

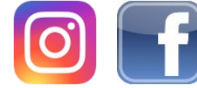


## SANTA CRUZ COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES

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RANDY MORRIS, DIRECTOR



# News Release

**Date:** June 23, 2025

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## JUNE IS ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS MONTH

### *Santa Cruz County Strengthens Outreach and Support for Older Adults*

In recognition of National Elder Abuse Awareness Month, the County of Santa Cruz is highlighting the importance of preventing elder abuse and ensuring older adults live with dignity, safety and support. The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors officially [proclaimed](#) June 2025 as Elder Abuse Awareness Month and June 15 as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Elder abuse can affect parents, neighbors, friends or community members. Local resources are available to provide assistance.

With more than 72,000 residents over the age of 59, older adults represent 26 percent of Santa Cruz County's population — a figure expected to grow to nearly 30 percent by 2030. In 2024, the County received more than 3,000 reports of abuse, which may include physical or emotional harm, neglect, abandonment, isolation or financial exploitation to an aging population at risk of abuse and neglect.

Despite its prevalence, elder abuse is widely underreported. National estimates suggest that just one in 25 cases of elder abuse are reported to authorities. Shame, fear of losing independence, and uncertainty about how to seek help can prevent older adults from speaking out.

"The County is here to help," said Melissa Villalobos, Licensed Social Worker and Adult Protective Services (APS) Program Manager with the County's Human Services Department. "Elder abuse can happen in any community, even within our own families. But no one has to go through it alone. We're committed to protecting the safety and well-being of our older residents—which is vital now as federally proposed budget cuts to programs that support vulnerable older adults are currently in debate in the U.S. Congress."

Involvement with APS is voluntary. APS assistance helps vulnerable older adults to navigate and expand existing services that focus on preventing further harm or neglect. The Human Services Department's APS team collaborates with local law enforcement, the District Attorney's Office, the Seniors Council, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman, and other community partners to prevent abuse, support victims and hold offenders accountable. This work builds on Santa Cruz County's designation as an Age-Friendly Community, [Age Well Santa Cruz County initiative](#) and ongoing efforts to develop a comprehensive local Master Plan for Aging.

"Elder abuse often goes unnoticed," said Santa Cruz County District Attorney Jeff Rosell, whose office is responsible for charging those accused of elder abuse crimes. "But families can help prevent it with a simple call or visit to elderly loved ones. When abuse is suspected, it's critical to report it."

If you or someone you know may be experiencing elder abuse, confidential help is available. Contact Santa Cruz County APS at (831) 454-4101 or [www.santacruzhumanservices.org/AdultLongTermCare](http://www.santacruzhumanservices.org/AdultLongTermCare).