



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: Health Services Agency

Subject: 2024 Santa Cruz County Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan Update

Meeting Date: March 11, 2025

Formal Title: Accept and file the 2024 Santa Cruz County Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan update

Recommended Action

Accept and file the 2024 Santa Cruz County Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan update.

Executive Summary

The 2024 Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan Update for Santa Cruz County outlines a comprehensive approach to reduce suicide rates and enhance support systems within the community. The plan is structured around five key strategic aims: 1) Maintain and Build Prevention Infrastructure, 2) Enhancing Protective Factors, 3) Intervention, 4) Means Safety, 5) Postvention. The 2024 Strategic Plan Update summarizes progress and impediments to the initial Strategic Plan of 2019 and provides direction on next steps to build a comprehensive suicide prevention infrastructure to assist the residents of Santa Cruz County experiencing suicide related concerns. The Health Services Agency (HSA) Behavioral Health Division (BHD) coordinates suicide prevention efforts in Santa Cruz County and requests Board approval of the 2024 Santa Cruz County Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan Update.

Discussion

The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors approved the 2019 Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan in June of 2019. The plan provided a map for the development of comprehensive suicide prevention services and awareness in Santa Cruz County. With funding through grants from California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that provided for training and the hiring of a Suicide Prevention Coordinator at BHD, services were able to be implemented to a more meaningful level. The grants provided multiple suicide awareness trainings and development of suicide prevention resources in accordance with the Strategic Plan.

While progress was made on the 2019 Strategic Plan, it is recognized that several worldwide and local events took priority of resources and energy starting with the global pandemic in 2020 followed by the CZU fires and then subsequent floods.

The suicide rate in 2021 for Santa Cruz County was 13 per 100,000 residents, compared to 10.4 per 100,000 residents for the Statewide average. This is a marked decline from 2019 when the original Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan was submitted to the Board noting the County rate of 16.4 per 100,000 residents, compared to 10.7 per 100,000 residents statewide. This decline occurred during the initial years of the COVID pandemic and while a statewide rate is not available for 2023, the local rate is reported at 17.1 per 100,000 residents, showing a drastic increase in the aftermath of COVID. Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suicide is now the 11th leading cause of death in the United States.

In early 2024, a Suicide Awareness Committee was formed to review and update the Strategic Plan. The Committee was comprised of members from BHD, Public Health, Veterans Administration, Suicide Prevention Services, and consultants. The Committee prepared the Suicide Prevention Plan Update which was further revised after a public comment period. The attached Strategic Plan Update builds upon the foundation established in the 2019 Plan, and provides direction for addressing this community-wide concern for the immediate future.

The 2024 Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan Update expands the previously identified three strategic aims to five, reflecting broader and more comprehensive efforts, including:

1. Maintain and Build Prevention Infrastructure
2. Enhancing Protective Factors
3. Intervention
4. Means Safety
5. Postvention

The attached Strategic Plan Update was open to Public Comment from August 15, 2024 through September 19, 2024, which was opened and closed by the Santa Cruz County Mental Health Advisory Board.

The Suicide Awareness Committee has identified the following immediate and ongoing priorities to support the Plan Update:

- Encourage dissemination and adoption of this 2024 Strategic Plan Update by local organizations and governing boards;
- Continue to identify and build collaboration and partnership on a regional level; and
- Build up the Suicide Awareness Committee with additional representation to reflect the geography and diversity of Santa Cruz County to continue suicide prevention efforts.

Financial Impact

The recommended action has no financial impact. BHD continues to fund suicide prevention training and the Suicide Prevention Coordinator position through a series of grants and is actively seeking additional grant opportunities.

Strategic Initiatives

Operational Plan - Comprehensive Health & Safety

Submitted By:

Monica Morales, Director of Health Services

Recommended By:

Carlos J. Palacios, County Administrative Officer

Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) did not significantly contribute to the development of this

agenda item.