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## HCS employee named social worker of the year

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Rudy Garcia

Submitted

A Hardin County Schools student support specialist was recognized recently for his work with students in the school system.

According to a news release from HCS, Rudy Garcia was selected as the 2022 Kentucky School Social Worker of the Year by the Kentucky Association for School Social Work.

Garcia started working for Hardin County Schools in 2011. He coordinates the district's student dropout prevention program and the HCS Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports after his implementation of it, the release said.

His nomination letter included information about his development of a program that educates students who have violated district drug and alcohol policies on the benefits of resistance, his creation of a collaborative community initiative between schools and family mental health agencies to apply appropriate social and behavioral skills to elementary students, and his coordination with mental health agencies to give parents and students skills that will lead to the development of better relationships, the release said.

Additionally, his letter of nomination touches on his coordination of a program that aids students when transitioning between their traditional school setting and College View Campus, the HCS alternative education site, according to the release.

"The cooperative spirit that is shared among HCS family members is a testament to what we can do as a society to help our youth and their families," Garcia said in the release. "The district and our community have supported me in doing what is best for our students. Social work is not what I do, it is who I am."

College View Campus Assistant Principal Neal Gibbs said you can feel the enthusiasm Garcia has for social work and the students he works with.

"He is the social worker that other social workers go to for mentoring, advice and resources. He embodies what social work is meant to be especially at the school level," Gibbs said in the release.

Garcia is an adjunct social work professor for the University of Louisville and Western Kentucky University. He works with local mental health agencies on boards and committees and supervises

social work interns from numerous post-secondary institutions. He and his wife also serve as foster parents, the release said.

He also is Kentucky's nominee for the School Social Worker of the Year at the Midwest School Social Work Conference.

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**Mary Alford**