

March 04, 2025

Melissa Schilling



Formal Complaint Against Santa Cruz County Social Services Director Randy Morris

I am writing to formally complain about the conduct of Randy Morris, Director of Santa Cruz County Social Services, regarding his repeated failure to mediate, communicate, respond, intervene, or effect any meaningful change in a critical mental health case involving my family. From August 2024 through March 2025, as this case has escalated and ultimately imploded, Mr. Morris has never once reached out with compassion, support, or service—despite bi-monthly email correspondence, court filings, and letters to social services employees requesting assistance.

Santa Cruz County Social Services has consistently failed to address the urgent and complex needs of my son, [REDACTED], a foster youth with a well-documented history of early childhood trauma, cognitive impairments, and severe mental health challenges. Despite extensive documentation, including neuropsychological assessments confirming his vulnerabilities, Santa Cruz County Social Services has not implemented appropriate interventions.

Key failures under Mr. Morris' leadership include:

1. Negligent Mental Health Oversight

- Despite clear evidence of Reactive Attachment Disorder, Santa Cruz County Social Services failed to conduct a thorough psychological assessment or ensure trauma-informed care.
- Alameda County social workers, who reviewed this case, immediately recognized the signs of Reactive Attachment Disorder and provided empathy, support, and resources—despite this case not being in their

jurisdiction. In contrast, Santa Cruz County Social Services has remained indifferent and unresponsive.

2. Failure to Provide Crisis Intervention

- [REDACTED] has been placed on two psychiatric holds (5150 and 5185) due to escalating mental health crises. Law enforcement has repeatedly had to intervene due to his destructive behaviors, including setting fires and physically damaging property.
- Santa Cruz County Social Services has not provided any crisis stabilization, despite these repeated incidents.

3. Failure to Communicate and Coordinate Care

- A San Rafael Police officer reported that Santa Cruz County Social Services is unresponsive during crises. When law enforcement is called to [REDACTED] facility, no authorized representative is available to communicate with them.
- The officer stated that I am the only consistent point of contact through 18 visits to the facility, further proving the county's complete lack of oversight.

4. Failure to Ensure Proper Medical Treatment

- Dr. Namjas Enman, a physician overseeing my son's psychiatric care, discontinued his psychotropic medications without in-person evaluation, consultation with prescribing doctors, or a follow-up care plan.
- This reckless decision has contributed to my son's worsening condition and increased psychiatric hospitalizations.

5. Failure to Ensure Supervision and Safety

- [REDACTED] has repeatedly gone AWOL from his STRTP (Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program) and has been involved in unlawful activities, including vehicle theft and property damage.
- Despite clear evidence of safety risks, Santa Cruz County Social Services has taken no steps to ensure proper supervision or placement in a more secure environment.

6. Refusal to Engage in Family Reunification or Meaningful Support

- [REDACTED] has expressed conflicting statements about wanting to return home, yet Santa Cruz County Social Services has made no effort to assess his competency or provide family therapy.

- The agency's refusal to engage in family-based support has only further alienated [REDACTED] and exacerbated his behavioral challenges.

Request for Immediate Action

Due to the continued failure of Santa Cruz County Social Services under the leadership of Randy Morris, I formally request:

1. **A Full Investigation** into the negligence, lack of intervention, and systemic failures of Santa Cruz County Social Services in handling this case.
2. **Immediate Transfer of [REDACTED]' Case** to a county with trauma-informed professionals, such as Santa Clara or Alameda County, where he has already received competent and compassionate engagement.
3. **Accountability for Randy Morris and his Department** for their failure to act in a way that ensures the safety and well-being of a vulnerable foster youth.
4. **A Court-Ordered Psychological Assessment** to formally determine [REDACTED] cognitive capacity, mental health needs, and appropriate placement.

Santa Cruz County Social Services has demonstrated gross incompetence in managing this case, placing my son at further risk. Their continued negligence should not be allowed to persist without consequence. I request urgent action before further harm occurs.

Sincerely,
Melissa Schilling

Sincerely,
Melissa Schilling
[REDACTED]

From: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
To: [Jesseka Rodriguez](#)
Subject: FW: Social Services in Santa Cruz County
Date: Tuesday, April 1, 2025 9:35:08 AM
Attachments: [Complaint Morris Board of Supervisors \(1\).pdf](#)

From: melissa schilling [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 31, 2025 9:16 AM
To: Board Of Supervisors <boardofsupervisors@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: Social Services in Santa Cruz County

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Good Morning.

Reaching out once more to circulate the state of mental health support in our county.

We have the highest rate of homelessness by county, in the state.

[Yet, we are understaffed, undertrained, ill-equipped as mapped by the Grand Jury of Santa Cruz County.](#)

We should be able to handle mental health emergencies and crisis. County Social Services can't blame shift their way to better outcomes.

It is much, much better in other counties - big and small.

Let's work together to improve outcomes for children using assessment, data, collaboration, multi-tiered systems of support, well funded services with resources and staff attached and a citizen oversight committee.

Our county has a committee to peer review outcomes for native plants and wildlife but not for our most at-risk foster youth?

-Melissa Schilling

photo



Together in Education

[REDACTED] | She/Her, Melissa Schilling, M.S., AET

[Cabrillo College](#) | [Climate Resilience](#)

[Education Therapist](#) | [Special Education](#)

[REDACTED] | What are you reading? I'm reading:



Land Acknowledgement:

"The land on which we gather is the unceded territory of the Awaswas-speaking Uypi Tribe. Today there are no known survivors of the Awaswas Nation. The Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, comprised of the descendants of indigenous people taken to missions Santa Cruz and San Juan Bautista during Spanish colonization of the Central Coast, is today working hard to restore traditional stewardship practices on these lands to honor the Awaswas and heal from historical trauma."

Amah Mutsun (Aaa-Ma) (Moot-sun)

Uypi (You-P)

Awaswas (Aaa-Was-Was)

From: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
To: [Jesseka Rodriguez](#)
Subject: FW: Plea for Immediate Mental Health Reform for Foster Youth
Date: Monday, March 24, 2025 9:38:16 AM

From: melissa schilling [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 24, 2025 8:00 AM
To: Board Of Supervisors <boardofsupervisors@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Cc: Second District <Second.District@santacruzcountyca.gov>; Kimberly De Serpa <Kimberly.DeSerpa@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: Plea for Immediate Mental Health Reform for Foster Youth

******CAUTION:** This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors
701 Ocean Street, Room 500
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Subject: Plea for Immediate Mental Health Reform for Foster Youth

Dear Members of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors,

I am writing as a mother who is exhausted, heartbroken, and desperate for real change in how this county handles mental and behavioral health care—especially for foster youth. My son, [REDACTED], has endured unimaginable struggles under the care of Santa Cruz County's mental health system, and despite my repeated attempts to get him the help he so desperately needs, he continues to fall through the cracks.

In just the past six months, my son has been placed on two separate 5150 psychiatric holds. He is not just another case file—he is a child, my child, who has suffered due to inadequate oversight, poor coordination between agencies, and outright neglect. I have tried everything—emails, calls, letters—to get someone, anyone, in the system to act before it's too late.

Where the System Has Failed My Son:

1. Psychiatric Negligence and Poor Decision-Making:

- Dr. Namjas Enman, the psychiatrist assigned to oversee my son's care, abruptly discontinued his psychotropic medications without conducting an in-person evaluation or consulting with the doctors who originally prescribed them. This decision was made without regard for his complex mental health history, leading to severe deterioration in his behavior and well-being.
- Since losing his medication, my son has spiraled into crisis after crisis,

culminating in multiple psychiatric hospitalizations. These could have been prevented had his care been handled with the attention and responsibility it requires.

2. A Broken Crisis Response System:

- Instead of receiving the structured, trauma-informed care he requires, law enforcement has been called repeatedly to handle my son's escalating mental health episodes. Police officers are not mental health professionals, and their involvement only exacerbates his distress.
- The county has failed to provide real crisis stabilization support. Each time he is placed on a 5150 hold, he is discharged back into the same broken system that failed him in the first place. This cycle cannot continue.

3. Lack of Leadership and Accountability in Social Services:

- Despite overwhelming evidence of my son's complex needs—including a documented history of early childhood trauma—Santa Cruz County Social Services has failed to act. Director Randy Morris has ignored my repeated requests for intervention, crisis planning, or even basic communication.
- Alameda County, when briefly involved in this case, immediately recognized his condition and provided a level of care and attention that Santa Cruz County has refused to offer. Why is it that another county can see the urgency of my son's needs, yet Santa Cruz continues to turn away?

4. Judicial Failures That Allow This Neglect to Continue:

- Judge Erika Ziegenhorn has sided time and time again with Social Services, despite clear evidence that my son is not receiving proper care. Instead of demanding accountability from these agencies, she has allowed them to operate with little oversight, leaving children like mine to suffer.

What Needs to Happen Now:

This is not just about my son—this is about every foster youth in Santa Cruz County who is being let down by a system that should be protecting them. I am pleading with you to take immediate steps to fix this crisis:

- 1. Investigate the failures of Santa Cruz County Mental and Behavioral Health Services** and hold accountable those responsible for the decisions that have led to repeated psychiatric crises.
- 2. Immediately transfer my son's case to a county with proven trauma-informed care**, such as Alameda or Santa Clara, where he has already received better support than he ever has in Santa Cruz.
- 3. Hold Randy Morris, Paul Vitali, Joanna Moody, Emily Simoni, Mary Ellen Olson, Laura Hyams, Alli Rainey and Della Wright accountable** for their roles in allowing this neglect to continue.
- 4. Establish a better crisis response system** so that foster youth experiencing

psychiatric emergencies are met with trained mental health professionals, not just law enforcement.

5. **Mandate court-ordered psychological evaluations** for foster youth in crisis to ensure they receive the appropriate care and interventions without bureaucratic delays.

I am not writing this letter as a lawyer or a politician. I am writing this as a mother who is watching her child suffer while the people in charge do nothing. You have the power to change this. Please, act now before another child falls through the cracks.

I appreciate your time and expect a response outlining the actions you will take to address this crisis.

Sincerely,

Melissa Schilling



[Follow-Up Questions for CPS](#)

photo



Together in Education

██████████ | She/Her, Melissa Schilling, M.S., AET

[Cabrillo College](#) | [Climate Resilience](#)

[Education Therapist](#) | [Special Education](#)

██████████ | What are you reading? I'm reading:

Tending the Wild by *Kat Anderson*



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