

## PRESS RELEASE

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### County of Orange Social Services Agency Receives Crown Communities Award

*Orange County leads the way as the first California county to offer  
simulation training for Adult Protective Services social workers*

**Orange County, Calif. (February 19, 2019)** -- The County of Orange Social Services Agency (SSA) is pleased to announce it has been honored with the 2018 Crown Communities Award presented by *American City & County* magazine. SSA was recognized for its simulation training program, the first of its kind in the state specifically designed for Adult Protective Services (APS) workers.

Since 2004, *American City & County* magazine has bestowed the awards acknowledging cities and counties throughout the country for their ground-breaking accomplishments. This year, SSA was one of six programs to win this prestigious accolade.

While simulation training is more commonly utilized in child welfare, the SSA curriculum for APS social workers is being hailed as a best practice among other California counties. The goal of the training is to help APS workers become more adept and confident at engaging with clients, family members and suspected abusers during home visits, which can be complex to navigate.

The SSA training program was enabled through a partnership with the Orange County Sheriff-Coroner Department for use of its simulation training facilities which provide three real-world home scenarios. SSA also garnered support from retired social workers who stepped forward to serve as “actors”, ensuring the simulations offer realistic and impactful training experiences.

Jason Axelrod, Associate Editor of *American City & County* stated “In examining their application, we were amazed at how SSA built California’s first adult protective services simulation training from the ground up without incurring any significant costs for the program. The use of APS retirees in the training struck us as innovative, since it offers an added layer of seasoned teaching for professionals.” He added, “SSA’s experience provides proof that local governments across the U.S. can create similar programs in their jurisdictions, even if a model currently does not exist in their states.”

According to SSA Director Debra J. Baetz, “SSA simulation training is specialized to help our APS workers practice approaches to establishing trust with clients, leading difficult conversations and assessing serious abuse allegations, all while remaining professional, calm under pressure and compassionate.” Baetz continued, “Our curriculum helps APS social workers become more skilled in handling the home visit, and enables an opportunity to practice their skills in a realistic and safe setting. “

For more information regarding the 2018 Crown Communities Award, please visit <https://www.americancityandcounty.com/collections/the-2018-crown-communities-awards/>.

To learn more about the County of Orange Social Services Agency, go to <http://ssa.ocgov.com/>.

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