



SANTA CRUZ  
COUNTY  
GRAND JURY

Grand Jury <jgrandjury@scgrandjury.org>

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## Response to Civil Grand Jury Response

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**Faris Sabbah** <fsabbah@santacruzcoe.org>

Mon, Aug 12, 2024 at 8:00 AM

To: Katherine.Hansen@santacruzcourt.org, grandjury@scgrandjury.org

Cc: Nick Ibarra <nibarra@santacruzcoe.org>

Dear Judge Hansen and Members of the Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury,

Please find attached my response to the Civil Grand Jury report of June 11, 2024, entitled "County Behavioral Health Services – A State of Mind." As required under California Penal Code §933(c), my response addresses all findings and recommendations assigned to me in the report.

I would also like to express my gratitude for the hard work and dedication of the members of the 2023-24 Civil Grand Jury. Thank you for your commitment to improving our county.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Faris Sabbah  
Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools



DR. FARIS SABBAH  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

**Dr. Faris Sabbah**

County Superintendent of Schools

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pronouns: he, him, his



**Santa Cruz County Office of Education**

[www.santacruzcoe.org](http://www.santacruzcoe.org)



**2024-7bR HSA SoS Required Response Request - COMPLETED.pdf**

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**The 2023–2024 Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury  
Requires the  
Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools  
to Respond by August 12, 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. ***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

- 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 is an important indicator of need as part of a holistic assessment of community health. However, in isolation it can be insufficiently granular or comprehensive to be used to direct funding decisions – even where that degree of flexibility exists in health funding disbursement, which in many cases it does not. Instead, ZIP Code data should be used alongside other indicators of community health as part of a comprehensive analysis. Within the school community for example, districtwide and school-site data sources are often as or more relevant to funding decisions as ZIP Code data. Census tract data provides another important, and more granular, geographic lens. It is also essential to note that eligibility for health services is generally based on individual need, regardless of ZIP Code within Santa Cruz County. This is not to say there is no place for ZIP Code based data; it can help to target outreach campaigns, and, in the context of other data, serves as an important indicator of progress addressing health inequities.

**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**):

This finding does not directly relate to programs or data under the purview of the Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools or the Santa Cruz County Office of Education (COE). We anticipate a more detailed response from the Health Services Agency (HSA), and would generally defer to the HSA's expertise on this matter. However, a review of the Civil Grand Jury's analysis in support of this finding raises several concerns. For instance, it does not appear that the Civil Grand Jury analysis adjusted for the population of each ZIP Code while performing its analysis. While these irregularities call into question the specifics of the analysis, it is the position of the Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools that the conclusion of this finding is directionally accurate: the 95076 ZIP Code requires focused attention to continue improving health care facilities and resources. Continuing to expand access to healthcare facilities and services in South Santa Cruz County is a key priority for the COE as part of a broad coalition of partners, including through the school-based wellness initiatives through which we are expanding students' access to mental health support to address any level of need. The Pediatric Health Work Group, of which the COE is a member, is one focal point for this work as it relates to youth in our community. The Pediatric Health Work Group has identified disparities in BMI and other health indicators that point to persistent health inequities disproportionately affecting youth in the 95076 ZIP Code. In response, the COE convened work groups of educators and topical experts in Spring 2024 to assess how schools can work more closely with families and health providers to share actionable information and best practices – whether in classrooms and cafeterias, or at home. We anticipate a report based on these findings will be released in Fall 2024.

**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**):

## Recommendations

**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:

After consulting with the partners referenced by the Civil Grand Jury, it is the determination of the Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools that it would not be an efficient or effective use of resources to produce an entirely new plan in this timeframe that is focused exclusively on the 95076 ZIP Code. Such a plan would overlap significantly with numerous existing plans and processes. These include the Community Health Improvement Plan which is set to begin this fall, as well as the Santa Cruz County Health Service Agency’s 2025 Strategic Plan and in some respects the Collective of Results and Evidence-based (CORE) Investments funding model. In addition, the COE is working closely with regional partners through the Central Coast K-16 Collaborative to address long-standing social and economic inequities in higher education and workforce participation through creation of classroom to career pathways in fields including health, computer science and education. The COE would reconsider participation in the plan proposed by the Civil Grand Jury should a need for it emerge from a community-led process tied to more targeted, evidence-based outcomes.