



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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CARLOS J. PALACIOS, COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

PRESS RELEASE

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GRANTS WILL ADDRESS LOCAL YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Funded by a \$2.2 million Housing and Urban Development grant, the County of Santa Cruz is pleased to announce that the Homeless Action Partnership and Youth Advisory Board have approved funding for seven projects to address local youth and young adult homelessness.

According to the 2017 Point-in-Time Count, there are 588 homeless unaccompanied minors and youth age 18-24 in Santa Cruz County. Eighty-seven percent of homeless youth were living in Santa Cruz County at the time they became homeless, but are unable to find housing in Santa Cruz County's housing market.

In January 2017, Santa Cruz County became one of 10 communities nationwide to receive a Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The final list of YHDP grants is the result of more than a year of community-based planning to design innovative projects to address the needs of homeless local youth and young adults and further the goals of All In - The Santa Cruz County Community Strategic Plan to Prevent, Reduce, and Eventually End Homelessness.

"The approval of these projects represents a significant milestone for addressing the significantly unmet needs of homeless youth in our community. With implementation beginning in October, we will be able provide our youth with critically-needed services and housing programs. The YHDP was designed by HUD with youth voice at its core, and I'm humbled by the dedication and hard work by the young adults on the Youth Advisory Board," Santa Cruz County Homeless Services Coordinator Rayne Marr said.

Together, community stakeholders and the Youth Advisory Board created the YHDP Coordinated Community Plan, which identifies service gaps and critical projects that could both break new ground and build upon past successes.



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Two-year funding awards include \$576,000 for a local youth and young adult drop-in center with a wide range of supportive services for those aged 15-24. Though similar models have proven successful in other communities, no similar resource currently exists in Santa Cruz County. To be operated by Encompass Community Services, the drop-in center is expected to serve 35-50 youth per day, and up to 450 over two years.

A \$200,000 grant will help fund an innovative program housing youth and young adults with local families, prioritizing pregnant/parenting youth, LGBTQ youth and youth from communities of color. Serving 14 youth over two years, the "Santa Cruz County Host Homes Program" will be operated by the Santa Clara-based Bill Wilson Center, which serves thousands of South Bay clients annually.

Rapid rehousing is an important feature of the program, with \$700,000 to provide rent, move-in assistance and housing navigation for homeless youth with independent living experience. Serving approximately 50 youth over two years, the grants will be split equally between the Homeless Services Center and Families in Transition of Santa Cruz County.

A \$275,000 grant will fund "New Roots," a permanent supportive housing program for youths with disabilities and complex needs. A \$150,000 grant will fund a Youth Homelessness Response Team, a joint project of the Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County and the County Office of Education with a focus of preventing homelessness for unaccompanied youth up age 24. A \$150,000 grant will fund youth-specific elements of the Smart Path Coordinated Entry System, serving approximately 600 youth over two years.

Projects are subject to final review by HUD, with approved funds likely to be released in October. In addition to the Youth Advisory Board, the County wishes to thank the Homeless Action Partnership, Encompass Community Services, serving as lead community agency for YHDP, and the over 40 members of youth serving community groups and agencies for their hours of planning work and leadership in the creation of the YDHP Coordinated Community Plan.