



# The Center at McKinleyville

*Rraninou'Waduk—We help each other.*

@centeratmck on Instagram

[www.mckfrc.org](http://www.mckfrc.org)

## LEAD AGENCY

### McKinleyville Family Resource Center

The mission of the McKinleyville FRC is to facilitate the collaboration of community and to develop programs that support, enrich, and sustain healthy community life.

## DV PREVENTION APPROACH

The collaborative focuses on improving safety for community members who face systemic inequities and who experience disproportionate rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) by addressing the community conditions that drive IPV. The Center's emphasis on early childhood also supports its ability to advance comprehensive approaches to promote safe relationships and families.

The focus areas for The Center include:

1. Health and well-being,
2. Connected community,
3. Safe & nurturing family,
4. Economic stability & success, and
5. Collaborative systems.

By serving as a bridge and an actual physical hub to connect community residents with local government, decision-makers, and opportunities for advocacy, The Center builds community capacity to affect policy change that addresses community-level drivers of IPV including poverty and housing insecurity. It also applies the learning gleaned through its case management services to educate the County on community needs and priorities. Through these strategies, The Center cultivates inclusion and trust among community members and Center partners, strengthens community beliefs that support safe relationships, and initiates changes within multiple systems in the community.

The Center's view of intimate partner violence prevention is based in the belief that if we are genuinely connected to those around us and supporting one another, we can prevent violence (and many negative health outcomes). The Center recognizes the assets of the Indigenous community's values of consent and reciprocity as well as the relationship between colonial and

### ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERS

#### Core Partners:

[McKinleyville Family Resource Center](#)

[Trinidad Rancheria Tribal Social Services](#)

[Cal Poly Humboldt, Department of Social Work](#)

[Open Door Community Health Centers](#)

[Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services](#)

[North Coast Child Support Services](#)

#### Additional partners:

[Native Women's Collective](#)

[Centro del Pueblo](#)

[North Humboldt Union High School District](#)

[Queer Humboldt](#)

structural oppressions and gender-based violence. The history of extractive industries in the region resulted in violence against both the land and the people. The Center partners with Indigenous-led organizations and engages them in decision-making. Wiyot Tribal members gave the name Rraninou'waduk to The Center, meaning "we help each other."<sup>1</sup>

### COLLABORATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS & BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

#### Development of the collaborative and building collaborative capacity

- The Center at McKinleyville collaborative formed in 2014 with the intent of improving community members' access to available services provided by the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services. This was in response to the disparities in access to services in rural areas and part of a plan to decentralize delivery of DHHS services throughout the county. This group of county government, tribal, community and university partners envisioned a one-stop location of integrated services embedded in a primary prevention approach.
- Prior to formally opening to the community for services, an onboarding process of a two-day staff training with follow-up weekly half-day trainings on emergent needs was part of the intentional development of a collaborative culture at The Center. The purpose was to build relationships, learn processes, and train on key content areas to prepare Center staff to implement service integration. They also discussed values of The Center including being client-centered (clients are experts in their lives), creating safe spaces for staff and clients including developing an organizational safety policy, and valuing social justice and integrity.

*"I thought the training was very intentional and was designed to foster new ways of thinking. It asked us to decolonize our minds and approach the work in a new way."*

The Center created and adheres to a Safety Policy for building a culture of healthy relationships with the premise that systems and community-based organizations need to model healthy relationships in order to influence community norms.

<sup>1</sup> Walking in Balance: Following Indigenous Leadership to Strengthen Gender-Based Violence Prevention. PC\_ConfSumm-Walking-In-Balance\_032322.pdf (preventconnect.org)

### GEOGRAPHIC AREA

McKinleyville is an unincorporated community located on the northern coast of Humboldt County.

### COMMUNITY OF FOCUS

Rural and tribal community members who have historically experienced disparities in access to health and social services. There is also a strong focus on collaborating closely with community partners and county agencies to achieve integration of services at The Center.

- Finally, after a decade of planning and construction, including interruptions presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Center at McKinleyville opened its facilities in March of 2022. Two months later McKinleyville Family Resource Center, DHHS, Open Door Community Health, and North Coast Child Support Services moved into their offices and the facility held its grand opening. The Center is a one-of-a-kind integrated services site, designed to promote collaboration across agencies and organizations. The Center Partnership Committee (CPC) makes decisions regarding daily operations and is made up of representatives of Center core partners selected by their organizations.

### Community engagement and power building

#### *Programming for lifting up community voice and responding to community needs*

- **Safe and Nurturing Family Needs Assessment.** The Center conducted a community asset and needs assessment process in 2019 to support the Center's goal on creating conditions of Safe and Nurturing Families. They used a cohort process for the assessment to build a culture of mutual reliance, respect, personal growth, and pride among leaders. Said one individual of the process, "This work creates a strong foundation to help move inter-agency collaborative work forward." Assessment activities included a preparation retreat for the core group, community input meeting, focus group with youth to learn what they know about healthy relationships, panel of service providers to learn from their perspective and experiences, presentation from local tribal members to learn about intimate partner violence prevention from a tribal perspective, and a review of local data related to risk and protective factors for IPV. During the assessment process community members identified several areas of interest including parenting, communication, social support building, mentorship, and life skills.
- **Integrated and Community Driven COVID Response.** At the start of the coronavirus pandemic, prior to The Center's opening, the collaborative responded to community's concrete needs within days of the state's shelter-in-place announcement. The Center followed up with all participants of a rapid community survey to respond to their stated needs including assistance with bill payment, food insecurity and distance learning, as well as offered additional financial and social-emotional support.

- **Do Groups and Additional Onsite Partners.** Do Groups further the work of integration and proactively respond to client needs as Center staff work to address challenges upstream in every aspect of their work. Examples of Do Groups include working with law enforcement to ensure compassionate responses to those in crisis at The Center, working through the best way to schedule appointments for clients so they feel cared for, and bringing school staff onsite to understand services they may refer families for. Open Door's Mobile Medical Van began monthly visits to serve those needing medical services, as did Humboldt Domestic Violence Services and North Coast Rape Crisis Team.
- **Language Justice.** COVID-19 surfaced persistent language barriers in the McKinleyville community that prevented full access to services. Among the recommendations presented in a 2021 evaluation report prepared by the California Center for Rural Policy at Humboldt State University is to continue to support local actions related to equity and inclusion, with intentional efforts to engage Black Indigenous People of Color and community members who primarily speak languages other than English. In response, the Center partners committed to investing resources to reduce barriers and provide accessible programs and services and to work towards language justice in the Center's physical spaces, materials, and interactions between clients and staff. For example, when visitors first enter the Center they are welcomed in the many indigenous languages of the region painted on the lobby wall. Children's playgroups are held in a number of languages. The Center can provide access to programming in Spanish and advocates with their partners to do the same. Three of the ten Center employees are bilingual in Spanish and English. The Center facilitates an English Learner Advisory Committee at a local high school, and English Express offers monthly classes to English Language Learners.

### *Supporting organizational partnerships beyond the collaborative*

- **Books for Belonging.** The Program Manager and Cal Poly Humboldt's Child Development Department collaborated with community organizations serving historically excluded peoples to create a collection of books for children ages 0–5 that represent diverse experiences. Groups included Humboldt Asian and Pacific Islanders (HAPI), Eureka NAACP, New Rising Hmong Association, Queer Humboldt, Centro Del Pueblo, and Native Women's Collective. The books were delivered to 60 childcare facilities in Humboldt County.

- **The McKinleyville Healthy Relationships Coalition.** The Center collaborates with the Native Women’s Collective (NWC) (an arts and culture nonprofit) to apply for grants. One successful application allowed NWC and The Center to host virtual health workshops, a volleyball camp for Native youth, and an in person multi-generational period positivity menstruation workshop which showcased the cultural coming of age process known as the Flower Dance. The Center is committed to maintaining the McKinleyville Healthy Relationships Coalition to support a population highly impacted by IPV.
- **On The Verge** are leadership development cohorts. The Elevate Youth cohorts engage young people to develop youth substance use disorder prevention programming while building relationships with each other and building their individual skills. Year One had a cohort of 8 young adults aged 21–26. The group engaged with the County Public Health Officer, conducted detailed research, and reflected on their own experiences. For their project, the cohort held an event called “Let’s Talk About Drugs!” geared towards Queer, BIPOC, or Disabled youth.

### Policy and funding shifts

- The opening of The Center and commitment of Humboldt County DHHS to co-locate staff at this one-stop location increased access to services for rural and tribal communities and thus represents a major shift in practices and resource flows. A family can visit The Center and in one location participate in a toddler play group, apply for benefits (e.g., CalFresh, Medi-Cal), access a food pantry, visit a resource fair, and attend a meeting or event of a community group. The planning process leading up to The Center’s opening as well as the current Community Advisory Committee reinforce the importance of the voice of the community to ensure that The Center continues to meet the needs of community members and local and tribal organizations. As a result they are seeing better coordination of support systems including established connections that enable quick response to funding opportunities.
- The Project Manager organized a letter campaign signed by 50 women residents and community leaders to hold accountable a City Councilmember who was found to have sexually harassed an employee. The letter which called for the resignation of the elected official was published in the local newspaper. Even though the official refused to step down, the remainder of

the city council passed measures to protect city staff and severely limit the official's access to City Hall.

- The McKinleyville Family Resource Center, along with the support of the Center at McKinleyville and community partners, was awarded a guaranteed income pilot project to provide 150 pregnant individuals with \$920 per month for 18 months. Humboldt Income Program will serve adult residents in their first or second trimester of pregnancy who are living at 200% or below of the federal poverty level.