



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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MOBILE CRISIS INTERVENTION SERVICES LAUNCH IN SOUTH COUNTY

The County of Santa Cruz is pleased to announce the launch of the South County Mobile Emergency Response Team for Youth (MERTY), providing community and field-based crisis intervention services to youth age 21 and younger.

Funded by a grant from the California Health Facilities Financing Authority (CHFFA), the program includes a mobile clinic staffed by a bilingual clinician and bilingual family support partner. The program provides culturally responsive and clinically appropriate services in the community, and responds quickly with urgent crisis services to help stabilize youth, support families and provide linkages to additional services. The program expands the County's community-based crisis services with a focus on removing barriers and providing easily accessible, high-quality care.

"Urgent crisis services are a priority, now more than ever, as youth struggle with the ongoing pandemic and continue to be isolated from school, peers and social interactions," said Cassandra Eslami, South County Services & Community Engagement Director. "MERTY reduces the need for transportation or office space by providing field-based urgent response coupled with a confidential meeting space inside the behavioral health mobile office."

To request MERTY services, call 1-800-952-2335 Monday-Friday between 8 a.m.-5 p.m. The clinical team can provide services at safe sites including schools and other community settings, including after-school programs and faith based organizations. In addition, the County recently received another CHFFA grant of \$578,973 to add a second MERTY mobile unit in North County, allowing MERTY services to cover all youth within Santa Cruz County in need of crisis mental health services.

"We are excited to launch MERTY to meet the needs of children, adolescents and family members in our Watsonville Community. With COVID-19 being part of our daily lives for the last year, we understand this has been a struggle for many, particularly children who may be experiencing a behavioral health crisis or for those that there are concerns are not doing well- struggling emotionally," Behavioral Health Director Erik Riera said. "We want you to call, and we want to help. Please consider reaching out to us."