



## **County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors**

### **Agenda Item Submittal**

**From:** Health Services Agency

**Subject:** Youth Crisis Programs Update and Resolution Designating the Youth Crisis Stabilization Program as Acute Mental Health Facility

**Meeting Date:** June 10, 2025

**Formal Title:** Accept and file County's Youth Crisis Programs Update and adopt resolution designating Santa Cruz County's Youth Crisis Stabilization Program at 5300 Soquel Avenue as the Acute Mental Health Facility for Youth up to Age 17

### **Recommended Actions**

1. Accept and file report on the County's Youth Crisis Programs, located in a new facility at 5300 Soquel Avenue in Santa Cruz; and
2. Adopt a resolution authorizing and designating the Youth Crisis Stabilization Program Facility and eligible personnel as the designated facility that will provide psychiatric assessment, evaluation, treatment, crisis intervention, discharge planning, and referral for further treatment for children and youth age seventeen and under, under the Children's Civil Commitment and Mental Health Act, and the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act, as amended.

### **Executive Summary**

The County's Youth Crisis Stabilization and Youth Crisis Residential Programs (Youth Crisis Programs) Facility, located at 5300 Soquel Avenue in Santa Cruz, adjacent to the County Sheriff's Office is scheduled for a construction completion date of no later than July 1, 2025. In preparation for opening the new facility, currently targeted for a timeframe between August 1, 2025 through September 1, 2025, the Board, on April 29, 2025, authorized the Health Services Agency Behavioral Health Division (BHD) to negotiate a contract with Aspiranet for program start-up during the months of May through June 2025, in preparation for operating the County's Youth Crisis Programs.

It is now time to adopt a resolution to designate the Youth Crisis Stabilization Program Facility and its professional staff as the location that will provide psychiatric assessment, evaluation, treatment, crisis intervention, discharge planning, and referral for further treatment for youth seventeen and under per the Children's Civil Commitment and Mental Health Act, and the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act, as amended. This designation process, as provided in Section 5404 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code, is the initial step in the licensing and certification process with the Departments of Health and Community Services and Social Services.

### **Discussion**

Under the Board's leadership and support, the acquisition and renovation of the building located at 5300 Soquel Avenue to serve as the County's Youth Crisis Stabilization and Crisis Residential Programs (Youth Crisis Programs) Facility is nearly completed. While there are a few minor adjustments proposed by the program's operator that will be made after the contract with Bogard Construction Inc. is deemed complete, the Youth Crisis Programs expect to open for clients in the August-September 2025 timeframe. BHD staff will work with the County Executive Office (CEO) and the County's Mental Health Advisory Board to invite mental health partners, elected representatives, and the

community at large to celebrate this milestone and to let medical providers, especially those in pediatric medicine, local schools, and public safety partners know that the Youth Crisis Programs Facility is open to serve the children and youth in the community. The design of the facility by 19Six Architects is exceptional and conforms with all current practices to keep clients and the staff engaged and safe. The public artist, Joey Rose, has delivered paintings and murals that greatly enhance both the building exterior and the interior spaces.

Staff look forward to a rich menu of programming from the proposed operator, Aspiranet, and as planned, it is expected to have the capacity to offer beds in the sixteen-bed Youth Crisis Residential Program to serve the behavioral health needs of youth in the central coast and Bay Area regions.

Since July 1, 2023, when the County's operator for the County's Crisis Stabilization Program stopped serving as a receiving facility for minors, citing the risks of having adults and youth in the same facility, BHD has partnered with the Dominican Hospital and Watsonville Community Hospital (WCH) emergency departments to accept youth who met criteria for a hold per WIC Section 5585.

As of January 1, 2024, BHD executed a contract with Pacific Clinics and funded behavioral health staff on duty 8:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m. daily to provide interim crisis intervention and stabilization support to youth and their families at the WCH emergency department. The contract for services with Pacific Clinics will expire as of June 30, 2025, and the interim services at WCH will end on that date, which will require a return to a dependence on local hospitals' emergency departments to accept youth in crisis until the new facility is ready to accept clients. It was intended to have a seamless transition from the interim services at WCH to the new youth Crisis Stabilization Unit. Due to difficulties related to securing a contractor who would staff both the Crisis Stabilization Unit and Crisis Residential Program the time frames for opening the new programs have been delayed. Pacific Clinics has notified BHD that they will only be able to staff WCH with crisis intervention staff until June 30, 2025. BHD staff will be working with the hospital emergency departments on a smooth transition, and with the new proposed operator, Aspiranet, to quickly and efficiently put policies, procedures, and staff in place to serve children and youth in the new facility.

Board adoption of the proposed resolution is required by the State Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to begin the certification and licensing process for Mental Health programming for the Youth Crisis Stabilization Unit, the eight-chair program planned for the first floor of the facility. The State Department of Social Services (DHSS) licenses the Children's Crisis Programs for Medi-Cal.

### **Financial Impact**

To fund the acquisition and the renovation of the County's Youth Crisis Programs facility, BHD secured grants and allocated local funding totaling about \$26.1 million as detailed below:

#### **Financial Resources – Acquisition, Design, Renovation**

CA Health Facilities Finance Authority (CHFFA) Grant-Round 3	\$7,597,706
CA Health Facilities Finance Authority (CHFFA) Grant-Round 4	\$2,125,000
FY22/23 Mental Health Services Act Capital Facilities Funding	\$2,083,252
Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP) Grant	\$11,793,455
Inter-Governmental Transfer Funds (IGT)	\$2,500,000

Through careful oversight, the acquisition, permitting, and renovation phases, including design, construction, and staff costs associated with the Youth Crisis Programs Facility will be completed within the financial resources available.

California Mental Health Services Act (Prop 63) Innovations funding will be utilized to support the program startup costs agreement with Aspiranet. The California Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), enacted through Proposition 63 in 2004, imposes a 1% tax on personal incomes exceeding \$1 million to fund mental health services, allocating 5% of these funds to counties specifically for innovation projects aimed at developing and evaluating new or adapted mental health practices. The stability of this funding is tied to the incomes of high earners, making it susceptible to economic fluctuations, which necessitates prudent fiscal planning.

These services are allowable under the Crisis Now Innovation Plan commitment to provide “somewhere to go,” an integral pillar of the Crisis Now model. The use of these funds for program startup costs for staff is a one-time use that manages the potential for future funding volatility. Sufficient appropriations for these start-up costs in the estimated amount of \$1,003,616 are included in HSA BHD’s FY 2024-25 Approved Budget under GL Key 363110.

BHD staff will be returning to the Board of Supervisors on or before August 5, 2025 to ratify the start-up contract with Aspiranet, as well as to present a contract amendment to include ongoing operations. Staff anticipate a soft start when the facility opens, with Aspiranet scaling their staffing model to less than full capacity, to reflect the census of services at WCH. BHD will provide an overview of the staffing approach and funding model for ongoing operations at that time.

**Strategic Initiatives**

Operational Plan - Comprehensive Health & Safety, Operational Excellence

**Submitted By:**

Jennifer Herrera, Interim Director of Health Services

**Recommended By:**

Carlos J. Palacios, County Executive Officer

**Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:**

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