



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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PRESS RELEASE

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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS TAKES ACTION TO HELP VULNERABLE BABIES AND TODDLERS

Acting on behalf of the County's youngest residents, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors has voted unanimously to fund a new "Thrive by Three" Fund to reduce hardships for new families, increase access to infant and toddler care, increase medical access and more.

"Investing in effective, high-quality early childhood programs is one of the best investments we can make in our community," Supervisor Ryan Coonerty said. "Data shows that these types of investments pay off in the long run by giving children a better chance to grow to become healthy, productive, contributing members of our community. We're giving them a chance to thrive."

With a \$350,000 initial commitment from the County, the Thrive by Three Fund has already leveraged additional funding that more than doubles the original investment, to \$723,000. Additional funding comes from the state, Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County, First 5 of Santa Cruz County and the county's Human Services Department and Health Services Agency.

Numerous studies show that positive early-life experiences improve outcomes for children as they grow into adults. Helping alleviate family stresses associated with issues like poverty and neglect, parental substance abuse, or family violence can improve brain development and have lifelong benefits on learning abilities, behavior and health.



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The Thrive by Three program has several key goals, including:

- Increasing the number of mothers getting prenatal care in the first trimester.
- Decreasing the number of babies born preterm and with low birthweights.
- Reducing hardships and emotional distress for new mothers and fathers during pregnancy and a child's first three years of life.
- Improving parental confidence, parenting practices, and parent-child relationships.
- Decreasing child maltreatment and entries into foster care.
- Increasing access to high-quality care and early learning opportunities for infants and toddlers.

The program comes in addition to the Board's prior establishment of the Nurse-Family Partnership, which pairs public health nurses with young mothers prior to a child's birth through age 3 to improve outcomes. The Thrive by Three Fund is expected to expand the capacity of the Nurse-Family Partnership.

Another component of the Thrive by Three program is to increase access to high-quality infant/toddler care by providing a limited number of scholarships to families. The program will also help develop a local AB 300-compliant child care plan, as well as fund an updated Child Care Developer Fee study.