



NEWS RELEASE

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“Read While You Wait” Opens New Chapter in Community Literacy

New program transforms waiting room experience at Alameda County Social Services Agency

June 26, 2013 - An innovative partnership between the Alameda County Social Services Agency (SSA) and the Hayward and Oakland Public Libraries is transforming waiting room time at the Agency’s Self-Sufficiency Centers into an opportunity to promote family literacy, enjoyment of reading, and awareness of public library services.

Read While You Wait brings family story time programs delivered by children’s librarians to SSA’s waiting rooms. Beginning in April 2013, librarians have visited SSA’s Self-Sufficiency Centers at North Oakland, Hayward and Eastmont during the 2nd and 3rd weeks of the month to share lively 30-minute presentations of story-reading and songs to customers and their children. Participating children also choose a donated book to take home. So far about 360 books have been distributed. Thanks to an overwhelmingly positive response a [summer schedule](#) has been added.

The second component of Read While You Wait, currently being piloted at SSA’s North Oakland office, is a magazine distribution program for clients to enjoy while waiting to receive service. Social Services Community Ambassadors (volunteers) provide current editions of magazines ranging from People to Fortune to help pass the time.

“Visit our waiting rooms on any given day and you are likely to encounter parents trying to keep small children engaged and entertained while they wait to conduct their SSA business. You will also see adults in need of some type of distraction to help them pass the time,” noted Lori A. Cox, Agency Director, adding that none of this was lost on Social Services’ executive management staff or SSA’s Office of Public Affairs.

Librarians at the Eastmont Self Sufficiency Center report that 90% of the children who participated in the waiting room story time visited the Eastmont public library and signed up for a library card.

The response from clients has been extremely positive. One client stopped a Community Ambassador passing out magazines and said, “I don’t want a magazine; I just wanted to tell you that whoever thought of this, it was a good idea and really nice.”

SSA will continue to develop ways to promote community literacy at all its sites, explained Sylvia Soublet, SSA’s Director of Public Affairs. “Our goal is to implement small changes over time that will change the experience and ultimately the perception that our customers have about coming to our offices.”

Experience a little bit of story time for yourself by following the links below:

[YouTube clip](#)

[Facebook post](#)

[Website.](#)



Anyone interested in volunteering as a Community Ambassador can [sign up online](#) or contact Sylvia Soublet at 510-267-9434 or ssoublet@acgov.org.

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