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RIVERSIDE COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT AWARDED HIGHEST HONOR BY CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST HEALTH FOUNDATION

LOS ANGELES (December 5, 2019) – The California Endowment announced at a December 3rd ceremony in Oakland that the Riverside County Public Health Department was the recipient of the [2019 Advancing Health Equity Awards](#) highest honor, the [Arnold Perkins Award for Outstanding Health Equity Practice](#) for its partnership with [Starting Over Inc.](#) to reduce housing discrimination for the formerly incarcerated. Eight public health departments and health human service agencies from across California were honored by The Endowment at the 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. “Riverside County Public Health Department’s unique partnership with Starting Over Inc. uplifts the authentic voices of the formerly incarcerated to tackle a seemingly intractable issue of providing safe, affordable housing to this highly marginalized population.”

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.

“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.”

A complete description of the award is below:

- **Arnold 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.

“We had to do a lot of reframing around the role of public health to include housing as part of a healthy life,” said Dianne Leibrandt, Community Engagement Coordinator, Riverside County Department of Public Health. “Health Equity is not just about access to health care, but also having access to safe, equitable housing.”

Click [here](#) to view and download a photo of Salomeh Wagaw, Vonya Quarles and Dianne Leibrandt, accepting the award.

Photo caption: from left: Kim Saruwatari, director Riverside University Health System Public Health, Diane Liebrandt, Community Engagement Coordinator, Riverside County Department of Public Health, Salomeh Wagaw, Epidemiologist, Riverside County Department of Public Health, Vonya Quarles, executive director, Starting Over, and Michael Osur, assistant director, chief health strategist, Riverside University Health System Public Health, pose with their Advancing Health Equity Award at the Dec. 3 ceremony in Oakland, CA. Photo courtesy of The California Endowment.

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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