



# COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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Nicole D. Coburn, County Executive Officer

## News Release

**Date:** December 29, 2025

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### COUNTY NAMES SANDRA MENDEZ CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER

The County of Santa Cruz is pleased to announce Sandra Mendez as its new Chief Probation Officer, bringing more than two decades of experience to a department that has been a national model for effective, community-based justice programs.

Mendez's career includes front-line supervision, program development, executive leadership, and complex organizational management. She joins Santa Cruz County after serving in senior leadership roles within probation departments, most recently as Deputy Chief in Madera County, where oversaw operations, staffing, budgeting, and long-term strategic initiatives for youth correctional facilities and programs following a five-year stint overseeing the Adult Services Division.

"Sandra brings the right combination of experience, integrity, and vision," County Executive Officer Nicole Coburn said. "Her background positions her well to lead the department into its next chapter while maintaining a strong focus on public safety, rehabilitation, and staff support."

"Throughout my career, I have been dedicated to public safety while helping individuals build pathways toward stability and success," Mendez said. "I look forward to working alongside our dedicated staff and community partners to strengthen outcomes for the people we serve."

Throughout her career, Mendez has demonstrated a strong commitment to evidence-based practices, rehabilitation, and community-focused justice. She has led the development and implementation of multi-million-dollar programs, managed large multidisciplinary teams, and overseen capital-related projects and facility operations. Her leadership experience includes responsibility for budget development, grant management, procurement, and contract oversight, as well as compliance with state and federal regulations.

Mendez began her career as a correctional officer, parole agent, and deputy probation officer before advancing through supervisory and executive roles. She holds a degree in Criminology from CSU Fresno and is recognized for her collaborative leadership style, bilingual capacity, and ability to lead complex change initiatives across justice, health, and community-based partners. She has received multiple professional commendations and peer recognition for her work in program innovation, staff mentorship, and collaboration. She will begin February 2, 2026.

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