

## **Child, Youth & Family Well-Being Partnership Toolkit**

### About

Santa Cruz County is shifting from mandated reporting to community supporting in order to prioritize early support and services that strengthen families and keep them safely together whenever possible.

This change focuses on prevention to provide a more compassionate and effective system for everyone involved. It can help families access resources such as housing, food or childcare before intervention from Child Protective Services becomes necessary.

The Child, Youth & Family Well-Being Partnership initiative is at the center of this shift. A key goal is to improve long-term outcomes by connecting families to the right resources, at the right time. It reflects a broader movement toward family well-being and prevention-focused child welfare, designed to build trust, reduce stigma, and strengthen community support networks across Santa Cruz County.

Use this toolkit to share information with staff, volunteers and the broader community you serve. There are many ways to amplify the message:

- Printed materials, including flyers, brochures, informational cards, bookmarks, magnets and stickers are available. Please email [FCSSantaCruzCounty@santacruzcountyca.gov](mailto:FCSSantaCruzCounty@santacruzcountyca.gov) to request printed materials.
- Digital training tools — Videos and PowerPoint presentations are available, with versions appropriate for internal use and for public education. Email [FCSSantaCruzCounty@santacruzcountyca.gov](mailto:FCSSantaCruzCounty@santacruzcountyca.gov) to request.
- Key messages — Social media, newsletter and website content has been created to explain the shift to community support. They are available below and can be customized to fit your organization and audience.

Share this shift with your community! Please let us know if additional resources would be helpful or if you have questions about how to best utilize these tools. Thanks for amplifying this effort!

### **Social and Newsletter Blurbs**

Share this shift with your community via social and newsletter. Below are blurbs. [Graphics and logos can be found here.](#)

## Facebook

Santa Cruz County is reimagining how it supports children and families by shifting from mandated reporting to community-based support. By prioritizing early help and prevention, we can strengthen families and keep them safely together whenever possible.

At the heart of this shift is the Child, Youth & Family Well-Being Partnership, connecting families to the right resources at the right time to improve long-term outcomes. This approach builds trust, reduces stigma, and strengthens community support across our county.

Support when possible. Act when needed. Find out more at [www.santacruzhumanservices.org/FamilyChildren](http://www.santacruzhumanservices.org/FamilyChildren).

## Instagram

Santa Cruz County is putting families first 

We're shifting from mandated reporting to community support by focusing on early help, prevention and keeping families safely together whenever possible. Through the Child, Youth & Family Well-Being Partnership, families are connected to the right resources at the right time, building trust and strengthening our community.

Support when possible. Act when needed.

## Newsletter

Santa Cruz County is shifting from mandated reporting toward a community-support model that prioritizes early assistance and prevention to strengthen families and improve long-term outcomes. The Child, Youth & Family Well-Being Partnership plays a central role in this effort by connecting families to the right resources at the right time. This approach builds trust, reduces stigma, and reinforces community support networks across the county.

Support when possible. Act when needed. Find out more at [www.santacruzhumanservices.org/FamilyChildren](http://www.santacruzhumanservices.org/FamilyChildren).

## FAQs

### **What's changing in child welfare practices in Santa Cruz County?**

Santa Cruz County is part of a growing effort to shift from a system focused solely on mandated reporting to one that emphasizes community support. The goal is to help families access services before challenges escalate into crises.

### **What is “community supporting,” and how is it different from mandated reporting?**

Community supporting is a shift in child welfare practices that emphasizes helping families access resources—like housing, food, or childcare—before involving Child Protective Services (CPS). Instead of automatically launching an investigation, which is triggered by mandated reporting, trained professionals can now explore supportive services that address the root causes of family challenges, many of which are linked to poverty.

This approach is supported by the Family First Prevention Services Act, a federal law that encourages counties to move away from a system focused solely on mandated reporting. In some cases, callers to CPS may be redirected to local support services or referred to 211, where a trained social worker can guide them to low-barrier help without initiating a formal CPS investigation.

Only a small percentage of CPS calls result in confirmed abuse or neglect. Most are screened out or closed with no intervention—yet these families still need support. Mandated reporters like educators and healthcare providers can benefit from training and easy-to-use tools that help them distinguish between situations requiring CPS involvement and those better addressed through community services.

### **How does the shift to community support benefit families, children and professionals?**

The transition from mandated reporting to community support creates a more compassionate and effective system for everyone involved:

For Families:

- Reduces fear, shame, and stigma associated with asking for help
- Creates welcoming, community-based pathways to support—no wrong door, no threat of CPS when safety isn't at risk
- Makes it easier to access resources for parenting stress, mental health, housing, child care and more
- Encourages trust and early intervention, rather than punishment

#### For Children:

- Avoids the trauma of unnecessary intervention for child welfare in their families
- Addresses root causes—like poverty and unmet basic needs—without the stress of foster care
- Promotes stability and well-being through access to services rather than system involvement
- Reduces long-term health and emotional impacts tied to child welfare involvement

#### For Professionals (Educators, Healthcare Providers, Case Managers, etc.):

- Allows for more meaningful collaboration with families
- Supports informed decision-making with tools and training that distinguish support needs from safety risks
- Shifts the role from enforcer to partner—helping build stronger, trust-based relationships with the families they serve
- Improves long-term outcomes by connecting families to appropriate community resources

#### **I think someone needs help. Who do I call?**

Call Santa Cruz County Child Protective Services to speak with a social worker: (831) 454-2273 or (877) 505-3299.