



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: Health Services Agency

Subject: Mental Health Student Services Act Round 4 Grant Funding

Meeting Date: January 28, 2025

Formal Title: Ratify three grant applications to Mental Health Oversight Services and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) for Mental Health Student Services Act Round 4 funding, approve agreements with MHSOAC in the amounts of \$500,000, \$800,000 and \$450,000 to increase navigation and access to behavioral health services for students and families, and take related actions

Recommended Actions

- 1) Ratify three grant applications to the Mental Health Services and Oversight and Accountability Commission for the Mental Health Student Services Act Round 4 grant funding to support continued existing partnerships between County Behavioral Health and local education entities to increase navigation and access to behavioral health services for students and families;
- 2) Approve a revenue agreement with the Mental Health Services and Oversight and Accountability Commission, Contract No. 25R0480, in the amount of \$500,000 to provide services in the category of Marginalized and Vulnerable Youth;
- 3) Approve a revenue agreement with the Mental Health Services and Oversight and Accountability Commission, Contract No. 25R0481, in the amount of \$800,000 to provide services in the category of Universal Screening;
- 4) Approve revenue agreement with the Mental Health Services and Oversight and Accountability Commission, Contract No. 25R0482, in the amount of \$450,000 to provide services in the category of Sustainability; and
- 5) Authorize the Health Services Agency Director or designee to sign the agreements and any related documents and amendments.

Executive Summary

The Health Services Agency (HSA) Behavioral Health Division (BHD), in collaboration with the Santa Cruz County Office of Education (COE), applied for, and was awarded, three multi-year competitive grants in the total amount of \$1.75 million from the Mental Health Services and Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) as part of the Round 4 grants made available through the Mental Health Student Services Act (MHSSA). HSA requests Board authorization to ratify the grant applications and approve three new revenue agreements with MHSOAC. The MHSSA Round 4 grants will supplement two existing awards from MHSOAC given to the same partnership in the last several years, and will be used to fund three distinct areas of work intended to focus on marginalized and vulnerable youth, universal screening, and sustainability.

Discussion

Senate Bill 75, as Chaptered in the 2019 Budget Act, included the MHSSA which is intended to foster stronger school-community mental health partnerships that can leverage resources to help students succeed by authorizing counties and local educational agencies to enter into partnerships to create programs that include targeted interventions for students with identified social-emotional, behavioral, and academic needs. MHSOAC has awarded three previous grant rounds, of which HSA, in collaboration with COE, has received two rounds of funding. On August 24, 2021, the Board approved Round 1 grant funding in the amount of \$4 million to fund navigation services and training to support students in Santa Cruz County schools to connect to appropriate behavioral health treatment. On October 19, 2021, the Board approved an expenditure agreement with COE in the amount of \$3.9 million, as pass-through funding to administer the MHSSA funds for navigation services and training to support students. In February 2023, HSA received an amendment to the original agreement with MHSOAC for an additional \$1,079,602 in Round 3 funding.

In May 2024, MHSOAC released a Request for Applications (RFA), making \$25 million in Round 4 grant funds available, designed to support the previous grant rounds, to provide services in the following categories: (1) Marginalized and Vulnerable Youth, (2) Universal Screening, (3) Sustainability, and (4) "Other Priorities" to allow applicants to identify and address their unique needs. COE, as lead agency, in collaboration with HSA BHD, submitted the applications in response to the RFA by the June 2024 deadline. On August 12, 2024, HSA received a notification that Santa Cruz County was awarded a total of \$1.75 million in the first three categories. In October 2024, MHSOAC sent a request to sign the three proposed revenue agreements. HSA will return to the Board with a resolution to accept the revenue funds once all three revenue agreements have been executed.

The purpose of the Round 4 MHSSA grants is to expand and integrate with the two prior rounds of grants already active in the same partnership between HSA/COE and funder, MHSOAC, extending much needed mental health supports and coordination. The existing grants were to establish additional mental health partnerships between County Behavioral Health Departments and local education entities. As such, grantees were required to include a partnership between County Behavioral Health, a County Office of Education (and/or a Charter School), and local school districts. As the lead agency in the Santa Cruz County School Integrated Behavioral Health Initiative (SIBHI), COE identified the funding mechanism, engaged all partners (i.e., BHD, Santa Cruz County Schools, and local partners), and provided grant writing support.

To guarantee key stakeholder involvement, MHSOAC requires MHSSA grants to be funded through County Behavioral Health Services, even if the lead agency is different, as is the case for Santa Cruz County. HSA BHD contracted with COE to be the primary contractor and lead implementor of grant activities and reporting. Key features of the existing contract with COE include existing school based mental health navigators to support alignment and integration with the County Access Team across the education system; support for training in schools on suicide prevention, Social-Emotional Learning, Implicit Bias and Cultural Responsivity; and support for The Diversity Center and the Local Chapter of the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) in their school-based offerings.

The implementation took effect under three umbrella domains: Prevention; Stigma Reduction; and Appropriate Access to Care. These three interweave a variety of actions and goals and an increase in Prevention has occurred through the synthesis of a consistent screening and referral process from schools for mental health and substance use disorder (SUDS) services.

The three new grant awards are intended for three additional areas of scope:

Category 1 - Marginalized and Vulnerable Youth

This category will focus on system-involved youth (Child welfare/Family and Children's Services and Probation) who identify as LGBTQ+. It will work with those county agencies, the entire school system and The Diversity Center to strengthen support for this subpopulation. The grant is for a total of \$500K for three years, funding some staffing at the county(s) level, as well as contracts for services and indirect costs at both lead agencies COE/HSA.

Category 2 - Universal Screening

This category requires a full-time staff to work with the state on a pilot for a universal screener to be implemented for all youth. Therefore, the focus will be working with a stakeholder group developed by the state, enlisting all school districts and allied service providers to garner buy-in and implementation across the county, where youth and children are receiving, or being referred for, mental health services. This grant is also for three years for a total of \$800K. Again, staffing, contracts and indirect costs are the focus of spending.

Category 3 - Sustainability

This category aims to develop a comprehensive plan to continue all services under the MHSSA awarded scopes, all of which will be sunseting within about 30-36 months. This grant is for a total of \$450K for up to three years as well. The primary work in this category will be focused on braiding existing and new funding opportunities to sustain the staffing and collaborative systems work underway. A primary emphasis will be on the new revenue generating pathways under the Multi-Payer Fee Schedule and what is known as Local Education Agency Billing Option Program (LEA BOP), as well as exploring opportunities in Enhanced Care Management (ECM), in addition to researching other mental health focused efforts and funding sources.

Work will continue to extend into early intervention by preventing mental illness from becoming severe and disabling with continued emphasis placed on underserved populations such as students experiencing homelessness, LGBTQ+, those in the foster care system, chronically absent, suspended and expelled, among others. Additionally, professional development (PD) will contribute to both creating a positive school culture and climate, as well as early identification skills.

A special focus will also include suicide prevention training for both students and staff. All the above, and below, will take place in close partnership with County Behavioral Health, their Access Team, and the myriad schools and agencies engaged in this effort under more than two dozen interconnected non-profits, health care centers and school districts.

Reduction of stigma will be a key driver in all activities, manifesting as messaging to school staff and students that recognizing signs and symptoms of mental health distress and seeking support is important and normal. This will be done throughout PD trainings created, and/or contracted, by the COE, NAMI, and The Diversity Center, as well as efforts around social-emotional learning and trauma responsiveness. Students will also

be hired to assist with messaging, delivery of PD and general planning.

Feedback from across the school system has repeatedly noted that it is not usually an issue of enough providers in general being the primary barrier to care, but rather the finding, accessing and remaining connected to them that is problematic. Having these navigators support that journey for several days, or months, will hopefully create a difference in the timing, number and sustainability of accessing needed mental health and SUDS supports.

The \$1,750,000 of MHSSA grant funds will be expended over the course of three fiscal years, and expended, as initially proposed to MHSOAC, as follows:

Table 1: Three-Year Summary of MHSSA Program Funds in Three Categories

MHSSA Program	Total Category 1	Total Category 2	Total Category 3
Year 1 (FY 2024-25)	\$163,490	\$259,638	\$148,213
Year 2 (FY 2025-26)	\$166,615	\$261,050	\$149,985
Year 3 (FY 2026-27)	\$169,895	\$279,312	\$151,802
Three-Year Total	\$500,000	\$800,000	\$450,000

Out of the funding amounts shown in the table above, 7.17% will be used to cover the County's costs for managing the grants. The rest of the money will be used to either expand the current MHSSA service contract with COE (Contract No. 25H0218) or create a new contract with COE to provide relevant services for the grants.

Financial Impact

The revenue agreements with MHSOAC, Contract Nos. 25R0480, 25R0481, and 25R0482, in the amounts of \$500,000, \$800,000, and \$450,000, respectively, have terms as of the effective date of agreement execution through December 31, 2027, spanning FY 2024-25 through FY 2026-27. HSA will return to the Board to accept and appropriate the funds once the grant agreements are executed, which will be budgeted under account 363101/40894. No new County General Funds are needed nor requested.

Strategic Initiatives

Operational Plan - Comprehensive Health & Safety, Operational Excellence

Submitted By:

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Recommended By:

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Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

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