



Santa Cruz County  
Grand Jury

Grand Jury <grandjury@scgrandjury.org>

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## Board of Supervisors Response: These are Our Children: Responding to Youth Homelessness in Santa Cruz County

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Jillian Ritter <Jillian.Ritter@santacruzcounty.us>  
To: "grandjury@scgrandjury.org" <grandjury@scgrandjury.org>

Thu, Aug 30, 2018 at 5:49 PM

Hello,

Please see attached for the Board of Supervisors response to the report titled, "These are Our Children: Responding to Youth Homelessness in Santa Cruz County."

Thank you,

Jillian

Jillian F. Ritter

County Supervisors' Analyst

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

701 Ocean Street, Room 500

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

831-454-2200

[Jillian.ritter@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:Jillian.ritter@santacruzcounty.us)

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### 2 attachments

[18\\_Grand Jury Reponse\\_Responding to Youth Homelessness in SC.pdf](#)

36K

[BDS Response Packet\\_These are Our Children.pdf](#)

193K



# County of Santa Cruz

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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FIFTH DISTRICT

August 30, 2018

The Honorable Judge John Gallagher  
Santa Cruz Courthouse  
701 Ocean Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

RE: RESPONSE TO THE 2017-18 GRAND JURY REPORT  
"THESE ARE OUR CHILDREN: RESPONDING TO YOUTH  
HOMELESSNESS IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY"

Dear Judge Gallagher:

The purpose of this letter is to formally transmit the response of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors to the 2017-2018 Grand Jury Report, titled "These Are Our Children: Responding to Youth Homelessness in Santa Cruz County."

Sincerely,

A blue ink signature of Zach Friend's name.

ZACH FRIEND, Chair  
Board of Supervisors

ZF:jfr  
Attachment

cc: Clerk of the Board  
Santa Cruz County Grand Jury



**The 2017–2018 Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury  
Requires that the**

**Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors**

**Respond to the Findings and Recommendations  
Specified in the Report Titled**

**These Are Our Children**

**Responding to Youth Homelessness in Santa Cruz County**

**by September 17, 2018**

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When the response is complete, please

1. Email the completed Response Packet as a file attachment to [grandjury@scgrandjury.org](mailto:grandjury@scgrandjury.org), and
2. Print and send a hard copy of the completed Response Packet to

The Honorable Judge John Gallagher  
Santa Cruz Courthouse  
701 Ocean St.  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

## Instructions for Respondents

California law PC §933.05 (included [below](#)) requires the respondent to a Grand Jury report to comment on each finding and recommendation within a report. Explanations for disagreements and timeframes for further implementation or analysis must be provided. Please follow the format below when preparing the responses.

### **Response Format**

1. For the Findings included in this Response Packet, select one of the following responses and provide the required additional information:
  - a. **AGREE** with the Finding, or
  - b. **PARTIALLY DISAGREE** with the Finding and specify the portion of the Finding that is disputed and include an explanation of the reasons therefor, or
  - c. **DISAGREE** with the Finding and provide an explanation of the reasons therefor.
2. For the Recommendations included in this Response Packet, select one of the following actions and provide the required additional information:
  - a. **HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED**, with a summary regarding the implemented action, or
  - b. **HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE**, with a timeframe or expected date for implementation, or
  - c. **REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS**, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for that analysis or study; this timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report, or
  - d. **WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.

### **Validation**

Date of governing body's response approval: 8/28/2018 Consent Agenda item 19

If you have questions about this response form, please contact the Grand Jury by calling 831-454-2099 or by sending an email to [grandjury@scgrandjury.org](mailto:grandjury@scgrandjury.org).

## **Findings**

- F1.** The restrictive eligibility requirements of AB 12 exclude some former foster youth from obtaining services available through that legislation and can result in their becoming homeless.

- AGREE**  
 **PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion  
 **DISAGREE** – explain why

**Response explanation** (required for a response other than **Agree**):

We disagree. AB12 is designed as an opt-in program. Any youth who meets the sole requirement of being in foster placement on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday will be automatically opted-in, unless they decline to participate. To maintain their ongoing eligibility in the program, youth are required to be on the path toward self-sufficiency by meeting one of the following participation criteria:

1. Enrolled in high school, or
2. Enrolled in post-secondary, or vocational education, or
3. Working a minimum of 80 hours per month, or
4. Participating in a program or activity designed to promote, or to remove barriers to employment, or
5. Is incapable of participating in any activity described above due to a documented medical condition.

Youth may provide verbal verification of participation in school or employment and are taken at their word. Verification of school or employment attendance, in the form of paycheck stubs or report cards, is not required.

The participation criteria outlined in item #4 allows for a flexible, individualized approach to engaging youth who are not able to meet the education or employment participation requirements of the AB12 program. Examples of activities that have been used to meet the criteria are volunteering, meeting with an Independent Living Program (ILP) Coordinator, attending ILP workshops, or participating in a substance use disorder treatment program.

To maximize the number of youth who opt-in to the program, social workers begin engaging youth in a discussion of the benefits of AB12 by the time they are 17.5 years old. The AB12 program is also reviewed in Child and Family Team meetings. Information about AB12 and instructions on how to maintain eligibility are provided to the youth verbally and in court reports. If a youth chooses to opt out, they are informed that they may call the Family & Children's Services hotline, their former social worker, or their ILP coordinator any time prior to their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday to enter or re-enter the program.

The lack of affordable housing in Santa Cruz County is a significant barrier for AB12 youth. Most youth in AB12 (about half) choose to live in Supervised Independent Living Placements (SILP), some with friends, parents, grandparents, relatives and other community members. Finding an affordable rental unit in Santa Cruz County is a

challenge, and many AB12 youth have made the choice to relocate to other counties where housing is more available and affordable.

To facilitate AB12 youth's ability to secure affordable housing in Santa Cruz County, the Human Services Department partnered with the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Cruz to submit an application to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development for Family Unification Program (FUP) Vouchers. FUP Vouchers can provide housing assistance to eligible youth for up to 36 months, with possible extensions under certain circumstances. Should the proposal be funded, FUP Voucher recipients would also be provided case management services to help them maintain their housing and move towards self-sufficiency.

**F2.** Turnover among Family and Children's Services social workers disrupts the care of children in foster care, to their detriment.

**AGREE (\* with clarification)**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

**Response explanation** (required for a response other than **Agree**):

The Board of Supervisors agrees that, in general, staff turnover is disruptive and impacts outcomes for children and families. Turnover rates for the past several years, are consistent with child welfare social worker turnover across the Bay Area region. Family and Children's Services (FCS) staff turnover rate has decreased in the past twenty-four months. Specific to the AB 12 population, social work staff does not frequently turn over. At times, staff may experience extended leaves for medical or family reasons and this can mean youth are seen by other social workers during this period. Therefore, from a client perspective, it can feel like staff turnover.

- F3.** The location and limited hours of the lone drop-in center in Santa Cruz County restricts the access of homeless young adults to necessary services and available resources.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

**Response explanation** (required for a response other than **Agree**):

- F4.** Santa Cruz County lacks an effective means of identifying and locating homeless youth and unaccompanied minor children in order to connect them to available resources.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

**Response explanation** (required for a response other than **Agree**):

- F5.** The County has no emergency or long term shelter available to house homeless youth and unaccompanied minor children, placing them at risk in adult shelters and on the streets.

**AGREE (\* with clarification)**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

**Response explanation** (required for a response other than **Agree**):

For unaccompanied minors, the Human Services Department (HSD) Family and Children's Services (FCS) has emergency foster care homes where they can be placed. However, as indicated in the report, these minors do not come to the attention of child welfare unless there is interaction with law enforcement or a mandated reporter.

## Recommendations

- R1. The Human Services Department should develop and distribute written procedures for ensuring that eligible foster youth are aware of the requirements and deadlines to opt in to AB 12. (F1)

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done  
 **HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe  
 **REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)  
 **WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

### Response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

The Human Services Department (HSD) Family and Children's Services Division has written policies and procedures that ensure information is provided to youth through many different methods.

There are few requirements and/or timelines for youth to adhere to in order to be eligible for AB12. The defining requirement is that youth must be in an out-of-home placement on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. As youth turn 17, they are advised of this by their social worker and in all court reports. Once they have opted into the program, they must participate in one of the five eligibility criteria to maintain their status in the program.

There are no deadlines to opt-in to AB12. A youth may choose to opt-in at any time prior to their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. Even if they exit the program they may opt back in at any time. Youth are provided this information during all status review hearings, at the transitional hearing prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, and through their attorneys, probation officers, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), Behavioral Health Specialist, Independent Living Plan (ILP) Coordinator, and at Child and Family Team Meetings. The youth and their team have frequent discussions about their plan to participate in AB12. These goals and strategies are described in the Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP), which is reviewed with the youth during monthly contact with their social worker.

The youth signs [a Mutual Agreement for Extended Foster Care \(SOC 162\)](#) when they choose to participate in AB12. This worksheet outlines the participation criteria for the AB12 program. The social worker reviews the agreement in detail with the youth, and has the youth initial each point, then sign to indicate their agreement to participate.

- R2. The Human Services Department should review the rate of turnover among social workers in the Family and Children Services unit and conduct a study to identify the underlying causes of FCS social worker departures, including exit interviews. (F2)

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done  
 **HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe  
 **REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)  
 **WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

**Response explanation, summary, and timeframe:**

The above recommendation has been underway for the past 18 months. The Human Services Department (HSD) Family and Children's Services (FCS) Division has been conducting small group meetings with all levels of staff, staff surveys, retention workgroups involving social work staff, and exit interviews.

The retention workgroup will be making recommendations to division and department leadership about how best to increase retention of social work staff.

Full exit interviews are conducted by an independent third party for everyone leaving FCS and the responses recorded. The responses are then coded by theme as to why people are seeking employment elsewhere.

The analysis of data gathered prior to the independent third-party exit interviews indicate most people leave to retirement or to seek other employment. The exit interviews are too new to aggregate the data for accurate information. As more responses are gathered, the reasons will be clearer. FCS will then use this information to further analyze staff turnover.

- R3. The County Administrative Officer should expand the Continuum of Care Request for Proposals to include a mid-County drop-in center in addition to the ones proposed for North and South County. (F3)

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done  
 **HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe  
 **REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)  
 **WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

**Response explanation, summary, and timeframe:**

Implementation is underway. Encompass Community Services (Encompass) has received approval from the Santa Cruz County Homeless Action Partnership for a grant award from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project funds to operate a new youth drop-in center, pending final approval by HUD. Encompass plans to develop the center with a central location in the mid-county area, such as near the Capitola Mall or Cabrillo College - accessible via multiple bus lines. Additionally, they plan to establish South County, North County and San Lorenzo Valley satellite site(s) offering outreach, engagement, and linkages through a mobile outreach van. The mobile outreach van will visit the satellite sites throughout the county as well as other established and ad hoc outreach locations and will be a key part of their outreach strategy. As part of the outreach strategy, a peer/adult Outreach/Service Navigator team will use the mobile unit to explore both the traditional youth and young adult (YYA) ‘hang-out’ spots (i.e. beaches, farmer’s markets, boardwalk, parks, downtowns, the mall) as well as other less known areas (i.e. the levee, State parks, and other areas identified by homeless youth) each week. In addition to on- the- ground street outreach, Encompass will engage community partners (including law enforcement, juvenile justice, child and family services, school districts and others) and community coalitions (including The Coalition to End Human Trafficking, Youth Violence Prevention Task Force; Smart Solutions and others) to reach YYA. Light touch engagement will take place through street outreach, offering snacks, emergency supplies, brief conversation, allowing time and space to build trust and rapport. YYA who are ready to engage in further services will be transported to the central drop-in center location and will be linked to the appropriate staff and services.

- R4. The Human Services Department should initiate a pilot outreach program to homeless unaccompanied minor children and young adults, to be implemented no later than the end of 2018. (F4, F5)

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done  
 **HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe  
 **REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)  
 **WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

**Response explanation, summary, and timeframe:**

In June 2018, a Youth Homeless Coordinated Entry System project was approved for funding under the County's new Youth Homeless Demonstration Project (YHDP). The new youth Smart Path Coordinated Entry System will include a fulltime outreach worker charged with identifying and engaging unaccompanied youth. The Youth Outreach Worker will be bilingual and have lived experience so that they can both build rapport and relate to unaccompanied youth and identify locations at which unaccompanied youth frequent. The Outreach Worker will help unaccompanied youth complete the applicable Smart Path Coordinated Entry Assessment and link them to resources for immediate help including emergency shelter, meals, showers, medical care, government benefits, employment assistance, and other assistance as available and applicable. When encountering unaccompanied minors, the Youth Outreach Worker will follow appropriate procedures as determined by the County's Family and Children's Services Division.

On October 1, 2018, the County of Santa Cruz Human Services Department (HSD) will become the lead agency for the Smart Path Coordinated Entry System. HSD intends to have the new Youth Outreach Worker in place soon after it takes over as lead agency. HSD will also utilize information from the Coordinated Entry Assessments to identify youth who are experiencing homelessness and may be eligible for additional resources under AB12.

**R5.** The Human Services Department should identify a location for, and the Board of Supervisors should provide funds for, an emergency shelter for homeless young adults, with a separate section for homeless unaccompanied minor children. (F5)

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done
- HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe
- REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain scope and timeframe  
(not to exceed six months)
- WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

**Response explanation, summary, and timeframe:**

Identifying a location for an emergency shelter for homeless young adults and unaccompanied minor children is outside of the sole purview and expertise of the Human Services Department (HSD). However, should funds be identified for this purpose, County staff would welcome the opportunity to assist more-suited entities in the development of site selection criteria and the identification and implementation of an emergency youth shelter.

Historically, decisions around emergency shelters have been a shared responsibility of the local governments and the local homeless Continuum of Care, known as the Homeless Action Partnership (HAP). To date, funding for emergency shelters has been very limited and has focused on serving all populations.

In its fiscal year (FY) 2018-19 State budget, significant additional funds were allocated for local jurisdictions to use in addressing homelessness. Santa Cruz County jurisdictions and community partners will be undergoing strategic discussions to determine how to use these new funds; considerations of emergency shelters and specific population groups will be included in these discussions.

In addition, emergency foster care homes continue to be available for unaccompanied minors.

## **Penal Code §933.05**

1. For Purposes of subdivision (b) of §933, as to each Grand Jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:
  - a. the respondent agrees with the finding,
  - b. the respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.
2. For purpose of subdivision (b) of §933, as to each Grand Jury recommendation, the responding person shall report one of the following actions:
  - a. the recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action,
  - b. the recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation,
  - c. the recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of the publication of the Grand Jury report, or
  - d. the recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.
3. However, if a finding or recommendation of the Grand Jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a County department headed by an elected officer, both the department head and the Board of Supervisors shall respond if requested by the Grand Jury, but the response of the Board of Supervisors shall address only those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision-making authority. The response of the elected department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her department.
4. A Grand Jury may request a subject person or entity to come before the Grand Jury for the purpose of reading and discussing the findings of the Grand Jury report that relates to that person or entity in order to verify the accuracy of the findings prior to their release.
5. During an investigation, the Grand Jury shall meet with the subject of that investigation regarding that investigation unless the court, either on its own determination or upon request of the foreperson of the Grand Jury, determines that such a meeting would be detrimental.
6. A Grand Jury shall provide to the affected agency a copy of the portion of the Grand Jury report relating to that person or entity two working days prior to its public release and after the approval of the presiding judge. **No officer, agency, department, or governing body of a public agency shall disclose any contents of the report prior to the public release of the final report.**