



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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PRESS RELEASE

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GRANT EXPANDS YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The County of Santa Cruz is pleased to announce a \$416,000 State grant to expand mental health services for children and families.

The grant will fund clinical staff and a mobile behavioral health office to establish the first Mobile Emergency Response Team for Youth dedicated to South County. The new team will provide crisis services and evaluations for children and youth age 5-21, delivering culturally appropriate and clinically relevant services to bilingual and monolingual youth and their families.

"Our Mobile Emergency Response Teams are a key pillar of the County's full suite of mental health crisis intervention and stabilization services," said Erik Riera, Director of Behavioral Health Services for Santa Cruz County. "The need for mobile crisis team capacity, particularly for youth and families, was identified through behavioral health's community stakeholder meetings, our local NAMI chapter, as well as the work of the local Mental Health Advisory Board. This grant will help us provide these critical services for youth in the Watsonville area."

One in five youths live with a mental health condition, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Sixty-two percent of all youth clients served by County Behavioral Health live in the South County region.

Mobile Emergency Response Teams provides crisis intervention, stabilization and field-based response to acute mental health crisis situations, and liaison with youth and families to provide safety planning and short-term clinical follow-up and linkage to appropriate treatment services. Services can be accessed by calling (800) 952-2335.

Funding for the Mobile Emergency Response Team for Youth (MERTY) is provided by the California Health Facilities Financing Authority (CHFFA) through a grant program authorized by the Mental Health Wellness Grant Program for Children and Youth under Senate Bill 833 (2016).

"I want to thank everyone who helped put together this successful application for funds, particularly Cassandra Eslami, Chief of South County Behavioral Health Services and Community Engagement, who wrote the grant application which was ultimately awarded funding," Health Services Agency Director Mimi Hall said.

For more information on County crisis intervention services, [click here](#).