



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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PRESS RELEASE

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COUNTY ANNOUNCES NEW HSA DIRECTOR

The County of Santa Cruz is pleased to announce Mónica Morales as the new Director of Health Services.

Raised in Watsonville, Morales brings a wealth of experience in health and public health policy administration, budgeting and working with community partners, including in her current role as Deputy Director of the Center for Healthy Communities for the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), where she oversees programs that address environmental and occupational health, injury and violence, chronic disease prevention, suicide prevention, and substance use and addiction.

Morales previously served as the Deputy Director of CDPH's Fusion Center for Strategic Development and served in several roles with the Nevada State Division of Public and Behavioral Health, including statewide Chronic Disease Director and Deputy Bureau Chief for Child, Family and Community Wellness.

"As we engaged in a national search for our next HSA Director, it became clear that the best candidate was raised in Watsonville and knows our community well," CAO Carlos Palacios said. "I'm pleased to welcome Mónica and her family back home, and look forward working with her to protect the health and well-being of our residents."

"There is much to be done to ensure we are moving forward equitable public health policies in our county. I look forward to working with the community and dedicated staff in the Health Services Agency to assure that all members of our community are healthy, safe and resilient," Morales said.

Morales is currently a planning member of the California Children's Behavioral Health Initiative, is a representative on the UC Merced Farmworker Research project and the California Health and Human Services Alzheimer's Advisory Committee. She also serves as a board member of the National Association of Chronic Disease directors, serving as president during 2019-20.

Morales has a BA in Sociology from UCSC and MPA in Public Policy and Administration from Columbia University, New York.. A graduate of Watsonville High School, she enjoys outdoor activities with her family; seven year old daughter Isa, four year son Nico, her spouse Adriana, and her dog, Choco.

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