



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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PRESS RELEASE

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COUNTY PROBATION SECURES \$6 MILLION GRANT TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM

The County of Santa Cruz is pleased to announce a nearly \$6 million grant to reduce recidivism by expanding diversion opportunities in the criminal justice system, including expanded substance use disorder and mental health treatment options, an expansion of Neighborhood Courts and earlier interventions for those accused of low-level offenses.

This is the second major grant awarded to the County through voter-approved Prop 47, and will help expand the County's Coordinated Access for Empowering Success (CAFES) program. Through community partnerships and a collaboration led by the Santa Cruz County Probation Department and including the newly formed Public Defender's Office, the District Attorney's Office, Santa Cruz County Superior Courts and County Behavioral Health, the grant aims to expand services to 300 individuals in order to build on the County's successful track record of reducing recidivism through Prop 47 grant funding.

"The grant will allow Santa Cruz County to help fulfill voters' mandate to reduce reliance on the criminal justice system to address individuals with substance use disorder or behavioral health issues," Santa Cruz County Probation Chief Fernando Giraldo said. "We will expand our early intervention and diversion efforts so that we can address underlying issues and reduce recidivism."

When voters approved Prop 47 in 2014, the new law reduced certain low-level drug and property crimes from felonies to misdemeanors. The resulting savings are deposited into a statewide Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Fund, which is then distributed to local jurisdictions through a competitive grant process. The County has used a previous Prop 47 grant to launch the Neighborhood Courts pilot project and implement other diversions for low-level, non-violent offenders, with successful preliminary results. (See <https://tinyurl.com/SCCProp47> for more information)

The grant also allows partners to equitably deliver services to individuals earlier in the justice process, including through a new Early Defense program overseen by the Public Defender's Office. Seventy-two percent of funding will be allocated to community-based organizations to support CAFES, and the grant includes an independent evaluation component to assure the program is delivering results.