



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES

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News Release

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APRIL IS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH

Community invited to Children's Memorial Flag Raising April 24, 2026

The County of Santa Cruz Human Services Department's Family and Children's Services (FCS) Division and the Child, Youth & Family Well-Being Partnership (Partnership) invite the community to recognize April as National Child Abuse Prevention Month. This recognition has taken place each year since its first presidential proclamation in 1983. Since then, individuals, organizations, and communities nation-wide have participated in this campaign to increase awareness of child maltreatment, and the critical role of prevention in maintaining child and family safety and well-being.

Last fiscal year 2,336 reports of child abuse, neglect or harm were made in Santa Cruz County, leading to 782 reported cases that warranted screening and investigation by County FCS social work staff. This resulted in substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect for 220 children, or 28% of those cases investigated, in fiscal year 2024-25.

A cornerstone of the FCS and Partnership collaboration is a prevention-focused initiative that shifts the historic "mandated reporting" model focused on investigation first, to a "community supporting" approach centered in prevention and early connection. This initiative launched last month with a symposium co-hosted by FCS and the United Way of Santa Cruz County, where traditional mandated reporters learned how to connect families with community-based support services that enhance safety and well-being.

This prevention momentum continues in April, with FCS coordinating a Children's Memorial Flag Raising event with Monica Martinez, Chair of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors raising the flag on Friday, April 24. The ceremony will begin at 12:00 pm on the courthouse steps at 701 Ocean Street in Santa Cruz, and will include guest speakers, a moment of silence and distribution of child abuse prevention information.

"Supporting and strengthening families is key to effective child abuse prevention," says Dr. Gloria Carroll, Director of Family & Children's Services. "By offering early support and reducing fear around seeking help, we're creating a system that's compassionate, equitable and focused on keeping children safe. I encourage our community to join in our efforts this month of April and become partners in our child abuse prevention work."

Learn more: <https://www.santacruzhumanservices.org/FamilyChildren>

PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE ♦ PROMOTING SELF-SUFFICIENCY ♦ ALLEVIATING POVERTY

STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITY BY IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF ALL COUNTY RESIDENTS

