



SANTA CRUZ  
COUNTY  
GRAND JURY

Grand Jury <grandjury@scgrandjury.org>

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## Responses to 2023-2024 Grand Jury Report "County Behavioral Health Services - A State of Mind"

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Caitlin Smith <Caitlin.Smith@santacruzcountyca.gov>

Tue, Sep 3, 2024 at 1:54 PM

Good Afternoon,

Please see attached for responses to the 2023-2024 Grand Jury Report titled "County Behavioral Health Services – A State of Mind" from the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors and the Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools which were approved by the Board of Supervisors on August 27, 2024.

Best,

Caitlin C. Smith

County Supervisors' Analyst

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

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To email all five members of the Board of Supervisors at once,

please use: [boardofsupervisors@santacruzcountyca.gov](mailto:boardofsupervisors@santacruzcountyca.gov)

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### 3 attachments



**Cover Letter County Behavioral Health Services-A State of Mind.pdf**  
198K



**Board of Supervisors Response - County Behavioral Health Services - A State of Mind.pdf**  
500K



**Superintendent Response-County Behavioral Health - A State of Mind.pdf**  
261K



# County of Santa Cruz

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## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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August 30, 2024

The Honorable Katherine Hansen  
Santa Cruz Courthouse  
701 Ocean Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

**RE: Response to the 2023-2024 Grand Jury Report “County Behavioral Health Services – A State of Mind”**

Dear Judge Hansen,

The purpose of this letter is to formally transmit the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors’ and the Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools responses to the 2023-2024 Grand Jury Report “County Behavioral Health Services – A State of Mind.”

Sincerely,

JUSTIN CUMMINGS, Chair  
Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

JC:cs  
Attachments

CC: Clerk of the Board  
Santa Cruz County Grand Jury



The 2023–2024 Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury  
Requires the

**Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors**

to Respond by September 9, 2024

to the Findings and Recommendations listed below  
which were assigned to them in the report titled

**County Behavioral Health Services – A State of Mind**

**Focus. Fund. Save.**

Responses are **required** from elected officials, elected agency or department heads, and elected boards, councils, and committees which are investigated by the Grand Jury. The California Penal Code (PC) [§933\(c\)](#) requires you to respond as specified below and to keep your response on file.

Your response will be considered **compliant** under [PC §933.05](#) if it contains an appropriate comment on **all** findings and recommendations **which were assigned to you** in this report.

Please follow the instructions below when preparing your response.

## Instructions for Respondents

Your assigned [Findings](#) and [Recommendations](#) are listed on the following pages with check boxes and an expandable space for summaries, timeframes, and explanations. Please follow these instructions, which paraphrase [PC §933.05](#):

1. **For the Findings, mark one of the following responses with an “X” and provide the required additional information:**
  - a. **AGREE with the Finding**, or
  - b. **PARTIALLY DISAGREE with the Finding** – specify the portion of the Finding that is disputed and include an explanation of the reasons why, or
  - c. **DISAGREE with the Finding** – provide an explanation of the reasons why.
2. **For the Recommendations, mark one of the following actions with an “X” and provide the required additional information:**
  - a. **HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – provide a summary of the action taken, or
  - b. **HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE** – provide a timeframe or expected date for completion, or
  - c. **REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – provide an explanation, scope, and parameters of an analysis to be completed within six months, or
  - d. **WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – provide an explanation of why it is not warranted or not reasonable.
3. **Please confirm the date on which you approved the assigned responses:**

We approved these responses in a regular public meeting as shown  
in our minutes dated August 27, 2024.

4. **When your responses are complete, please email your completed Response Request as a PDF file attachment to both**

The Honorable Katherine Hansen, Grand Jury Supervising Judge  
[Katherine.Hansen@santacruzcourt.org](mailto:Katherine.Hansen@santacruzcourt.org) and

The Santa Cruz County Grand Jury [grandjury@scgrandjury.org](mailto:grandjury@scgrandjury.org).

**If you have questions about this request form, please contact the Grand Jury by calling 831-454-2099 or by sending an email to [grandjury@scgrandjury.org](mailto:grandjury@scgrandjury.org).**

## Findings

**F1.** The County budget website lacks HSA Financial data visible to the public to ensure transparency of programs and funding efficacy.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE**

**DISAGREE**

**Response explanation** (required for a response other than **Agree**):

The award-winning County budget website ([Proposed Health Services Agency 2024-25 Budget](#)) contains financial data viewable in several different ways; by revenue/expenditure type, division, and service. A service is defined as an operational unit within a department aimed at accomplishing a major governmental purpose or supporting the Operational Plan. The operational plan, a collection of objectives: measurable, time-bound, and inclusive tests of change that reflect the County's major work towards creating a healthy, safe, more affordable community, links budget appropriations to each service and is available on the County website. A [PDF](#) of the County Proposed 2024-25 Budget in Brief is also available.

**F2.** The County has limited staff to analyze the data for identifying trends which would allow focusing resources more effectively.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE**

**DISAGREE**

**Response explanation** (required for a response other than **Agree**):

The County has Analysts and other qualified staff with skills and tools necessary to analyze data, trends, and form recommendations to effectively allocate limited resources. Not all data is accessible to the County, but data sharing initiatives are advancing within County departments, which have the potential to improve resource allocation efficiencies, as well as advance care coordination, inform decision-making, and improve service delivery outcomes.

A significant number of population health reports and analysis can be found online at the Health Services Agency Website: [Population Health Data \(santacruzhealth.org\)](https://www.santacruzhealth.org/population-health-data)

**F3.** Zip code data can pinpoint areas of “High Need,” which can direct data-driven funding for better health outcomes and give a better “Return on Investment.”

- AGREE**
- PARTIALLY DISAGREE**
- DISAGREE**

**Response explanation** (required for a response other than **Agree**):

Zip code data can pinpoint areas of “High Need,” which can direct data-driven funding for better health outcomes and give a better “Return on Investment”, The BHD is responsible for the administration of the Specialty Mental Health and Drug Medi-Cal Health Plans and the provision of care to Medi-Cal beneficiaries who meet health criteria, based on individual need, under these health plans. Often, these beneficiaries are living with life-long diagnoses and improvement is measured by maintenance or improvement in functioning and self-reported metrics.

**F4.** The 95076 zip code has an extraordinarily high number of patient transfers to outside the county compared to other zip codes of Santa Cruz county. This indicates a major lack of healthcare facilities and services to serve the community.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE**

**DISAGREE**

**Response explanation** (required for a response other than **Agree**):

The County is committed to retaining the existing health care facilities and services that support all County residents, including 95076 zip code residents, and has committed to expanding the availability of facilities and services. The County has made significant investments with its community partners to purchase and keep open Watsonville Community Hospital and has recently purchased a building to establish an in-County youth crisis stabilization facility. In addition, the County relocated services at Westridge, increasing accessibility to South County.

If the finding is only related to Behavioral Health transfers, then the data referenced in the Grand Jury report is too broad, as that data appears to include all patient transfers for any health need, not only behavioral health, regardless of insurance provider. The County is responsible for the payment of hospital services only for patient transfers for inpatient psychiatry for Medi-Cal beneficiaries.

Due to Federal legislation, inpatient psychiatric facilities that are not attached to an acute care hospital are capped at 16 beds. As a result, Santa Cruz County has only one inpatient psychiatric health facility (also known as the PHF) of 16 beds located at 2250 Soquel Ave, Santa Cruz. The County Specialty Mental Health Plan contracts with Telecare to deliver the health services in that facility.

If this finding is regarding lack of healthcare facilities and services to Medi-Cal beneficiaries, the responsibility and the data is held by the Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans (MCPs). In Santa Cruz County, the MCPs are the Central California Alliance for Health (CAAH) and Kaiser Permanente, which are accountable to the State of California's Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) for maintaining network adequacy requirements.

If this finding is regarding lack of healthcare facilities and services to private insurance members, the responsibility and the data is held by the Managed Care Plans (MCPs). There are many MCPs that provide health care coverage for Santa Cruz County residents, such as Anthem, Blue Shield, Kaiser Permanente, and others. The non-Medi-Cal MCPs are accountable to the State of California's Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) for maintaining network adequacy requirements.



**F5.** A study of socioeconomic indicators of the 95076 zip code, compared to other zip codes of Santa Cruz county, reveal a dire need to improve the following:

- Homelessness
- Low Preschool Enrollment
- Poor Health Care Access
- Unemployment
- Support for Single Parent Households

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE**

**DISAGREE**

**Response explanation** (required for a response other than **Agree**):

Santa Cruz County's DataShareSCC provides dozens of indicators related to community health and well-being. <https://www.datasharescc.org/>  
The data shows similar findings. The Public Health Division-led Community Health Assessment (CHA) will be published in August 2024, and preliminary results also show findings that concur.

**F6.** The ECM programs are currently at capacity and have waiting lists. More providers are needed to expand the program further to transition more residents to independent living.

- AGREE**
- PARTIALLY DISAGREE**
- DISAGREE**

**Response explanation** (required for a response other than **Agree**):

The County does not have data on waiting lists or patient need for the Enhanced Care Management (ECM) program. The Enhanced Care Management is a Medi-Cal entitlement that is the responsibility of the Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans (MCPs) and administered through the MCPs. In Santa Cruz County, there are two Medi-Cal MCPs – Central California Alliance for Health (CAAH) and Kaiser Permanente. Those organizations are responsible for the ECM programs, not the County. The County Health Services Agency is merely one of many contractors to CCAH to provide the ECM program to some Medi-Cal beneficiaries. The waitlist information would be the responsibility of the MCPs.

**F7.** Though there is evidence that managed care programs like ECM are effective, lack of data leaves doubt in the public’s mind. Data supporting the success rate of ECM programs would ensure stronger public support.

- AGREE**
- PARTIALLY DISAGREE**
- DISAGREE**

**Response explanation** (required for a response other than **Agree**):

The County does not have data on the effectiveness of the Enhanced Care Management (ECM) program at this time. The Enhanced Care Management is a Medi-Cal entitlement that is the responsibility of the Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans (MCPs) and administered through the MCPs. In Santa Cruz County there are two Medi-Cal MCPs – Central California Alliance for Health (CAAH) and Kaiser Permanente. Those organizations are responsible for the ECM programs, not the County. The County Health Services Agency is merely one of many contractors to CCAH to provide the ECM program to some Medi-Cal beneficiaries. Effectiveness information would be the responsibility of the MCPs.

## Recommendations

**R1.** The Grand Jury recommends that Behavioral Health Services, in collaboration with the Chief Administrative Office Staff (CAO), provide a plan to report program performance on County websites. This plan should include data necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of each behavioral health program, including outcome-based metrics, patient feedback for each program, number of patients served, and financial details like budgeted expenses and revenue sources by program. This plan should be published by December 31, 2024. (F1, F2, F3)

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done
- HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe
- REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain the scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)
- WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

### Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

The County Health Services Agency and its Behavioral Health Division (BHD) publish the External Quality Review Organization (EQRO) Reports for the Mental Health Plan and Drug Medi-Cal Plan’s quality performance on the Behavioral Health website ([Medi-Cal Specialty Behavioral Health External Quality Review- MHP](#) and [Medi-Cal Specialty Behavioral Health External Quality Review- DMC-ODS](#)). This is a state-administered network adequacy and quality audit of County BHD that is conducted by an external organization, independent of the County of Santa Cruz and BHD.

The County budget website links expenditure and revenue appropriations to each service. A service is defined as an operational unit within a department aimed at accomplishing a major governmental purpose or supporting the Operational Plan. The Behavioral Health Division of the Health Services Agency has seven services that can be explored at this link (Health Services Agency [Proposed 2024-25 Budget](#)).

Beginning in Fall 2024 through Spring 2025, a Public Health Division-led Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) will be developed using a community engagement framework (MAPP 2.0), based on the CHA findings. If the community engaged process finds 95076 zip code and associated indicators to be a priority to include in the CHIP, elements of this recommendation may appear in the CHIP in mid-2025.

**R2.** The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors direct the CAO to implement performance budgeting of Behavioral Health Services over the next two-year budget cycle. This was also recommended by the 2017-2018 Grand Jury. The BoS should take this action by December 31, 2024. (F1)

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done
- HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe
- REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain the scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)
- WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

**Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:**

The County budget website links applicable operational objectives that contain measurable and time-bound tests of change to budget appropriations at the service level. A service is defined as an operational unit within a department aimed at accomplishing a major governmental purpose or supporting the Operational Plan. The Operational Plan is renewed every two years while the Budget is adopted annually. The Health Service Agency’s Budget and linked operational objectives can be found at this link: Health Services Agency [Proposed 2024-25 Budget](#).

Few counties are linking their operational efforts to their budgets in this way. In 2022, the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) awarded Santa Cruz County a Challenge Award recognizing the innovation in integrating the plans.

**R3.** The Grand Jury recommends that because the 95076 zip code is the area of most need, Behavioral Health Division’s Enhanced Care Management programs should focus efforts on identifying and case managing clients in this area by December 31, 2024. (F3, F4, F5, F6, F7)

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done
- HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe
- REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain the scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)
- WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

**Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:**

Enhanced Care Management (ECM) is a Medi-Cal entitlement that is the responsibility of the Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans (MCPs) and administered through the MCPs. In Santa Cruz County there are two Medi-Cal MCPs – Central California Alliance for Health (CAAH) and Kaiser Permanente. Those organizations are responsible for the ECM programs, not the County. The County Health Services Agency is merely one of many contractors to CCAH to provide the ECM program to some Medi-Cal beneficiaries.

The Behavioral Health Division will begin offering ECM services to all Adult Specialty Mental Health beneficiaries regardless of zip code, through HSA's ECM contract with the Central California Alliance for Health, by December 2024. The County BHD will offer ECM to all Specialty Mental Health beneficiaries based on the population priorities outlined by ECM requirements, as such staff will ensure an equity lens is at the forefront of the work.

**R4.** The Grand Jury recommends that Behavioral Health Services, County Office of Education, and the Board of Supervisors develop and publish a plan, with measurable outcomes, that focuses on improving socioeconomic indicators in the 95076 zip code by December 31, 2024. (F3, F4, F5)

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done
- HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe
- REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain the scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)
- WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

**Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:**

Beginning in Fall 2024 through Spring 2025, a Public Health Division-led Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) will be developed using a community engagement framework (MAPP 2.0), based on the CHA findings. If the community engaged process finds 95076 zip code and associated indicators to be a priority to include in the CHIP, elements of this recommendation may appear in the CHIP in mid-2025. The 2018-23 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) can be viewed on the DataShare Santa Cruz County website ([datasharescc.org](http://datasharescc.org)).

**R5.** The Grand Jury recommends that Behavioral Health Services and the Board of Supervisors include an outcome-based evaluation of contracted services through a summary report that is publicly available. This should be done for all new and renewed contracts by December 31, 2024. (F1, F2, F4, F5, F7)

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done
- HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe
- REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain the scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)
- WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

**Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:**

Behavioral Health Contractors utilize best practices, which are backed by scientific research conducted in controlled setting. Behavioral Health contracts have evaluation metrics, many of which it is the mechanism in which contractors are paid for the service.

While allocating the significant time and resources necessary to design and implement a system-wide outcomes evaluation is not possible at this time, Santa Cruz County's DataShareSCC provides dozens of indicators related to community health and well-being ([datasharescc.org](https://datasharescc.org)). Additionally, the Public Health Division-led Community Health Assessment (CHA) will be published in August 2024, and there are overlapping elements that should contribute to a broader understanding.