



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

701 OCEAN STREET, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-4073

(831) 454-2000 WWW.SANTACRUZCOUNTY.US

CARLOS J. PALACIOS, COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Jason Hoppin

831-454-3401

GRANT REDUCED RECIDIVISM, JAIL IMPACTS

An independent evaluation of a three-year program designed for incarcerated individuals with mental health issues or substance use disorder has shown promising results that include reduced recidivism and other beneficial public safety impacts.

Using a grant from the Board of State and Community Corrections' Mentally Ill Offender Crime Reduction Grant (MIOCR) program, the Santa Cruz County Mentally Ill Offender Continuum of Care addressed a long-standing need to deliver prevention, diversion and intensive outreach services through additional staff, pre-trial and in-custody programs, and downtown outreach and public safety mental health liaison workers. Among the programs funded by the grant was the Maintaining Ongoing Stability through Treatment (MOST) program.

The evaluation showed a 79 percent increase in contacts with program participants, resulting in a 74 percent reduction in jail bookings and a 90 percent reduction in convictions, among other impacts. For the 160 program participants, this represents a savings in excess of \$2 million for jail costs alone.

"The MIOCR program has been an excellent collaboration with the Sheriff's Office, County Mental Health and our justice partners. Field-based interventions work and this format has provided my staff with the opportunity to work with clinicians to help people in crisis," Sheriff Jim Hart said.

"These results or more than encouraging, they are a signal to providers and the community that focused, intensive investment in services not only improves outcomes for those suffering mental health and substance use disorders, but can save money over the long run," Santa Cruz County Behavioral Health Director Erik Riera said.

Program participants were also at decreased risk for recidivism and demonstrated improved functioning. In addition, the evaluation showed increased cooperation among partner agencies, which also included the courts and Probation Department.

Although the grant expired in June, the County is continuing to fund these successful services. Furthermore, if voters approve Measure G in November, the County is proposing an additional outreach and public safety intervention program aimed at repeat offenders which includes behavioral health services.