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MEDIA CONTACT:

Jeff Okey

jokey@calendow.org

213-928-8622

EIGHT CALIFORNIA PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENTS, HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCIES HONORED FOR INNOVATIVE PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT HEALTH EQUITY

OAKLAND, Calif. (December 5, 2019) – The California Endowment, the state’s largest health foundation, announced the recipients of the [2019 Advancing Health Equity Awards](#) for their local innovations in improving public health. Eight public health departments and health human service agencies from across California were honored by The Endowment at a December 3rd ceremony for their work that goes beyond the traditional scope of public health to positively impact the health of poor and marginalized communities.

“Bringing health equity to all Californians requires public health departments to think outside of traditional medical interventions and practices to reduce and eradicate health disparities experienced by California’s poor and marginalized communities,” said Anthony Iton, MD, JD, MPH, senior vice president, The California Endowment. “These eight public health departments and health and human services agencies are doing that through non-traditional partnerships and methods that are producing promising health impacts.”

Launched in 2014 by The Endowment, the *Advancing Health Equity Awards* are meant to bring attention to and reward public health department practices that can inform and inspire the future work of others committed to improving health equity. This year’s awards ceremony at The California Endowment’s Oakland conference center featured a fireside chat with California’s Surgeon General Nadine Burke Harris who spoke about what is needed to truly achieve health equity in California.

“Understanding the science of toxic stress is an important addition to all the work we are doing on health equity,” said California Surgeon General Nadine Burke Harris. “Because when we deploy all the science and resources that we have, including all of the resources of health care to be part of the solution, that gets us to achieving a health equity agenda faster and more effectively.”

This year’s *Advancing Health Equity Awards* recipients are:

- **Arnold X. Perkins Award for Outstanding Health Equity Practice** was awarded to the [Riverside County Department of Public Health](#) (RCDPH) for its partnership with [Starting Over](#), Inc. to reduce housing discrimination for the formerly incarcerated. RCDPH’s role is to provide resources and technical support such as data analysis, guidance on policy and County politics, and meeting logistics. Starting Over’s role is to provide lived experience narratives and expertise on the criminal justice system. Having voices of system impacted people at the table helps

ensure that housing developments will less likely include blanket barriers for individuals with criminal convictions.

- **Exemplary Health Equity Practice Award** was given to the City of [Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services](#) which established the first municipal [Office of Equity](#) in Southern California. In collaboration with the [Vera Institute of Justice](#) and [Sanctuary Long Beach](#) the Office of Equity established the [Long Beach Justice Fund](#) (LBJF) to provide legal counsel for immigrants facing deportation to help families stay together. Immigrants with legal representation are eleven times more likely to establish the right to remain in the United States. In addition, the Office of Equity has worked to improve language access services for health, human and city services through a partnership with an alliance of community-based organizations known as the [Language Access Coalition](#). Nearly half of Long Beach residents speak a language other than English. By improving access to these translation services, ALL Long Beach residents will have better access to health, human and city services.
- **Exemplary Health Equity Practice Award** was given to the [San Francisco Department of Public Health](#) for its [Black African American Health Initiative](#), which is a series of workgroups with specific goals on improving outcomes for specific health conditions for San Francisco's underserved, black communities, most notably hypertension and chlamydia. The hypertension workgroup efforts resulted in closing the gap between Black/African American blood pressure control from 8 percent to 3 percent in four years. Through its cultural humility workgroup, intensive training to normalize discussion on racism among SFDPH leadership resulted in the implementation of racial equity teams, councils and committees across SFDPH. Last year, their efforts to address racism and cultural bias rebranded itself as the Equity Governing Council to formally institutionalize equity practices and embed them across SFDPH.
- **Exemplary Health Equity Practice Award** was given to the [Los Angeles County Department of Public Health](#) (LACDPH) for their transformational journey to build health equity and embrace racial justice that resulted in their launching of the [Center for Health Equity](#). The Center seeks to increase LACDPH's competency and capacity to engage in sustained equity work, amplify community voice and authentic narratives to drive action, and support community to engage in efforts to eliminate inequities, among other objectives. Starting internally, LACDPH created "Just Culture" which challenges their hierarchal power dynamics, views system issues and behavioral choices as interconnected, and encourages responses to problems to be led with fairness and kindness. These principles also drove their response to concerns about the [Exide battery recycling plant's lead contamination](#) of surrounding communities. Through their partnership with community-based organizations, LACDPH and community members were able to engage the affected communities to call for a strong regulatory response to address the lead contamination across thousands of homes.
- **Emergent Health Equity Practice Award** was given to the [Stanislaus County Health Services Agency Public Health Division](#) (SCHSAPHD) for its significant efforts and commitment to increase equity for underserved communities through the building of their internal infrastructure in order to bring equity to the forefront of their public health efforts. Significant resources were and continue to be invested in leadership development and staff training to reinforce efforts that focus on addressing power as the root cause of health inequities. Staff and leadership at all levels of the agency are involved and a Health and Racial Equity Committee was created and works robustly to ensure ongoing learning and staff training at all levels of SCHSAPHD. They are also embedding strategies to address equity and power imbalances into the [2020 Community Health Improvement Plan](#) in order to sustain health equity efforts across government agencies.

- **Catalyst Health Equity Practice Award** was given to the [Calaveras County Health and Human Services Agency's \(CCHHSA\) Public Health Division](#) for the creation and ongoing implementation of [The Calaveras Oral Health Program](#). Calaveras County is often stymied by the lack of data on health issues impacting Calaveras County residents. Due to the rural nature of the County, health data is often aggregated along with other smaller counties, if it's captured at all. This lack of data makes it especially difficult to address public health issues in rural counties resulting in poor health outcomes for California's residents of rural communities. CCHHSA conducted a [Calaveras County Oral Health Community Needs Assessment](#) and used the findings to create the [Calaveras County Oral Health improvement Plan](#). The needs assessment and improvement plan demonstrate how communities can use knowledge to give voice to an issue, gain resources and positively affect the health of the community.
- **Honorary Exemplary Health Equity Practice Award** was given to the [Santa Barbara County Public Health Department](#) for its collaboration with the community organizing group [Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy \(CAUSE\)](#) to ensure [farm workers](#) have access to safe and clean toilets, and potable water while working in the fields. Subsequently, SBCPHD convened a multi-sectoral work group that included CAUSE, labor groups, community-based organizations, [California Rural Legal Assistance](#), UC Merced, farmworkers, and industry owners and representatives to jointly address these issues through data collection and policy recommendations. SBCPHD's partnership with CAUSE provides a voice for farmworkers which will help advance health equity in the Santa Barbara County farmworker community.
- **Honorary Exemplary Health Equity Practice Award** was given to the [County of Santa Clara Public Health Department](#) for the [PEACE Partnership](#). The partnership brings together 37 partners including, community residents, public health, healthcare organizations, schools, city and county agencies, and others to build a healthy, peaceful and empowered community by preventing and addressing violence and trauma in East San José. By investing in people, places and opportunities, and rooting hope and healing at the center of activism for policy change CSCPHE believes the partnership can help transform the health, safety and resilience of the East San José community.

About The California Endowment

The California Endowment, a private, statewide health foundation, was established in 1996 to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians. Headquartered in downtown Los Angeles, The Endowment has regional offices in Sacramento, Oakland, Fresno and San Diego, with program staff working throughout the state. The Endowment challenges the conventional wisdom that medical settings and individual choices are solely responsible for people's health. The Endowment believes that health happens in neighborhoods, schools, and with prevention. For more information, visit The Endowment's Web site at www.calendow.org.

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