



Special Announcements & Resources

InSync Newsletter: Quarter 3
July - September 2025



Career & Resource Expo

Join us for the annual Career and Resource Expo on August 13, 2025, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., located at the County of Ventura Government Center between the Hall of Justice and the Hall of Administration.

The Expo will feature representatives from up to 26 agencies and departments that will share expertise and insights on navigating their available careers and resources. Invite your friends and family to come network while learning about career opportunities in administration, healthcare, information technology, public works, safety, and more.

Whether you're considering career growth or exploring resources, scan the QR code to register now and *be part of something amazing*.

Thank you for your commitment to our organization's growth and success. For questions, contact the event coordinator at jessica.jimenez@ventura.org.

Probation Externship

We're excited to announce that CEO-HR and Probation Agency have collaborated to develop an eight-week externship at the Juvenile Facilities Complex, launching this fall.

This unique opportunity is designed for students interested in pursuing a career as a Deputy Probation Officer. The program will provide a realistic preview of the profession, helping participants understand the career trajectory and day-to-day responsibilities of the role. This externship is ideal for students seeking practical knowledge in probation work while gaining insight about a future full-time career with the Ventura County Probation Agency.



For questions, please contact the program coordinator at jessica.jimenez@ventura.org.

Smile Bright: The Importance of Preventive Dental Care

When it comes to taking care of your health, your smile matters more than you might think. Preventive dental care is one of the easiest ways to maintain not only your oral health, but your overall well-being.



Why Preventive Dental Care Matters

Regular dental visits help catch problems early before they become painful or costly. Your dentist can detect cavities, gum disease, and even early signs of conditions like diabetes and heart disease. Many serious dental issues can be prevented altogether with simple, consistent care.

How Your MetLife Plan Helps

Your MetLife dental plan includes **two free cleanings and exams per calendar year** when you visit an in-network dentist. These visits typically include:

- A professional cleaning to remove plaque and tartar
- A thorough dental exam
- X-rays, if needed, to detect hidden issues

Why Use Both Cleanings?

Skipping cleanings increases the risk of gum disease, tooth loss, and costly treatments down the road. Plus, research links oral health to heart health, making your dental visits an important part of your total well-being.

Take Advantage of Your Benefit

- Visit the MetLife My Benefits portal at www.metlife.com/mybenefits.
- Use the "Find a Dentist" tool to locate an in-network provider.
- Schedule your first cleaning and remember to book your second one six months later.

Tip: In-network dentists help you get the most value from your plan, with lower out-of-pocket costs and full coverage for your preventive visits.

Remember, prevention is powerful. A few hours a year in the dentist's chair can save you time, money, and discomfort later, and help keep your smile healthy and bright for years to come.

Coming Soon: Annual Health Insurance Feedback Survey

Watch for the survey in your County email inbox soon. Your feedback makes a difference in guiding the County Benefits team and our health plan partners as we evaluate medical benefit options for the year ahead. In preparing for a new plan year, your voice will help determine future benefit offerings and ensure we are providing the best possible support for your health and well-being.



Make the Most of Your FSA This Summer

Summer is the perfect time to take advantage of your Flexible Spending Account (FSA). Whether you're planning beach days, outdoor adventures, or just enjoying the sunshine, your FSA can help cover seasonal essentials while saving you money.

In addition to medical, dental, and vision expenses, your FSA can be used for items like sunscreen, first-aid kits, insect repellent, allergy relief, and more. You'll find plenty of eligible summer health products at FSASTore.com, where you can browse and shop using your Chard Snyder debit card. Orders ship straight to your door, making it easy to stay prepared all season long.

Don't let your FSA dollars go to waste; check your balance and stock up on summer must-haves today.

Complaint Resolution and Misconduct Hotline

County of Ventura employees should be able to voice concerns about tough workplace issues like harrassment, discrimination, or discourteous workplace behavior. When appropriate, employees are encouraged to first discuss concerns with their supervisors, then their agency/department HR Representatives. If resolution is still not reached, more information and online reporting are available at hr.ventura.org/complaint-resolution.



24-Hour Employee Misconduct Hotline: **1-800-684-6523**

*Calls and online reporting can be anonymous so there is no fear of retaliation.
Human Resources is committed to compliance and your participation is essential.*

Risk Control: Valley Fever on the Rise in Ventura County

Did you know that as of April 30, 2025, the number of cases of Valley Fever in Ventura County more than doubled since 2024? Within the first five months of 2025, over 170 cases have been reported in Ventura County, as opposed to 81 cases in 2024. Valley Fever infections tend to increase in the late summer into fall, which means many more cases are coming in 2025. It’s important that you understand Valley Fever so that you can reduce your chances of becoming infected.



Valley Fever is caused by exposure to coccidioidomycosis, which is a fungus that grows in soil and dirt in some areas of California and the southwestern United States. You can become exposed to coccidioidomycosis in these areas by breathing dust from outdoor air containing the fungus. This can occur when you are digging, driving on a dusty road, or going outdoors on a windy day. Recent studies have found that rainy conditions encourage coccidioidomycosis spore growth, and when the soil is then dried out by drought, the spores survive and are more easily released into the air.

Longer conditions of drought mean that there are longer opportunities for the spores to be released. Wildfires can also release large amounts of spores into the air. Once airborne, the fungus may become inhaled, infecting the lungs and causing illness. Some cases of Valley Fever can be fatal.

Symptoms of Valley Fever include chest pain, coughing, difficulty breathing, fever, fatigue, body aches, rashes, and night sweats. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) advises seeking medical attention if you suspect you may have Valley Fever, as these are also common symptoms of COVID-19, influenza, and the common cold. Valley Fever is not contagious among individuals.

When you are in an area known to potentially contain coccidioidomycosis in the soil, consider the following CDPH tips to prevent exposure:

- Avoid dust outdoors. When it’s windy, stay inside with windows and doors closed. Close the windows of a vehicle when driving on a dusty road.
- Cover open dirt areas with grass, plants, or other ground cover to reduce dust.
- Wet soil before digging.
- After returning indoors, change out of clothes covered with dirt, and avoid shaking out and breathing in any dust that may be trapped in the fabric.

If you feel that you may be exposed to Valley Fever while at work, please contact your agency/department Safety Officer.

More information regarding Valley Fever can be found on the [California Department of Public Health](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) websites.



Is Your Home's Title Held in a Trust? Protect Your Assests and Avoid Probate

Of over 200,000 properties in Ventura County, only 90,936 are held in a trust, leaving many families unprotected. One of the most meaningful gifts you can give your loved ones is peace of mind about the future. That's why Health Care Foundation for Ventura County (HCFVC) has partnered with **Giving Docs** to offer a free, secure, and easy way for you to create a legally-binding will or trust. This no-cost resource is our way of thanking County of Ventura employees, your friends, and your families for supporting a healthier future for our community.

As you create your will or trust, you'll also have the opportunity to leave a lasting legacy by including a planned gift to HCFVC. Your support will ensure future generations have access to compassionate, high-quality healthcare right here in Ventura County.



In Partnership With



Smart Ways to Give and Save on Your Taxes Before Year-End

Make a lasting impact on local healthcare while maximizing your year-end tax benefits with these powerful giving options:

Donor-Advised Funds (DAF): Recommend a grant to HCFVC and make an immediate difference while enjoying favorable tax advantages.

Gifts of Stocks and Bonds: Donate appreciated securities to avoid capital gains taxes and potentially increase your charitable deduction.

Gifts of Cryptocurrency: Make a fast, secure, and tax-efficient gift by donating Bitcoin or other cryptocurrencies directly to HCFVC.

Take the next step today. Visit hcfvc.org to create your free will or trust, explore smart giving options, and make a lasting impact in just minutes.

Annual Notice of 2025-2026 Plan Administrative Fees

The Deferred Compensation Committee oversees your 401(k) and 457(b) plans and has a fiduciary duty to act in the best financial interest of plan participants. This includes identifying opportunities to reduce costs whenever possible. In line with this commitment, the Committee is pleased to announce a reduction in plan administrative fees for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. The new rates are as follows:

Quarterly Fees 2025-2026 Fiscal Year		
	Active (Current employees with a balance)	Inactive (Termed or retired with a balance)
401(k) Plan	\$10.25	\$5.00
457(b) Plan	\$10.25	\$5.00

Questions regarding the quarterly fees can be directed to deferred.compensation@ventura.org.

VCCU Financial Literacy Workshops

The Deferred Compensation program has teamed up with the Ventura County Credit Union (VCCU) to bring a free series of in-person financial literacy workshops to the Government Center. All workshops will be held at 12:00-1:00 p.m. in the Lower Plaza Assembly Room in the Hall of Administration.

Join VCCU on a financial education journey with topics that are educational, fun, and interactive. Mark your calendars now and be on the lookout for the registration email from Deferred Compensation approximately two weeks prior to each workshop.

July 9, 2025 - Home Buying

Thinking about buying a home? Learn what financial preparation is required prior to purchasing a home, the factors that can affect your eligibility for a loan, the different mortgage options available, and how to estimate what you can afford to pay for a home.



August 13, 2025 - Debt Management

Explore common reasons why people find themselves in debt. Learn about the value of using debt management strategies such as loan consolidation, budgeting, and debt management plans. Various debt management solutions will be compared, and a personal debt management plan will be discussed.

September 10, 2025 - Mind Over Money

Discover the powerful connection between your feelings and your financial decisions. Learn how emotions like fear, stress, and excitement can impact your spending, saving, and investing habits. Gain practical tips to recognize emotional triggers and make smarter financial choices.

Can't make in-person workshops? Check out VCCU's [Financial Education](#) page for upcoming webinars.



Introducing Victor Portillo

Victor is our new dedicated **Fidelity Workplace Financial Consultant**, and he can assist you with your financial wellness and retirement planning. Victor is located at the Government Center in the Hall of Administration and is available for in-person, virtual, or phone appointments. To schedule a complimentary consultation with Victor, please use the **Fidelity online scheduler** or call 800-642-7131. Victor is also available to come to your worksite and present at agency/department staff meetings or trainings. To discuss an on-site presentation, reach out to Victor at victor.portillo@fmr.com.

Ask Fidelity Webinars

There are several upcoming webinars this quarter, which you can [register for here](#).

Top Ten Things to Do Before You Retire

Thursday, July 17, 2025, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Wish you had a to-do list to help you prepare for retirement? Learn about how to get your finances in order and other important considerations that can impact your decisions.

Navigating Market Volatility

Wednesday, July 30, 2025, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Learn about the importance of having a plan and staying the course, investing best practices, and common pitfalls to avoid during volatile markets. The goal is for you to establish a plan if you don't have one, feel comfortable with your plan, and know where to get help.

Creating the Retirement that You Want

Thursday, August 14, 2025, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Learn about why it's important for women to plan for higher retirement expenses, especially healthcare costs, and how to be strategic about when to claim Social Security.

Finding an Investment Style to Fit Your Needs

Wednesday, August 20, 2025, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Managing for retirement isn't easy, but Fidelity is here to help. Learn about the different ways Fidelity can assist you in managing your retirement savings.

How to Make the Most of Your Retirement Savings

Thursday, September 18, 2025, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

How much savings is enough for retirement? Learn strategies that can help you save more today, and get tips for preserving and growing your savings in retirement.

What is a Roth In-Plan Conversion?

Wednesday, September 24, 2025, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Your retirement plan offers many ways to save for the future. Learn more about your options, including how to convert pre-tax dollars to a Roth using an in-plan conversion.

Hiking Series

So far this year employees have explored three local hiking areas, enjoying the beautiful nature of Ventura County as well as the opportunity to socialize and exercise with colleagues, family, and friends. In April, we hiked at Arroyo Verde Park, and in June we adventured along the trails of the Ventura River Preserve. **Registration is now open** for our final hike of the year taking place on Saturday, August 16, at Wildwood Regional Park in Thousand Oaks.



Biometric Screenings

Eligible employees and their spouses/domestic partners can take advantage of free biometric screenings each year offered through the Wellness Program. These screenings include blood testing of total, HDL, and LDL cholesterol levels, triglycerides, and glucose, as well as testing of blood pressure, weight, and waist circumference. The information obtained in the screenings provides participants with a closer look at their health and the ability to identify possible risk factors for future issues. The remaining biometric screenings for this year will be at County worksites on July 10 and 24, and August 7, 14, and 28, so **schedule yours today**. No appointments available? Walk-ins are welcome.

Golden Sneaker Competition

We're halfway through the annual Golden Sneaker Inter-Agency Competition, our biggest step battle of the year. Using the Be Well app, County agencies/departments compete as teams to achieve the highest daily step average and win the Golden Sneaker Trophy. If you haven't joined the competition, there's still time to create an account on the **Be Well app** and get your steps counted.

Current Leaderboard (Daily Step Average)

Small Division (1-50 employees)
VCERA - 8,583 steps

Medium Division (51-200 employees)
Resource Management Agency - 5,864 steps

Large Division (>200 employees)
Fire Department - 6,857 steps



Corporate Games Champions

In April and May, County employees took part in the annual Corporate Games, hosted by the City of Ventura. Through six weeks of fierce but friendly competition with other local corporations, County of Ventura earned 25 medals and, ultimately, won the title of Division A Champions. Congratulations to all participants, and we look forward to defending our title in next year's Corporate Games.



Coastal Housing Partnership provides an array of housing benefits for County of Ventura employees. Whether you are purchasing a home, seeking home-buying education, refinancing a mortgage, or looking for a rental, Coastal Housing Partnership has **resources available to help**.

In addition to our monthly webinars, which you can **register for here**, be sure to save the date for our upcoming Home Buying Fair in October 2025.

Upcoming Webinars

Navigating the Process of Obtaining a Home Loan

Tuesday, July 22, 2025, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Local loan officers will provide information on how to navigate the home buying process with emphasis on how to obtain a home loan, improve your credit score, how much of a loan you can afford, and how to buy a home with less than a 20 percent down payment. The latest information will be provided on loan programs, interest rates, and the current lending industry. There will also be an opportunity for you to get your questions answered.



Empowering Women in the Real Estate Purchase Process

Tuesday, August 12, 2025, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

This webinar will guide you through the home-buying process. Learn how to navigate obtaining a loan, how to improve your credit score, how to purchase a home with less than a 20 percent down payment, what's involved in working with a real estate agent, and much more.

Real Estate Agent Panel

Tuesday, September 16, 2025, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Two local real estate agents will provide information on how to prepare to purchase a home, what to look for in a real estate agent, and the process of finding a home and making an offer. They will also provide the latest information on real estate market conditions. Be sure to bring your questions for these real estate professionals.



The **Employee Assistance Program** (EAP) provides free and confidential counseling to you and your family to help resolve problems that may impact your health and well-being. We are staffed by licensed mental health professionals with experience in areas such as coping with personal crises, grief, marriage/family concerns, challenges at work, medical disorders, addiction issues, and other mental health concerns. EAP services are short-term and focus on stabilization, support, problem-solving, and seeking additional resources and referrals.



Easy Scheduling with EAP

When life is hectic, even small things like phone calls and paperwork can feel overwhelming. The EAP makes it easier than ever to schedule an appointment. Simply go to **our website** and click the prompt at the top of the page to open the new online intake form. The submitted form goes straight to our office, and you'll receive a call to schedule an appointment that is convenient for you. We are available for in-person, video, or phone appointments. For more information, visit our website or call 805-654-4327.

Learning & Organizational Development



Best Practices for Office Etiquette: Cubicles and Communication

Respect Personal Space

Cubicles may not have doors, but they are personal workspaces. Avoid leaning over partitions, entering someone's space uninvited, or startling colleagues by approaching too quietly. A gentle knock on the cubicle wall or a verbal cue can help minimize any negative feelings the other person may have if you enter and engage while they are focused on an important task.

Be Mindful of Noise

Sound travels easily in open-plan offices. Keep phone conversations at moderate volumes, use headphones for video or audio, and silence notifications if possible. When collaborating with coworkers or speaking for an extended amount of time in an online meeting, consider using a meeting room rather than your cubicle. Another option is to consider a walking meeting. Many County worksites have walking paths that can facilitate great meeting experiences.

Keep Conversations Appropriate and Brief

While small talk can foster camaraderie, it's important to recognize that not every moment is a good time for it. Professional boundaries are essential, so be considerate with casual conversations, both in length and in content. If you're busy with a work task, it's appropriate to say to a coworker, "I'm focusing right now, but can we catch up later?"

Practice Cleanliness and Organization

Your cubicle reflects not only your habits, but also the culture of your team. Keep your space clean and manage trash appropriately. Avoid leaving food out at your workspace, and consume any fragrant foods in designated break areas rather than at your desk.

Observe Visual Boundaries

Glancing at a neighbor's screen, even unintentionally, can feel invasive. Position your monitor in a way that maintains privacy and avoid commenting on what a colleague is working on unless invited. Visual discretion is part of building mutual trust in a shared space.

Use Technology Respectfully

If you're utilizing speakerphones, video calls, or smart assistants, do so in a way that doesn't disrupt others. When in doubt, default to using headphones or find a quiet room. Technology should enhance work, not create new distractions.



Acknowledge Hybrid Realities

In today's flexible workplace, not everyone is in the office daily. Be conscious of colleagues joining remotely by being punctual for hybrid meetings and ensuring audio and video setups are inclusive and functional.

Lead with Courtesy

The simplest gestures, such as greeting coworkers in the morning or asking before borrowing supplies, can build a positive work atmosphere. In shared spaces, kindness and consideration matter a great deal.

Conclusion

As we navigate through our work days, thoughtful cubicle etiquette helps build collaboration without friction. Awareness, empathy, and mutual respect can make the office feel like a welcome place.

Learning Management System Courses

Email Etiquette: To Email or Not to Email?

We often default to email for communication because we can get it anywhere; it's on our desktops, laptops, phones, tablets, and watches. However, email isn't always the best way to communicate. There's still value in meeting face-to-face or talking over the phone, and there can be risk in communicating without the help of nonverbal cues and voice tone. This five-minute course discusses the different things that you need to consider before drafting an email.

Supervisors and Managers: We recommend including this short course in an upcoming meeting with your team to review best practices and expectations regarding appropriate utilization of email, Microsoft Teams, phone calls, video calls, and in-person meetings.

To access this and other valuable courses, use the links to the right to log in to your agency/department Learning Management System.



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Thank you for reading this edition of *InSync*.

Click here to take a brief survey to assist us in publishing the best possible newsletter.

Please check with your supervisor should you wish to attend any of the events mentioned in this edition of InSync during your scheduled shift.

This County-wide email has been approved for distribution by the County Executive Office.