



County of Santa Cruz

COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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PRESS RELEASE

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On Tuesday, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors addressed the problem of substance abuse within the community by taking affirmative steps toward expanding treatment options for County residents.

Voting unanimously, the Board accepted an update on a plan being developed by the County's Health Services Agency to access funding available through the Affordable Care Act. Recently, the State of California won federal approval to design a Medi-Cal-based drug treatment program that would increase access to a range of services, including detoxification, residential treatment, case management, recovery maintenance services and physician consultation services.

The County of Santa Cruz is actively exploring joining this program, and expects to be among the first wave of counties to adopt it, pending a review of the program's risks and benefits.

"We're very happy that we're going to be part of the state program and to increase needed services for our community," said Giang Nguyen, Director of the Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency. "Drug and alcohol treatment is a path to healthier lifestyles, healthier families and a healthier community."

One in four families is affected by substance abuse, and the need for increased treatments services in the County is clear: more than 21,600 County residents are estimated to have substance use disorder, and 3,200 are actively seeking treatment. However, fewer than 1,300 are enrolled in County-funded programs.

In other business, the Board approved initiating an Environmental Impact Report on a proposed series of County Code changes designed to limit commercial weddings and events in residential neighborhoods, ensure viability of agricultural uses and protect



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farms, regulate the use of temporary structures such as PODs and carport tents, and establish an updated permit framework, including new policies and regulations, flowing from the Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan approved by the Board of Supervisors in Fall 2014.

The EIR includes an environmental analysis of the proposed changes and allows for public input.

If enacted, commercial weddings would be banned in urban areas, the Coastal Zone and on parcels less than eight acres in size, along with other limitations. This precludes commercial weddings in much of the North Coast – including Bonny Doon, Davenport and the Swanton Road area – urban Live Oak and South County areas south of Highway 1.

The changes will also set up an enforcement process through a permit system that would regulate large neighborhood special events and fundraisers with over 100 attendees on private properties; allow for wine tastings, farm-to-table dinners and roadside fruit stands to support local farms; regulate the use of storage cargo containers on rural properties; and update County codes to allow research and development and tech businesses in commercial areas.