



# County of Santa Cruz



## HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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### Press Release

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### **SANTA CRUZ COUNTY ANNOUNCES CONSTRUCTION OF A LOW-BARRIER NAVIGATION CENTER**

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY – The Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency and Human Services Housing for Health Division are pleased to announce construction of a pioneering 34-bed low-barrier navigation center, the first of three similar facilities planned throughout Santa Cruz County.

Funded through a \$10.2 million grant from the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) for the Behavioral Health Bridge Housing (BHBH) Program, the new facility will provide County Behavioral Health services and interim supportive housing for individuals experiencing homelessness with behavioral health conditions, with priority for Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Court participants.

"The Behavioral Health Bridge Housing Program represents a significant step forward in addressing the intersection of homelessness and behavioral health challenges in our community," Santa Cruz County Health Services Director Mónica Morales said. "Through collaborative efforts and innovative approaches, we can provide much-needed support and pathways to stable housing for individuals in need."

"This will be the first of its kind referral-based facility in Santa Cruz County and will provide a service-rich environment with on-site interim housing so that individuals with psychiatric health and substance use disorder needs are not discharged back to the streets," Housing for Health Director Dr. Robert Ratner said. "Once established, this program will help Santa Cruz County secure additional state and federal dollars to address homelessness."

To be located at 2202 Soquel Avenue adjacent to the existing Behavioral Health Center operated by Telecare, the project is a critical step in a broader strategy to provide a more robust housing continuum for those with mental illness and co-occurring substance use disorders. Stakeholder engagement and input from groups including individuals with lived experience of mental illness underscored the urgent need for housing solutions with integrated behavioral health services.

The referral-only facility will be built on county-owned land using modular construction and is expected to be completed by the end of 2024. Two more navigation centers are being developed to expand services and reduce the impacts of homelessness on individuals and the community.

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