

Criminal Justice Council Summary Report

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY MENTAL/BEHAVIORAL
HEALTH & CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM REVIEW
SERIES 2021-2025



CRIMINAL
JUSTICE COUNCIL
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

OVERVIEW

REGIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCY POLICY REVIEW & ANALYSIS

2021

REGIONAL MENTAL/ BEHAVIORAL HEALTH & LAW ENFORCEMENT REVIEW & ANALYSIS

2022

COURT & JAIL SYSTEM REVIEW & ANALYSIS: ADDRESSING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CASES

2023

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TREATMENT AND EMERGENCY CARE SYSTEM REVIEW & ANALYSIS

2024

Starting in 2021, the Criminal Justice Council (CJC), in partnership with Applied Survey Research (ASR), created a series of annual reports that provided a multi-year, multi-system review and analysis of the intersection of behavioral health and the criminal legal system in Santa Cruz County. In light of national discussions regarding police policies and procedures in 2020, the CJC embarked on an effort to review the policies pertaining to use-of-force, technology, independent oversight, behavioral health response and community transparency. The 2021 report aimed to identify areas of alignment, gaps, and opportunities for improvement in law enforcement policies and procedures.

Following the success of the 2021 report, the 2022 report delved into law enforcement and mental health liaison responses to mental/behavioral health calls, examining policies, training, and actual call data.

The 2023 report turned the focus towards the jail and court systems and sought insights from key criminal legal system partners on addressing cases with a behavioral health component, including their roles, strengths, challenges, and collaborative opportunities.

The final report in 2024 focused on the availability of mental health and substance use treatment, as well as the emergency medical/ treatment response to behavioral health needs for individuals engaged in the criminal legal system. Collectively, these reports aimed to improve public safety by identifying areas for improvement in how criminal legal system-partners and mental health and substance use treatment providers respond to cases with a behavioral health component.

The following summary outlines key data and takeaways from each of the annual reports and concludes by providing recommendations to improve the ways in which the local criminal legal system and partners look at and address cases with behavioral health components.

SUMMARIZED KEY TAKEAWAYS

- WIDESPREAD POLICY ALIGNMENT:**
 Law enforcement agencies in Santa Cruz County have aligned policies on key issues like use of force, technology, and public information release.
- UPDATED AND MODERN POLICIES:**
 On nearly every policy issue regarding use of force, technological deployment and release of information to the public, local law enforcement agencies had updated and modern policies.
- SUPPORT FOR DEDICATED MENTAL HEALTH RESPONSE:**
 All jurisdictions without dedicated mental health response units support the creation of an independent agency for these calls.

View Full 2021 Report Here:



REPORT 1

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY REGIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCY POLICY REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

The first report provided a comparative snapshot of key policies and procedures in Santa Cruz County law enforcement agencies. The purpose was to see where there was alignment, where there were gaps and where there were opportunities to improve. It was not a comprehensive look at local agency policies but provided a transparent overview of the policies that work to ensure officers respond safely and responsibly in key situations.

Policy data was collected from five law enforcement jurisdictions across the county. This data was analyzed and key highlights are included below:



Does your agency **publish public records act requests?**



Does your agency **release officer involved shooting body camera footage?**



Does your agency require **implicit bias training?**



Does your department **report out on use of force?**



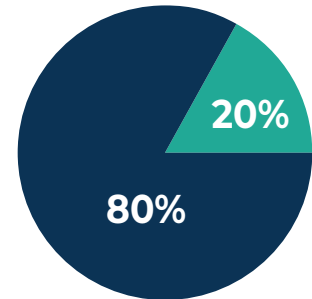

100%
Do not do **no-knock warrants**



Of the law enforcement agencies surveyed use **“Preponderance of Evidence”** as the **level of evidence needed to sustain a complaint against an officer.**

Does your department **report out on complaints against police personnel** to elected officials, to the community, or both?

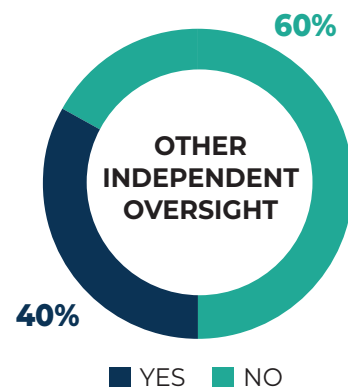
- BOTH ELECTED OFFICIALS AND THE COMMUNITY
- NONE OF THE ABOVE



Does your agency have an **independent auditor?** The independent auditor is defined as someone outside of your agency who reviews all complaints against officers/deputies



If your agency does not have an independent auditor, does it have any other type of **independent oversight?** (*Note: if this question does not apply please select N/A)



Does your department currently have policy related to the **acquisition and use of technology for the purposes of surveillance and/or law enforcement?**



Does your department currently use **predictive policing technology?**



Does your department currently use **facial recognition technology?**

In recognition of this regional effort to examine cross-jurisdictional policing practices throughout the county, this report received the 2022 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the 2022 Challenge Award from the California State Association of Counties (CASC). Each year, NACo and CASC recognizes innovation in county government programs throughout the state and nation. These awards recognized the 2021 report as a groundbreaking open and transparent review of local policing practices, examining critical issues such as use of force, technology, implicit bias training, addressing behavioral health issues and more. In conversations with NACo and the White House it is believed that this was the first-ever regional comparative review of law enforcement policies and procedures conducted in the country.



SUMMARIZED KEY TAKEAWAYS

- POSITIVE IMPACT OF MENTAL HEALTH LIAISONS:**
 Both Law Enforcement and Mental Health Liaisons value joint responses to mental/behavioral health calls.
- INCREASED DEMAND FOR MENTAL HEALTH LIAISONS:**
 Law Enforcement desires more Mental Health Liaison coverage, and jurisdictions without Liaisons are interested in exploring sharing arrangements.
- OPTIMIZED SCHEDULING:**
 Mental Health Liaisons are currently scheduled during peak call times, but additional hours could further enhance support.
- STREAMLINING EMERGENCY PROCEDURES:**
 Improved procedures at emergency mental health facilities would benefit Law Enforcement's response to mental health crises.
- STANDARDIZING MEDICATION POLICIES:**
 Jurisdictions are working towards a uniform policy for handling arrestee medications.

[View Full 2022 Report Here:](#)



REPORT 2

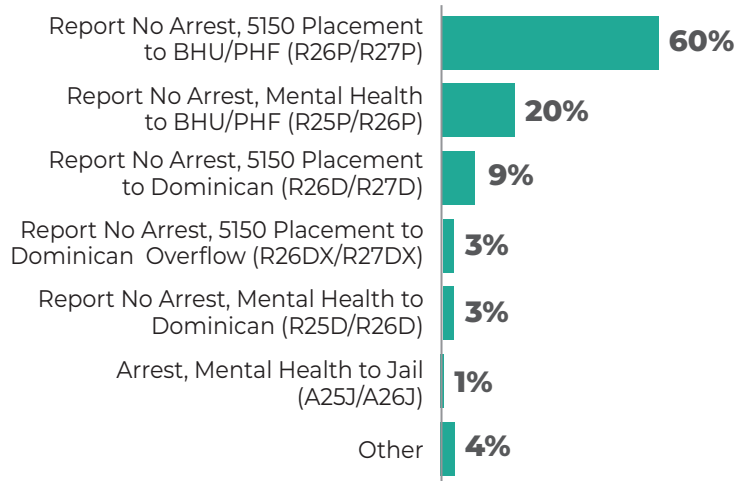
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY REGIONAL MENTAL/BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND LAW ENFORCEMENT REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

The second report provided two key elements in understanding local law enforcement response to mental/behavioral health calls: a comparative snapshot of mental/behavioral health policies, trainings and procedures in Santa Cruz County law enforcement agencies and a look at what mental/behavioral health calls look like when law enforcement arrives – from whether (and where) a transport was needed, to when the calls occurred and even whether an arrest occurred.

Surveys were conducted with law enforcement and mental health liaisons working in Santa Cruz County. Data from the 911 Call Center was also collected. This data was analyzed and key highlights are included below:



Frequency of **Transportation Disposition Codes**



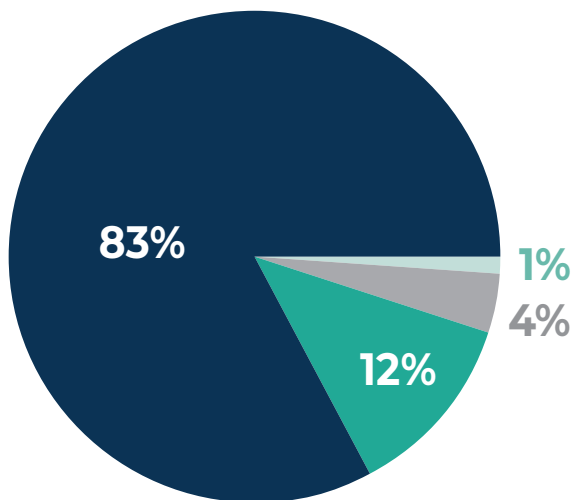
Source: Santa Cruz Regional 9-1-1 Call Center and Scotts Valley Police Department 9-1-1 Call Center
 N=102 transport codes recorded for 100 calls from June 1 to August 15, 2022
 Note: Other includes Arrest, MH to BHU/PHF (A25P/A26P), Arrest, 5150 Placement to BHU/PHF (A26P/A27P), Cite, Criminal 5150 Placement to BHU/PHF (C26P/C27P), Report No Arrest, and MH to Dominican Overflow (R25DX/R26DX)
 Note: Police Department and Sheriff's Office mental health codes are different by one number. For the above: PD CODE/SO CODE.

SNAPSHOT OF DISPOSITION CODE DATA FROM CALL CENTERS

ASR analyzed call center data collected between June 1 and August 15, 2022. Six hundred and thirty one (631) mental health related 9-1-1 calls were coded by dispatchers and officers with 665 newly aligned mental health related codes (some calls received multiple disposition codes).



Frequency of Transportation Destination



- BEHAVIORAL HEALTH UNIT (BHU)/ PSYCHIATRIC HEALTH FACILITY (PHF)
- DOMINICAN HOSPITAL ED
- DOMINICAN HOSPITAL ED OVERFLOW
- JAIL

Source: Santa Cruz Regional 9-1-1 Call Center and Scotts Valley Police Department 9-1-1 Call Center
N=102 transport codes recorded for 100 calls from June 1 to August 15, 2022.

Between June 1 and August 15, 2022, law enforcement recorded 102 transports as a result of 100 mental health calls. The majority, 84 or 83%, were brought to the BHU/PHF/Telecare, regardless of jurisdiction of the call. Four of the 16 transports to Dominican Hospital went to “Overflow”. The most frequently used transport code was for “report no arrest, 5150 placement (R26P/R27P)” (60%).



Number of Times Mental Health Disposition Codes Used, by Code

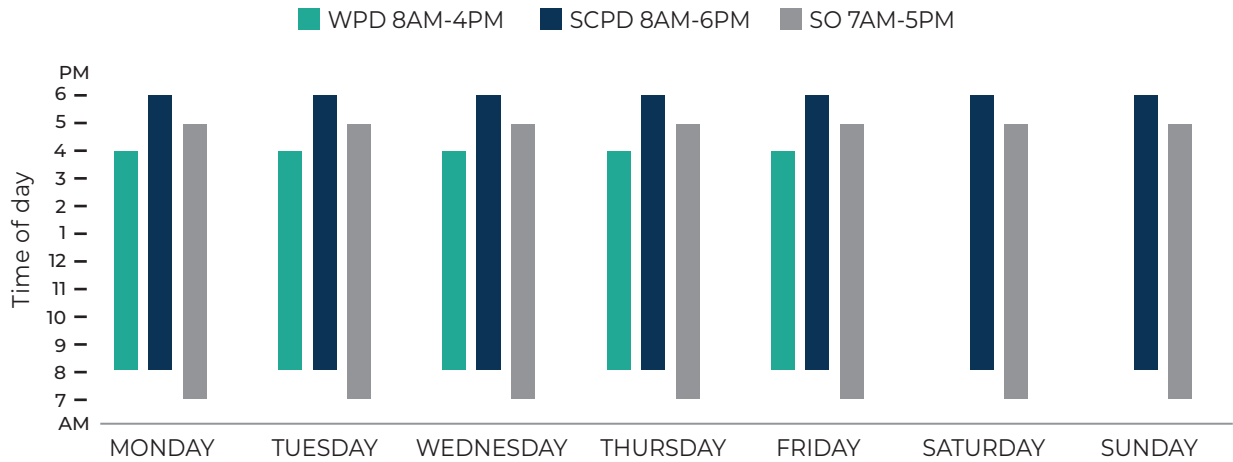
- 216** HANDLED AT THE SCENE, MENTAL HEALTH (H25/H26)
- 158** SUBJECT CONTACT, MENTAL HEALTH (S26)
- 56** GONE ON ARRIVAL/UNABLE TO LOCATE, MENTAL HEALTH (G25/G26)
- 44** REPORT/NO ARREST, 5150 PLACEMENT (R26/R27)
- 18** REPORT/NO ARREST, MENTAL HEALTH (R25/R26)
- 16** HANDLED AT THE SCENE, 5150 (H26/H27)
- 13** SUBJECT CONTACT, 5150 PLACEMENT (S27)
- 11** CANCELLED CALL (BY ANY SOURCE)
- 11** FOLLOW UP/SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT, 5150 PLACEMENT (F26/F27)
- 9** FOLLOW UP/SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT, MENTAL HEALTH (F25/F26)
- 11** OTHER

Source: Santa Cruz Regional 9-1-1 Call Center and Scotts Valley Police Department 9-1-1 Call Center
N=563 mental health related codes (102 transport codes not included) recorded for 631 calls from June 1 to August 15, 2022
Note: Other includes Unfounded Mental Health (U26), Arrest, 5150 Placement (A26/A27), Arrest, Mental Health (A25/A26), Unfounded 5150 Placement (U27), and Citation, Infraction Mental Health (I25/I26).
Note: Police Department (PD) and Sheriff's Office (SO) mental health codes are different by one number. For the above definitions, the codes are shown as: (PD CODE/SO CODE). Where there is only one code, it refers to a Police Department code and there is no corresponding Sheriff's Office code.



Which days of the week do you have a Mental Health Liaison/Clinician available. How many hours per day is one available? How many Mental Health Liaisons/Clinicians are typically in the field at any given time? (Law Enforcement Respondents only)

MH Liaison Coverage* Per Week

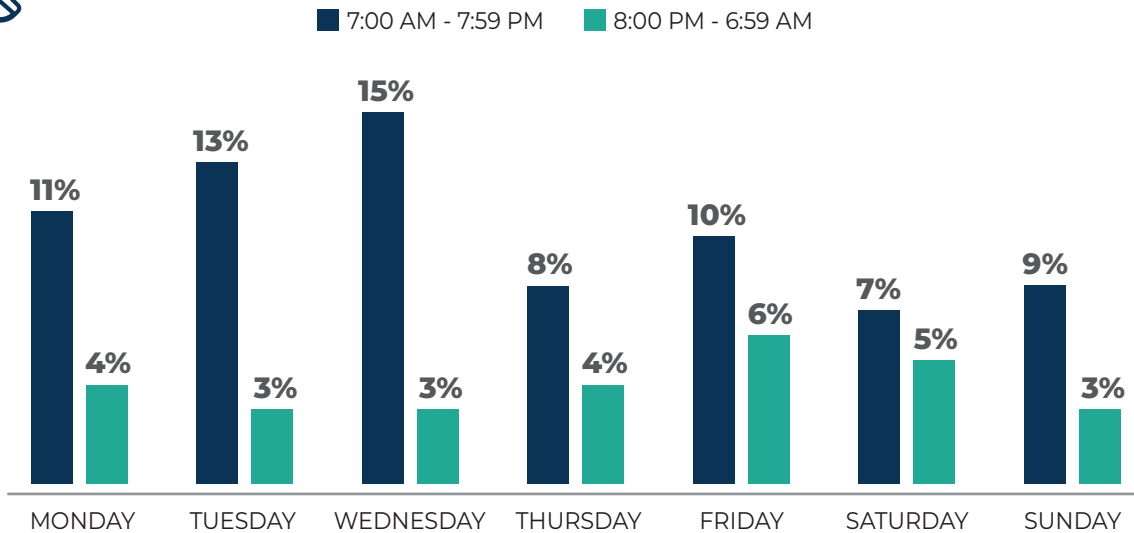


Source: 2022 Survey of Law Enforcement Executive Staff Sheriff's Department, Santa Cruz PD and Watsonville PD responding

*For all three jurisdictions, there is one Mental Health Liaison in the field during each scheduled shift.



Frequency of Mental Health Codes by **Time of Day** and **Day of the Week**



Source: Santa Cruz Regional 9-1-1 Call Center and Scotts Valley Police Department 9-1-1 Call Center
 N=665 mental health codes recorded on 631 calls
 Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

SUMMARIZED KEY TAKEAWAYS

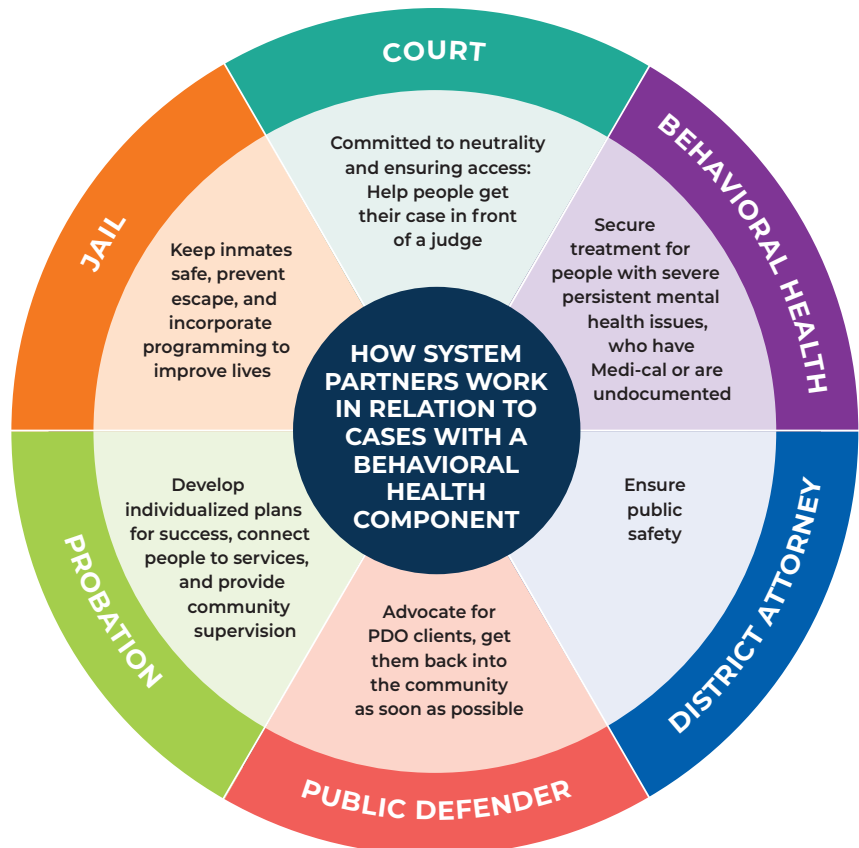
- SHARED COMMITMENT:**
 All partners approach cases with compassion and a belief that incarceration is often not the best answer for cases with a behavioral health component.
- DIVERSE ROLES:**
 Each partner has a unique role, and while tensions can arise, there's general understanding and consideration.
- COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION:**
 Partners value collaboration but seek improved communication and case coordination.
- RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS:**
 There are insufficient resources to meet mental health needs, especially for those with lower-level needs.
- INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITATIONS:**
 The jail's physical structure hinders effective housing and treatment of individuals with behavioral health needs.
- CONTINUITY OF CARE:**
 Despite collaboration, gaps in continuity of care persist.
- FUNDING NEEDS:** Additional funding is required to sustain existing efforts and develop new programs.

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY COURT AND JAIL SYSTEM REVIEW AND ANALYSIS: ADDRESSING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CASES

The third report provided important perspectives directly from key system partners. Findings highlighted system-partner views on the role of their system or department in relation to cases with a behavioral health component, what they do well, their challenges and limitations, and how they can better work together with other partners. Additionally, the report shared available data from system partners on key initiatives, responses and services related to addressing the needs of this specific population.

Surveys and key informant interviews were conducted with criminal legal system partners. Additional secondary data was also collected. This data was analyzed, and key highlights are included below:

SYSTEM OVERVIEW



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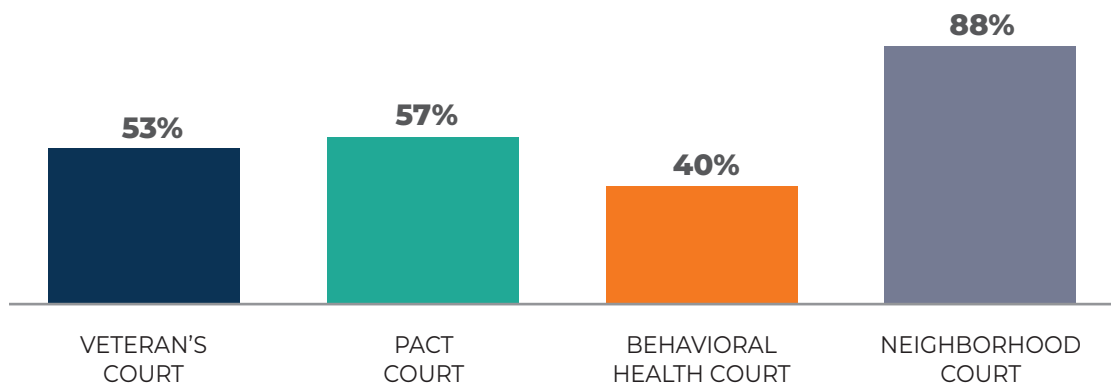


Number of Cases in Santa Cruz County Granted Mental Health Diversion

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Mental Health Diversion Granted	4	26	49	77	108
Percentage of Total Filings	0.05%	0.34%	0.89%	1.35%	2.03%

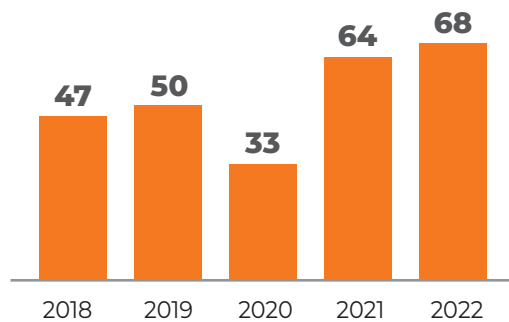
Source: Santa Cruz County Superior Court

Percentage of Individuals Successfully Completing Court Diversion (1/2020 - 6/2023), by Type



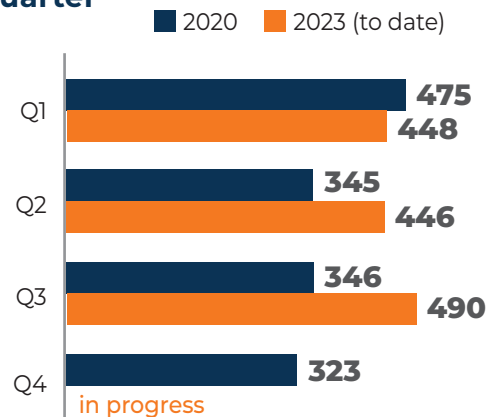
Veteran's Court n=88, PACT Court n=53, BHC n=110, NHC n=157
Source: Santa Cruz County Collaborative Courts

Number of Incarcerated People Determined Incompetent to Stand Trial (IST)



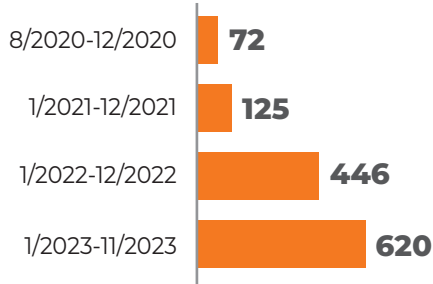
Source: Santa Cruz County Jail
Note: DSH was not accepting patients due to COVID-19 for part of 2020.
Note: Data above represents the number of people determined IST while data from the court represents number of filings (can be multiple filings per person).

Total Number of In-Custody Patients on Mental Health Medications, by Quarter



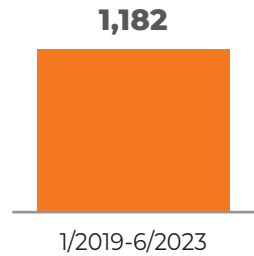
Source: Santa Cruz County Jail/Wellpath
Note: Due to Wellpath staff turnover, data for 2021 and 2022 is not available.
Note: Numbers are duplicated from quarter to quarter

Number of MAT Services Provided in the Jail, by Year



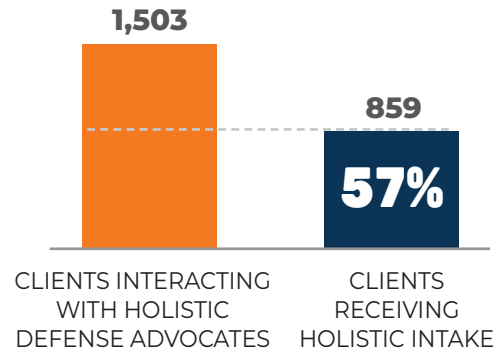
Substance-use disorders and mental health conditions are often co-occurring. To support individuals with substance-use disorders in the jail, the Sheriff’s Office launched the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) program in 2020. MAT is the use of FDA-approved medications, in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies, to provide a “whole-patient” approach to the treatment of substance use disorders. The Sheriff’s Office partners with Wellpath to provide this service and routinely treats approximately 50 incarcerated persons at any given time.

Total Number of Referrals to Screening by County BH for Individuals in Custody, January 2019-June 2023



Source: Santa Cruz County Behavioral Health

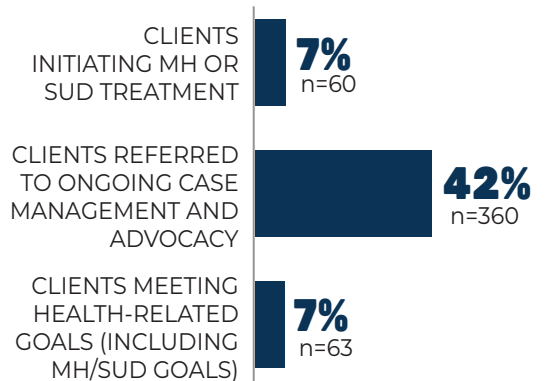
Number of Clients Receiving Holistic Intakes, July 2022 – June 2023



Number of Clients Receiving Some Form of MH/SUD Support or Advocacy, July 2022 – June 2023

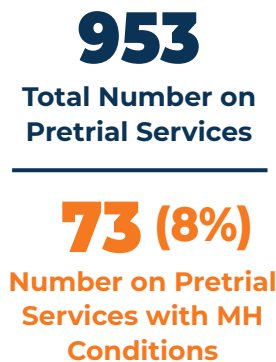


Client Outcomes After Holistic Intake, July 2022 – June 2023



Source: Outcomes of Partners for Justice Partnership Report to the SCC Board of Supervisors, July 14, 2023 n=859

Total Number on Pretrial Services and Number with Mental Health Conditions, 2022



Source: SCC Pretrial Division

SUMMARIZED KEY TAKEAWAYS

- INSUFFICIENT TREATMENT OPTIONS:** There is a need for more diverse treatment options, including step-down, locked, and on-demand services, particularly for individuals in the criminal legal system.
- BARRIERS TO ACCESS:** Issues with referrals, eligibility criteria, and inequitable access to existing services create disparities, especially for those experiencing homelessness, substance use, or labeled “harder to treat.”
- REENTRY AND COORDINATION GAPS:** Improved reentry planning and care coordination prior to release from jail and treatment settings are needed.
- HOUSING SHORTAGE:** There is a significant lack of transitional housing, sober living environments, and affordable housing options for individuals transitioning from custody or treatment.
- ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN:** Policy/legislative changes have increased administrative workload, leading to staffing and capacity challenges that hinder service delivery.
- NEED FOR LIVED EXPERIENCE INPUT:** Incorporating the perspectives of individuals with lived experience and their families is crucial for understanding barriers to accessing treatment and support.
- DATA COORDINATION:** Coordinated data collection across providers and system partners is needed to improve understanding of challenges, outcomes, and inform decision-making.



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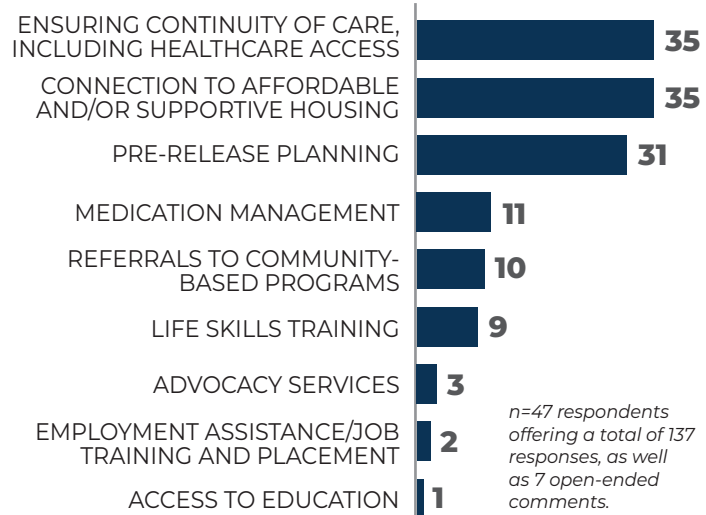
REPORT 4

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TREATMENT AND EMERGENCY CARE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

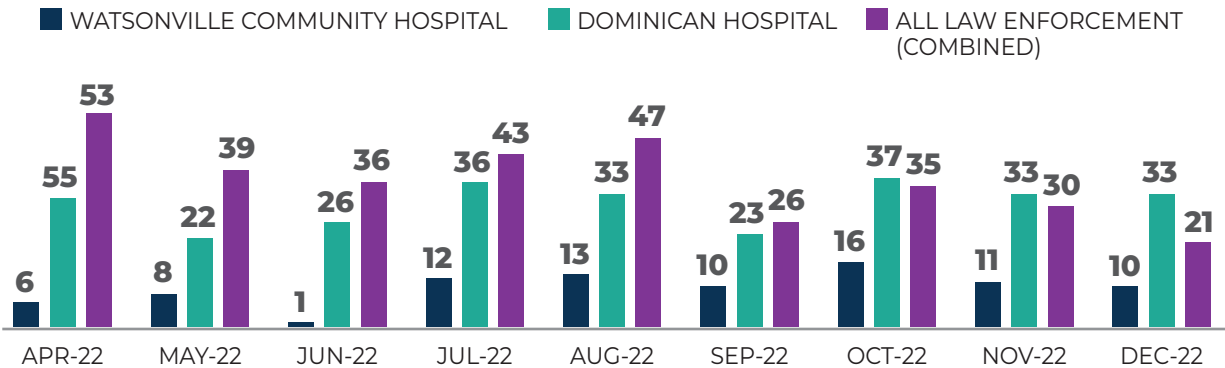
The fourth and final report examined the availability of mental health and substance use treatment and the emergency medical/treatment response to behavioral health cases intersecting with the criminal legal system. Findings illustrated that the need for treatment and housing support far exceeds the availability of local resources; There is a need for an improved continuum of care. in both areas. Beyond a lack of resources, stakeholders shared challenges related to accessing the resources and supports that are available. Furthermore, there was a call for engaging and uplifting the voices of those with lived experience to better understand the challenges for those engaged in the criminal legal system who are dealing with mental/behavioral health challenges.

Survey data was collected from criminal legal system partners as well as medical and treatment providers, SLEs, and other related community-based partners. Key informant interviews were also conducted with key stakeholders including treatment providers. Additional secondary data was also collected. This data was analyzed, and key highlights are included below:

SURVEY: In your view, what are the top three strategies to address the needs of individuals involved in the criminal legal system with mental health or substance abuse issues to support successful reentry into the community in Santa Cruz County?

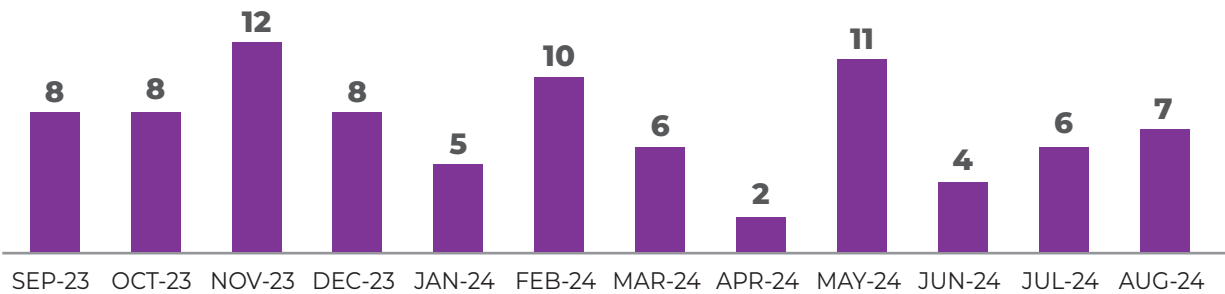


Number of Admissions to Telecare, by referral source (April 2022-December 2022)



Source: Crisis Now Multi-County Innovation Plan (July 2023) - APPENDIX 10
 Note: ASR did not have access to source data.

5150's from County Jail to Telecare (CSP/PHF)



Source: Santa Cruz County Behavioral Health Department
 Note: ASR did not have access to source data

TREATMENT SOLUTIONS IDENTIFIED BY SYSTEM PARTNERS

- Need to build a new jail designed to house and treat people (e.g., a LPS facility).
- If a new jail is not possible, build a MH treatment facility with a large capacity (80-100 beds) that can handle higher level MH needs and those involved in the criminal legal system
- Reverse the requirement to discharge patients for 24 hours after a positive marijuana drug test
- Ensure treatment providers are not just serving those they think will be most successful
- Return residential treatment pre-authorization back to 90-days: less time than that is too short and overburdens staff with assessments, paperwork and admin, rather than focusing on clients

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2021-2024 report series was born out of a call to action, locally and nationally, to review law enforcement policies and issues of community safety. Local law enforcement's partnership with Mental Health Liaisons allowed for a further focus on mental/behavioral health crisis response and then, more broadly, the criminal legal system's response to cases involving individuals with mental or behavioral health needs. Finally, the 2024 report looked specifically at the medical and treatment landscape for supporting individuals with mental or behavioral health needs and how these providers work in conjunction with other criminal legal system partners to address the local need. From surveys and many in-depth interviews with local stakeholders, the following recommendations were identified.

RECOMMENDATIONS

MAINTAIN AND BUILD UPON POLICY ALIGNMENT

Continue to uphold the existing alignment of law enforcement policies regarding use of force, technology, and public information release and ensure these policies remain updated and modern.

EXPAND AND OPTIMIZE MENTAL HEALTH LIAISON PROGRAM

Increase Mental Health Liaison coverage, explore shared arrangements between jurisdictions, and consider expanding liaison hours beyond peak call times to maximize support.

IMPROVE EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH PROCEDURES

Streamline law enforcement-related procedures at emergency medical and crisis mental health facilities to improve efficiency, and increase county-wide capacity to serve individuals in acute mental health crisis.

ENHANCE COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION

While acknowledging the existing shared commitment and understanding of diverse roles, focus on improving communication and case coordination between partners.

IMPROVE JAIL INFRASTRUCTURE

Address infrastructure limitations within the jail to better accommodate and serve individuals with behavioral health needs by improving existing facilities, building a locked mental health facility or building a new jail designed to serve this population.

IMPROVE CONTINUITY OF CARE

Develop strategies to bridge existing gaps in continuity of care, ensuring seamless transitions for individuals receiving services.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED

INCREASE PROGRAM AND TREATMENT FUNDING

Advocate for increased funding to sustain current effective programs (e.g. Collaborative Courts), develop new initiatives to address unmet needs, and secure additional resources to address the needs of those who don't qualify for Specialty Mental Health Services.

EXPAND TREATMENT OPTIONS AND IMPROVE ACCESS

Increase the availability of diverse treatment options, including step-down, locked, and on-demand services, particularly for individuals in the criminal legal system. Address barriers to accessing existing services, such as referral processes, eligibility criteria, and inequitable access, especially for those experiencing homelessness, substance use, or labeled "harder to treat."

STRENGTHEN REENTRY PLANNING AND COORDINATION

Enhance reentry planning and care coordination prior to release from jail and treatment settings to facilitate successful transitions.

INCREASE HOUSING AVAILABILITY

Expand the availability of transitional housing, sober living environments, and affordable housing options for individuals transitioning from custody or treatment.

REDUCE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

Review policies and procedures to identify opportunities to reduce administrative workload on agencies, thereby improving staffing capacity and service delivery

INCORPORATE LIVED EXPERIENCE

Formally incorporate the perspectives of individuals with lived experience and their families into planning, implementation, and evaluation efforts to ensure services are responsive to their needs.

IMPLEMENT COORDINATED DATA COLLECTION

Establish a system for coordinated data collection across providers and system partners to improve understanding of challenges, outcomes, and inform data-driven decision-making.

While this report series is concluding, the critical work of ensuring community safety and increasing individual and collective wellbeing continues. Year after year, system and community partners expressed a shared sense of urgency and commitment to addressing gaps, seeking solutions, and working together better to improve the systems of care for Santa Cruz County. These recommendations come directly from the findings of this effort and should be a starting place for moving to action both as individual stakeholders and as a collective system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the Santa Cruz County Criminal Justice Council (CJC), we would like to acknowledge the following partners, who made these reports possible.

- 911 Call Center
- Mental Health Liaisons
- Superior Court of California, County of Santa Cruz
- Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency, Behavioral Health Division
- Santa Cruz County Probation Department
- Santa Cruz County Office of the Public Defender
- Santa Cruz County District Attorney Office
- Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office
- Santa Cruz Police Department
- Capitola Police Department
- Scotts Valley Police Department
- Watsonville Police Department
- Telecare Psychiatric Health Facility / Santa Cruz Crisis Stabilization Program
- Dignity Health - Dominican Hospital
- NaphCare and Wellpath
- Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance, Inc.
- Janus of Santa Cruz
- New Life Santa Cruz
- Encompass Community Services
- NAMI Santa Cruz County
- As well as many other community-based organizations and treatment providers that were included in data collection.

Additionally, we would like to thank all the CJC members, especially the CJC Executive Committee and Ad Hoc Committee members, who supported report development each year.

MEMBERSHIP AND PROCEDURES

The CJC has a diverse membership that includes community leaders and subject matter experts from throughout the county. The membership includes local elected leaders from the Board of Supervisors and local City Councils, all of the Chiefs of Police and the Sheriff, the District Attorney and Chief Probation Officer, the Public Defender, the County Superintendent of Schools, the President of Cabrillo College, the Superior Court, the County Behavioral Health Director and local non-profit leaders. The CJC meets quarterly and these meetings are open to the public. More information about meetings and the CJC can be found on the CJC's website.

www.santacruzsjc.org



The Criminal Justice Council of Santa Cruz County (CJC) was created over thirty years ago in an effort to provide a more effective criminal justice system for the residents of Santa Cruz County. The all-volunteer membership works to:

- increase coordination and cooperation between criminal justice partners - government, non-profit, educational and others
- to reduce youth involvement in gangs
- to provide a forum for discussion and development of recommendations for strategies related to solutions to crime and violence locally
- provide long-range planning for the criminal justice system – with a focus on addressing countywide gang prevention and intervention
- provide timeline information on criminal justice matters and act as an advisory body to public entities in Santa Cruz County