feature 34 studios, 16 one-bedrooms and a two-bedroom manager’s apartment. Also on site are a community recreation area and outdoor common area, stylish lobby, laundry facilities and secure bike parking. Most important, Wellnest emotional health experts will be there to offer support and links to resources.

Completion is anticipated in December 2021.

The Nest on Florence builds on the success of the Avis and Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center and the Hope for Housing LA Program, in which young people learn to live independently and prepare for permanent housing. Wellnest has launched a capital campaign, Housing for Promise, to build The Nest on Florence and help young people forge a pathway to housing stability and independence.

Join us by contacting Andrea Salazar, Vice President of Advancement & External Affairs, at AndreaS@WellnestLA.org or 323-545-4706.



Statistics Reveal the Need

- **Between ages 18-25** is a critical time period, when young adults experience the highest prevalence of mental illness of any age group. Yet nearly half of those don't get help.
- **1.4M youth 16-24** live in L.A. County. Of these, **20%** report needing help for mental or behavioral health.
- **14% of homeless** in L.A. are young adults **18-25**.
- **19%** increase in homelessness among transition-age youth in 2019.
- **1 in 3 youth** experience homelessness upon “aging out” of foster care.
- **L.A. is the least affordable housing market** in the U.S.
- Lacking family support networks and often victims of childhood traumas, about **25%** of California’s foster youth transitioning into adulthood live in precarious housing situations.
- Youth aging out of the foster care system likely constitute a significant share of the **more than 11,000** homeless young adults in California.

David and Susan Hirsch

Activist Philanthropists

For David and Susan Hirsch, supporting causes they care about goes far beyond monetary contributions. “For us, giving back to the community means giving of yourself, too,” said David, a member of the Wellnest Board of Directors.



The Hirsches are driven in their activist philanthropy by a desire to understand and impact the world “outside the bubble of our own neighborhood,” Susan added. “Getting involved adds to the experience of giving, and to your knowledge of the broader community.”

Inspired by his mother’s activism, David Hirsch first visited the Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic nearly 45 years ago at the behest of a family friend. There, David met a young boy who showed signs of past abuse in scars and burns on his face and arms. So traumatized, the boy couldn’t speak. “That did it for me,” David said. He signed on immediately, and this fall marks his 44th year on the Board.

He brings to his role a successful career in business and law, including a finely honed knowledge of real estate and construction. As Board Chair, he was instrumental in capital campaigns that acquired Wellnest’s first two buildings on Vermont Avenue. Most recently, he helped spearhead the campaign for The Nest on Florence, Wellnest’s first permanent supportive housing project. The five-story apartment structure on the campus is now named the David and Susan Hirsch Building.

The Hirsches never aspired to see their names on a building, but they are passionate about the cause of affordable housing, especially for young people ages 18-25, many of whom are transitioning from group homes or foster care, and at risk for homelessness. Susan, who holds a master’s in public health, has worked with transition-age youth. “Too often,” she said, “this group is excluded from traditional support systems.”

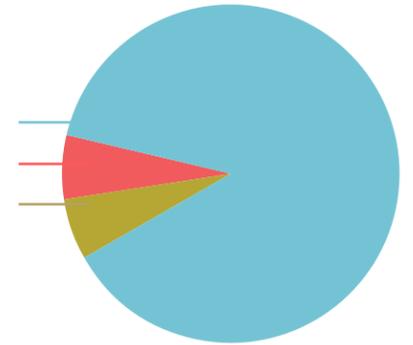
David was about to retire from the Wellnest Board when “we realized we needed to find a way to house these kids. This is a wonderful step forward.”

The Hirsches believe that helping even one young person turn their life around is important. As David said,

“You change the world one grain of sand at a time.”

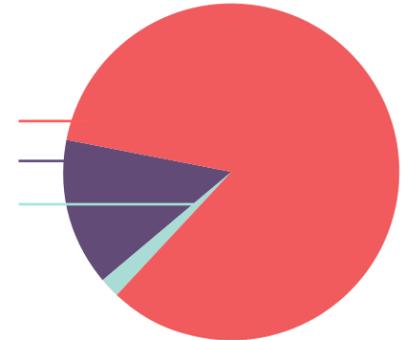
Where the funding comes from

Public	\$24,148,466	89%
Private	1,495,446	6%
Others	1,541,347	6%
	\$27,185,259	



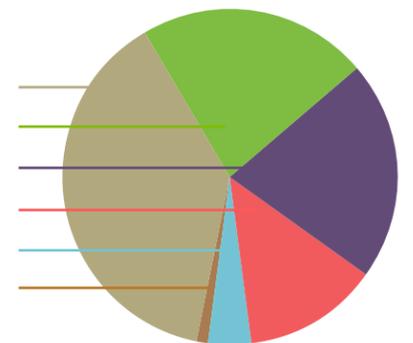
Where the funding goes

Programs	\$20,966,474	84%
G&A	3,532,960	14%
Fundraising	549,183	2%
	\$25,048,617	



How programs use resources

Outpatient Services	\$8,002,121	38%
Early Intervention and Community Wellness	4,702,567	22%
Intensive Services	4,399,585	21%
Avis & Mark Ridley-Thomas LLC	2,805,422	13%
Psychiatric Services	865,766	4%
Clinical Training and Intern Development Program	191,013	1%
	\$20,966,474	





Annual Honor Roll of Donors

Endless opportunities are embraced with giving hearts. Thank you, everyone, from the bottom of ours.



We are deeply grateful for gifts received this past fiscal year from old friends and first-time supporters alike to support our comprehensive array of programs and services. Your philanthropic partnership is a vital contribution to Wellnest's ongoing efforts to offer help and hope for children and their families.

DIAMOND \$250,000-Over \$1,000,000
Office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Rose Hills Foundation

VISIONARY \$100,000-\$250,000
AEG Community Foundation
Everychild Foundation
Good Hope Medical Foundation
Ralph M. Parsons Foundation

PLATINUM \$25,000-\$99,999
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Weaver

Wellnest announces appointment of Dr. Quinton C. James and Carlos A. Perez

The Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of Quinton C. James, M.D. and Carlos A. Perez to the distinguished role of Board Emeritus for Wellnest, a role that recognizes their many years of dedicated service to Wellnest and their ongoing involvement by continuing to provide their expertise to the Board.

Dr. James (retired) has served in numerous capacities as a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist for the Los Angeles Unified School District, Chief for Child and Adolescent Services at Martin Luther King, Jr. General Hospital and Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. Dr. James authored numerous papers and presentations, has been a discussant for various programs related to his profession, and served as an active public speaker on the subject of child mental health.

Dr. James's civic appointments have included: California Delegate to the White House Conference on Children; National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism; the Health Committee to Write Standards for Child Care, California Department of Public Health; and, the American Psychiatric Association Task Force on Ethnocentricity Among Psychiatrists.

Mr. Perez (retired), a Certified Public Account, served as a Partner for Deloitte & Touche in the firm's tax function; Pacific Southwest Diversity Leader and member of Deloitte's National Diversity Council; Commissioner for the City of Los Angeles appointed by Mayor Riordan to serve on the "El Pueblo de Los Angeles Monument Commission," and, appointed by the Commissioner of Internal Revenue to serve on the Internal Revenue Service Commissioners Advisory Group.

Mr. Perez received numerous honors and recognitions: Hispanic Business Magazine – 100 Influential Hispanics; Boy Scouts of America Distinguished Citizens Awards; "ALPFA" Lifetime Achievement Award; and, National Employee Association Professional Achievement Award.

Dr. James and Mr. Perez will sustain their legacy as leaders and stewards of Wellnest, as the agency fulfills its mission: Through a holistic approach to emotional well-being, Wellnest offers hope, healing and opportunity to the children, young adults, families, and communities we serve. Our commitment remains steadfast as we enter our second century of service.

EMERITUS MEMBERS



— Dr. Quinton James



— Carlos Perez

NEW BOARD MEMBERS



— Carrie Hidding,
teamCFO



— Margo Kaatz,
Whittier College



— Alicia Jacobs,
The Ajament Partners

List of Officers and Directors

FY 19/20

Wellnest is indebted to the governing leadership of our Board of Directors. These individuals, working in close partnership with Executive Staff, gave generously of their time, talent, and resources in carrying out our mission.

Directors

Wayne Chen, M.D.
Blue Shield of California

James Gallagher, Esq.
Pillsbury Law, rtd.

Carrie Hidding, CPA, MBA
teamCFO

David L. Hirsch, Esq.
MASCO Corporation, rtd.

Shelly Holmes
Holmes Associates

Alicia Jacobs, MBA
The Ajament Partners

Margo Kaatz, RN, MA, Esq.
Whittier College

Gail Kennard
Kennard Design Group

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Charlene Dimas-Peinado, LCSW, EML
President and CEO
Wellnest

Executive Team

Charlene Dimas-Peinado, LCSW, EML
President and CEO

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Chief Operating Officer

Margaret Lopez, CPA, MAcc
Chief Financial Officer

Paco Retana, MSW, LCSW
VP of Programs

Andrea Salazar
VP of Advancement & External Affairs

Laura Alvarez, PHR, SHRM-CP
VP of Human Resources



Wellnest Executive Team from left: Paco Retana, Vice President of Programs, Lisa Hirsch Marin, Chief Operating Officer, Margaret Lopez, Chief Financial Officer, Charlene Dimas-Peinado, President and CEO, Andrea Salazar, Vice President of Advancement and External Affairs, Laura Alvarez, Vice President of Human Resources

Wellnest 2019-20 Annual Report

Editors:

Andrea Salazar, VP of Advancement & External Affairs

Vanessa Gorski, Advancement Officer

Candace Pearson

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The Pace Group

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Alan Bernstein, Director, Client Solutions

Contributing Photographers:

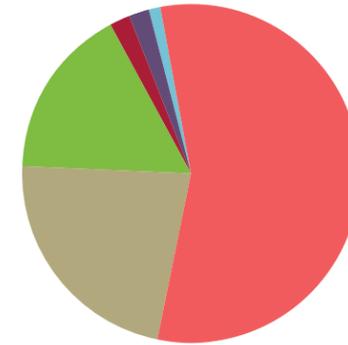
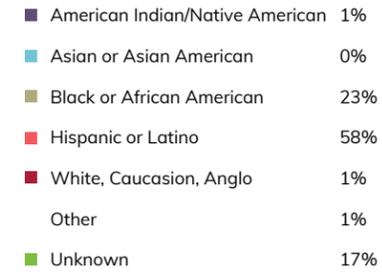
Bobby Gulrajani, Almog Avidan Antonir,

Priscilla Caraveo Photography, Fernando Acevedo

Setting high standards and asking more of ourselves is rewarded through the happiness of those we serve.

Services are community-based, family-focused, and culturally sensitive. Clinicians and professionals partner with families and caregivers, using a strength-based approach to treatment, to address children’s and youth’s mental health issues and achieve positive outcomes. This approach is designed to support existing family strengths and empower parents and caregivers to replicate this strength in other areas of family interaction.

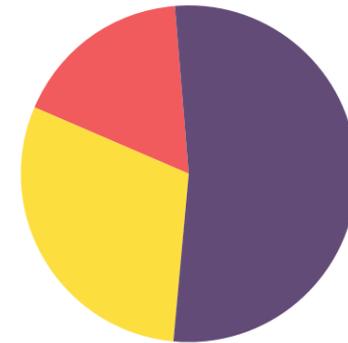
Ethnicity/Race of Clients



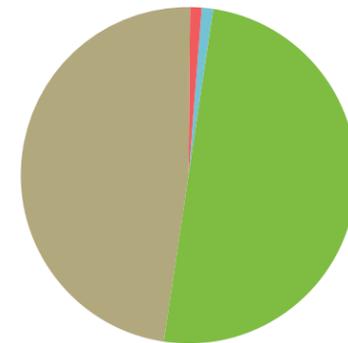
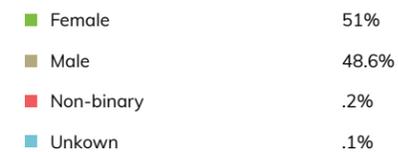
Area	Total Population
County	10,192,376
SPA 4	1,167,286
SPA 6	1,048,734
SPA 7	1,322,943



Age Ranges of Clients



Gender of Clients



“Not only does Wellnest care about my son’s well-being – they care about mine, too. And that’s a nice feeling to have.”

With the weekly support of Wellnest’s telehealth services and individual therapy, Janelle enjoys having our services so readily available wherever she and her 4-year-old son are. She was eager to share that their family bond has gotten stronger since receiving Wellnest’s services.

1-year old James is a client in our Early Intervention Outpatient services. His older siblings have been overwhelmed with what feels like the world turned upside down. Thanks to teletherapy appointments with our therapists and games supplied by Wellnest, his family has been able to manage.

Alexa and her 3-year-old are living in a shelter as she works to maintain her current job. With the support of regular teletherapy from Wellnest, Alexa is seeking out housing resources, while taking care of her mental health and her child.

All names changed to maintain anonymity

Invest today in tomorrow's future

What we all do today has a profound effect on those that need our help the most. Thank you for your generosity.



Children, young adults, and families in South Los Angeles are at risk for daily exposure to significant trauma, including poverty, community violence, abuse, and lack of services that prevent them from reaching their full potential.

50

At Wellnest, and throughout our long history, we have made it our mission to offer hope, healing, and opportunity to the communities we serve.

We take our research-based, trauma-informed services to people in need, whether in schools, their homes, community parks, health centers, and our recently opened Avis & Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center for youth.

Given the increased needs of the community, due to COVID-19, our commitment is now greater than ever before. Making sure that our community's most high-need youth and families have the help they need is central to all we do. This includes plans to build a new housing facility for youth and families at risk of homelessness. It will provide stable housing, mental health and substance abuse counseling, case management and much more.

Your contribution will offer us a helping hand to vulnerable young adults and families, so they can enjoy a healthier future.

To make an investment today, please visit www.wellnestla.org/donate.

To learn more about Nest on Florence, contact **Andrea Salazar**, VP of Advancement & External Affairs at andreas@wellnestla.org or 323-373-2400.

611 ON-SITE SERVICES IN SCHOOLS

611 children and youth received mental health services on-site in the Los Angeles Unified School District, charter schools, and private school campuses.

Kambria Caldwell, LMFT, Clinical Supervisor —



“I quickly realized I was

needed more now than ever before.”

“Together we can.”



Wellnest is a nationally acclaimed, and leading provider of emotional health and wellness services to the children, young adults, families, and communities that we serve.



WellnestLA.org

-  Instagram: @wellnest_la
-  Facebook: /wellnestla1924
-  Twitter: @wellnest_la
-  LinkedIn: /company/wellnestla

LOCATIONS

University Park Office Administrative Offices

3031 S. Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90007
T 323.373.2400

Exposition Park Office

3787 S. Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90007
T 323.766.2345

Leimert Park Office

4401 Crenshaw Blvd., #300
Los Angeles, CA 90043
T 323.290.8360

Avis and Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center

5054 S. Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90037
T 323.373.2444

Integrated Care

Adventist Health White Memorial
1720 E. Cesar E. Chavez
Los Angeles, CA 90033
T 323.545.3522