



Santa Cruz County Women's Commission

701 Ocean Street, Fifth Floor, Room 510
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(831) 454-2772 (F) 831-454-2411 TTY/TDD: 711
commissions@santacruzcountyca.gov
www.sccwc.org

Notice of Public Meeting and Agenda

Date: Thursday, October 15, 2026
Time: 6:00 to 8:00 PM
Location: County Govt Building, 701 Ocean Street, Fifth Floor Redwood Conference Room
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

*As a courtesy to those affected, kindly attend the meeting **scent-free** and **smoke-free**.*

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Roll Call/Agenda Review
2. Approve *September 17, 2026 Meeting Minutes*
3. Public Comment:
Any person may address the Commission for a period not to exceed five minutes on matters within the jurisdiction of the Commission.
4. New/Continuing Business/Action Items:
 - 4.1. Reproductive Rights Update – Commissioner Michelis-Ow
 - 4.2. Ad Hoc Subcommittee Engagement Overview
 - 4.3. Establish an Ad Hoc EEO/CR Plan Review Subcommittee
 - 4.4. Status of Women and Girls Education Report – Status Update
5. Staff Report
6. Correspondence
7. Emerging Matters
8. Adjournment

The next scheduled regular meeting will be on Thursday, November 19, 2026 at 6:00 PM

The County of Santa Cruz does not discriminate on the basis of disability, and no person shall, by reason of a disability, be denied the benefits of its services, programs, or activities. If you require special assistance to participate, please call (831) 454-2772 (TTY/TDD: 711) at least 72 hours in advance to make arrangements.



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Meeting Minutes

DATE: Thursday, September 17, 2026
TIME: 6:00 PM
LOCATION: County Government Building, 701 Ocean Street, 5th Floor Redwood Conference Room
PRESENT: Tasha Fareed (1st District), Gail Michaelis-Ow (2nd District), Brenda Rogers (2nd District), Suzanne Doty (3rd District), Allison Albert (3rd District), Rita Sanchez (4th District), Ariel Young (5th District)
EXCUSED: Paige Gordon (1st District), Kate McGrath (5th District)
ABSENT: None
STAFF: Kaite McGrew (Commissions Manager)
GUESTS: Veronica Campos (Janus Perinatal Program Manager) and no members of the public were present.

1. Call to Order/Roll Call/Agenda Review

Meeting convened at 6:05 PM.

2. Approve June 18, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve June 18, 2026 Meeting Minutes as written

Motion/Second: Young/Sanchez

Motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Comment: None

4. New/Continuing Business/Action Items:

4.1. Janus of Santa Cruz Presentation

Campos provided an overview of Janus of Santa Cruz's 50-year history, mission, and services for women and families, including outpatient and residential substance use disorder treatment, withdrawal management, a 10-bed women's facility, a 30-bed co-ed facility, a sobering center, and perinatal, pregnancy, and parenting services. Janus is planning to relocate its women's residential program to South County next year, expanding to 25 beds and allowing children aged 12 and under to stay with their mothers. Services are funded through Medi-Cal, private pay, and grants, with grant funding available to help uninsured clients. Immigration status is not a barrier to services. Janus also partners with community organizations and provides enhanced care management to help clients connect with services both during treatment and after discharge.

Commissioners discussed service gaps and barriers, including housing for unhoused women, childcare for women participating in treatment, the limitations of short-term residential programs, and the need for continued support following discharge. Janus reported increased referrals from the Sheriff's Office and noted ongoing community stigma surrounding substance use. Janus also connects domestic violence survivors with the Walnut Women's Center and works with community partners on food, diapers, housing, and other supports. Campos will follow up with information regarding County funding opportunities and demographic data.

4.2. Consider Feedback on Draft CEDAW Ordinance

Commission reviewed the draft ordinance and provided the following feedback: remove reference to the Women's Commission from section 8.51.050, require the CEO's office to report on Countywide efforts no less frequently than every three years, mandate the elements of the report ("shall" instead of "may"), and require departments to incorporate their CEDAW initiatives into their EEO/CR departmental plans. Albert will review the

Motion Authorizing Staff to Submit Feedback in a Memo to the CEO's Office

Motion/Second: Doty/Rogers

Motion passed unanimously.

4.3. Status of Women and Girls: 2026 Education Report Update and Draft Review

The Commission reviewed a draft update to the SOWAG Education Report and discussed the disparity between women's higher educational achievement and their continued economic disadvantage, including the gender wage gap. Commissioners discussed whether economic data are within the scope of the report and potential strategies for addressing the disparity, including CEDAW-based requirements for County vendors. Sanchez suggested recommending that the Board of Supervisors direct the Economic and Workforce Development Board to review the report and return within six months with recommendations to address the gender wage gap. The Commission will review the Board's powers and duties to develop appropriate language for the recommendation.

The Commission also discussed clarifying information regarding sexual harassment complaints, Title IX, and gender equity in education, including women's sports. The subcommittee will return with a final report, including the cover letter, key takeaways, and recommendations, for Commission consideration.

4.4. Consider Request for a Proclamation Recognizing the United Nations' Designation as the International Year of the Woman Farmer

Commission reviewed the draft letter and discussed the barriers women farmers face in establishing themselves and their businesses.

Motion Approving the Letter as Written and Authorizing Staff to Submit it to the Board

Motion/Second: Young/Fareed

Motion passed unanimously.

5. Staff Report: None

6. Correspondence: None

7. Emerging Matters

Commissioners are encouraged to educate themselves about all the measures on the ballot and to promote public participation and civic engagement in the voting process. Commissioners are also encouraged to maintain open, two-way communication with their appointing Supervisors to better inform advocacy. Albert reported that the gender wage gap has significantly widened since last reported.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:59 PM.

Respectfully submitted by: Kaite McGrew, *Commissions Manager*

Ad Hoc Subcommittee Guide

Quick Reference

✓ DO

- Ensure the subcommittee is **fewer than a quorum** of the Commission.
- Stay within the specific assignment authorized by the Commission.
- Designate a Chair (and, if desired, a Vice Chair).
- Establish a meeting schedule.
- Include **every subcommittee member** and the **assigned staff liaison** in all communications.
- Meet remotely unless there is a compelling reason to meet in person.
- Report your progress at every regular Commission meeting during the life of the subcommittee.
- Work collaboratively and strive for consensus.
- Complete your assignment promptly.

X DON'T

- Include Commissioners who are **not** members of the subcommittee in discussions about the subcommittee's work.
- Include members of the public in the subcommittee's internal deliberations.
- Exceed the authority delegated to the subcommittee by the Commission.
- Continue operating after your assignment has been completed or six months have elapsed.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is an ad hoc subcommittee?

An ad hoc subcommittee is a temporary group of Commissioners established by the Commission to carry out a specific, limited assignment.

The Commission determines the scope of the subcommittee's work when it creates the subcommittee. Depending on its assigned purpose, the subcommittee may be authorized to research an issue, develop recommendations, coordinate or implement a project, organize an event, prepare educational materials, draft correspondence or reports, or complete another specific task on behalf of the Commission.

An ad hoc subcommittee exists only for the purpose assigned to it and may not act outside the authority granted by the Commission.

How many members can serve on an ad hoc subcommittee?

An ad hoc subcommittee must always consist of **fewer than a quorum** of the Commission.

How long does an ad hoc subcommittee exist?

An ad hoc subcommittee exists only until it completes its assigned task or **six months from the date it was established, whichever occurs first.**

Once its work is complete or six months have elapsed, the subcommittee is automatically dissolved. If additional work is needed after six months, the Commission may establish a new ad hoc subcommittee.

Does the subcommittee have officers?

Yes. Every ad hoc subcommittee should designate one member to serve as **Chair**. The subcommittee may also choose to designate a **Vice Chair**.

The Chair is responsible for scheduling the meetings, coordinating the work of the subcommittee, coordinating with staff as needed, and providing status reports to the Commission.

How are meetings scheduled?

The members of the subcommittee are responsible for establishing their own meeting schedule.

Staff will gladly assist with creating Zoom or Microsoft Teams meetings and Outlook invitations for the subcommittee upon request if provided with the meeting dates and times.

Subcommittees are encouraged to meet as often as necessary to complete their assignment.

Should the subcommittee meet remotely or in person?

Subcommittees should **plan to meet remotely**.

Remote meetings are typically the most efficient use of everyone's time. They make it easier for Commissioners and staff to participate without unnecessary travel and provide the greatest scheduling flexibility.

If the nature of the work cannot be completed without meeting in person (e.g., installing an exhibit, hosting an event, or some other activity that requires physical presence to complete), the subcommittee may certainly do so. However, an in-person meeting should be scheduled **only when every participant agrees it is necessary**. If any participant—including a Commissioner or the assigned staff liaison—prefers to meet remotely and the work can be completed remotely, the meeting should instead be held remotely.

How may the subcommittee work together?

Ad hoc subcommittees are intentionally flexible.

Members may collaborate using whatever methods best support the work of the subcommittee, including:

- Zoom or Microsoft Teams meetings
- Conference calls
- Email correspondence
- Collaboration on shared documents or shared drives
- Other collaborative tools approved by staff

Members do **not** need to meet at the same time or in the same place in order to accomplish the subcommittee's work. They may collaborate over time using any of the

methods listed above, allowing members to contribute whenever they are available while keeping the project moving forward.

Who should be included in subcommittee communications?

All substantive communications regarding the subcommittee's work should include:

- Every member of the subcommittee; and
- The assigned staff liaison.

Subcommittee members should conduct all substantive discussions with all members of the subcommittee and copy staff. Keeping all members informed ensures that everyone has the same information and the same opportunity to participate in developing the subcommittee's work.

Commissioners who are **not** members of the subcommittee **should not be included** in discussions regarding the subcommittee's work before it is presented to the full Commission. Likewise, members of the public should not participate in the subcommittee's internal deliberations. **Public input should instead occur when the subcommittee reports to the Commission during a public meeting.**

Does every member have to participate each time the subcommittee meets?

Not necessarily.

The subcommittee may continue working whenever enough members are available to move the project forward. Information from meetings where not all members were present should be distributed to the entire subcommittee and staff after the meeting to keep everyone informed and allow for feedback from members who could not be present.

For very small subcommittees—those with very few members—it is generally preferable to wait until most or all members are available before making significant decisions or developing recommendations so that the work reflects the views of the entire subcommittee.

Does the subcommittee have to follow formal parliamentary procedure?

No.

Ad hoc subcommittees are intended to operate informally. Formal motions, seconds, and parliamentary procedure are generally unnecessary.

Members should discuss issues openly and work toward consensus whenever possible. When consensus is apparent, no formal vote is necessary. If it is not clear that a consensus exists, the Chair should simply ask for a vote so that the decision or recommendation of the subcommittee is clear.

Does the subcommittee have to keep minutes?

No.

Formal minutes are not required.

However, subcommittees should maintain their working documents, draft materials, and project files in the designated shared location whenever practical so that all members and staff have access to the current work product.

Does the subcommittee report back to the Commission?

Yes.

At every regular Commission meeting that occurs during the life of the subcommittee, the Chair (or another designated member) should provide a brief status report describing the progress of the subcommittee's work. Even if the subcommittee has not met or progressed on their task, that should be reported at the meeting.

Following each report, the Commission should provide an opportunity for public comment so Commissioners and the subcommittee may hear community input while the project is still under development. Public input received during these updates can help inform the subcommittee's ongoing work before it is finalized.

Can the subcommittee take action?

Yes—within the scope of the authority granted by the Commission.

The Commission may authorize an ad hoc subcommittee to carry out a specific assignment on its behalf, such as coordinating an event, implementing a project, conducting research, preparing educational materials, drafting correspondence or reports, developing recommendations, or completing another assigned task.

The subcommittee may not exceed the authority delegated to it by the Commission. Matters reserved for action by the full Commission must be brought back to the Commission for consideration and action.

What makes an ad hoc subcommittee successful?

Successful ad hoc subcommittees:

- Clearly understand the assignment given by the Commission.
- Select a Chair to coordinate the work.
- Keep all members and the assigned staff liaison included in communications.
- Meet remotely unless every participant agrees that an in-person meeting is necessary.
- Communicate frequently and collaborate openly.
- Keep the Commission informed through regular status reports.
- Consider public input collected during Commission meetings throughout the life of the project.
- Complete their assignment promptly so the subcommittee can be dissolved once its work is finished.

Ad hoc subcommittees provide Commissioners with a flexible and efficient way to accomplish focused projects between regular Commission meetings while ensuring that the Commission and the public remain informed of their progress.



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September 17, 2026

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors
Attn: Chair Martinez
701 Ocean Street, 500
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Re: Request for a Proclamation Recognizing the United Nations International Year of the Woman Farmer 2026

Dear Chair Martinez and Members of the Board,

On behalf of the Santa Cruz County Women's Commission, we respectfully request that the Board of Supervisors issue a proclamation recognizing the United Nations' designation of **2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer**.

The International Year of the Woman Farmer was established to recognize the indispensable contributions of women throughout the agricultural value chain and to encourage governments, communities, and institutions to address the persistent gender disparities that continue to affect women working in agriculture.

Although women play essential roles in food production, processing, marketing, agricultural science, and farm management, they continue to experience unequal access to land ownership, financing, technology, training, leadership opportunities, and decision-making. The United Nations has identified advancing gender equity in agriculture as an important strategy for strengthening food security, economic resilience, and sustainable agricultural systems.

Santa Cruz County is uniquely positioned to recognize this international observance. Agriculture remains one of the County's foundational industries, contributing significantly to the local economy while producing berries, leafy greens, apples, flowers, nursery products, wine grapes, and numerous specialty crops. Women contribute to every aspect of this sector—as farm owners, agricultural workers, researchers, educators, managers, entrepreneurs, food processors, and business leaders—yet many continue to encounter barriers to advancement within an industry that has historically been male-dominated.

The Women's Commission believes that recognizing the *International Year of the Woman Farmer* provides an opportunity to acknowledge the vital contributions women make to Santa Cruz County's agricultural economy while highlighting the importance of expanding opportunities for women throughout the agribusiness sector. Supporting women's participation and leadership in agriculture strengthens local businesses, promotes workforce equity, encourages innovation, and contributes to the long-term resilience of one of the County's most important economic sectors.

The proclamation would also recognize the important role that women farmers and agricultural professionals play in advancing environmental stewardship, food security, climate resilience, and the economic vitality of our rural communities. By celebrating women working across

the agricultural supply chain—from production and harvesting to research, marketing, distribution, and agricultural entrepreneurship—Santa Cruz County can join communities around the world in recognizing their essential contributions.

Accordingly, the Santa Cruz County Women’s Commission respectfully requests that the Board of Supervisors adopt a proclamation recognizing 2026 as the **International Year of the Woman Farmer** in Santa Cruz County and encourage residents to celebrate the achievements and ongoing contributions of women throughout our local agricultural community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Sincerely,
Signed by:

paige gordon

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Paige Gordon, *Commission Co-Chair*

DocuSigned by:

Allison Albert

3D26C83AE09346B...
Allison Albert, *Commission Co-Chair*

27. Accept and file report on the County's current activities and potential costs, timelines and operational considerations to implement the Women's Commission Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) recommendations (County Executive Office)



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: County Executive Office

Subject: Report on the Women's Commission Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Recommendations

Meeting Date: March 24, 2026

Formal Title: Accept and file report on the County's current activities and potential costs, timelines and operational considerations to implement the Women's Commission Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) recommendations

Recommended Actions

Accept and file the report on the County's current activities and potential costs, timelines, and operational considerations to implement the Women's Commission Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) recommendations.

Executive Summary

On September 9, 2025, the Board of Supervisors (Board) received the Women's Commission's recommended priorities to advance gender equity in alignment with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). At that meeting, the Board directed staff to return with an assessment of the operational considerations, estimated costs, and potential implementation timelines associated with advancing those recommendations.

This report responds to that direction. In coordination with relevant County departments, the County Executive Office reviewed each recommendation and assessed the extent to which the recommendation is already addressed through existing County programs, policies, or partnerships. For recommendations that would require new or expanded efforts, this report outlines potential approaches, operational considerations, and preliminary resource implications should the Board wish to pursue further action.

Overall, several recommendations align with ongoing County initiatives and collaborative efforts already underway, while others would require additional policy direction, staffing capacity, or funding to implement. Attachment A provides a detailed summary of each recommendation and the corresponding departmental response.

Discussion

At the September 9, 2025 Board meeting, the Women's Commission presented its recommended priorities for advancing gender equity in Santa Cruz County as part of the County's ongoing commitment as a CEDAW County. The recommendations span a range of issue areas, including health care access, housing, justice system involvement, economic opportunity, workforce equity, and data practices.

Following that presentation, the Board directed the County Executive Office, in coordination with Human Resources and other relevant departments, to review the recommendations and return with an assessment of fiscal and operational considerations. County departments were consulted to evaluate each recommendation

within the context of existing programs, legal requirements, operational capacity, and available resources.

Staff review indicates that several recommendations are already being advanced through existing programs, partnerships, and cross-sector convenings, including efforts related to perinatal health, childcare access, federal funding impact assessment, and services for justice-involved individuals. Other recommendations could be incorporated into existing workplans with additional direction, such as enhanced monitoring of housing disparities or expanded data reporting practices. A subset of recommendations would require new initiatives, additional staffing capacity, or dedicated funding to implement.

Table 1 below provides a high-level summary of the recommendations, lead departments, and key considerations. Detailed responses are included in Attachment A. In addition, Recommendation 11, which proposes the development of a CEDAW ordinance, is currently under review in coordination with County Counsel. Staff anticipate returning to the Board with a separate item on this topic in August 2026.

Table 1: Summary of CEDAW Recommendations and Staff Responses

Rec.	Topic	Lead Dept(s).	Summary of Response
1	Workforce Compensation	Human Resources (HR) / County Executive Office (CEO)	Structured pay system in place; staff recommend internal review of workforce and payroll data; full independent study would be costly
2	OB/GYN Access	Health Services Agency (HSA)	Existing Birth Equity Action Group addressing issue; staff recommend continuing to leverage this forum
3	Reproductive & Gender Care	HSA	Existing services and non-discrimination practices in place; staff recommend continuing current approach
4	Prenatal Substance Use	HSA	Expanded services and funding already in place; staff recommend continuing and monitoring existing efforts
5	Federal Funding Impacts	CEO / HSA / Human Services Department (HSD)	Ongoing monitoring, analysis, and partner convenings underway; staff recommend continuing current approach
6	Incarcerated Women	Sheriff / Probation / Public Defender's Office (PDO) / Commission on Justice and Gender (JAG)	Programs largely in place; JAG provides ongoing oversight and is recommended as primary forum
7	Housing Disparities	HSD	Monitoring could be incorporated into existing programs; staff recommend ongoing monitoring within legal frameworks
8	Childcare Access	HSD	Existing capital program; limited operational funding for expansion; staff recommend leveraging external funding opportunities
9	Immigration & Justice	PDO / partners	Legal support exists; staff recommend building on SHIELD and existing efforts; broader expansion would require resources
10	Gender Data	CEO / HSD / HSA	Data collected; staff recommend alignment with DataShare standards; expanded reporting requires additional standards and privacy considerations
11	CEDAW Ordinance	CEO / County Counsel	Under development; staff recommend continuing review and returning to Board with options (anticipated August 2026)

As an advisory body to the Board of Supervisors, the Women's Commission's recommendations are intended to inform policy discussions. This report is provided to support the Board's consideration of these recommendations and to identify areas where further direction may be warranted.

Financial Impact

There is no direct fiscal impact associated with accepting and filing this report.

Strategic Initiatives

Equity Framework - Workplace & Workforce, Leadership, Operations & Services
Operational Plan - Operational Excellence

Submitted By:

Nicole D. Coburn, County Executive Officer

Recommended By:

Nicole D. Coburn, County Executive Officer

Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

ChatGPT, an Artificial Intelligence (AI) large language model tool, significantly contributed to the development of this agenda item, including Staff Report, in compliance with the County of Santa Cruz AI Appropriate Use Policy.

Attachment A: Women’s Commission CEDAW Recommendations and Departmental Responses

The following provides the Women’s Commission recommendations and corresponding departmental responses, including current County activities and potential implementation considerations.

1. Gender Analysis of County Workforce Compensation (Article 11)

Recommendation: Direct the County Administrative Office to commission an independent consultant to conduct a comprehensive gender analysis of County workforce compensation to identify and address pay disparities.

County employee compensation is generally determined by negotiated salary schedules tied to job classifications, which establish standardized pay ranges and step progressions. These structures help promote consistency in compensation for employees performing comparable work. In addition, the County currently monitors workforce diversity and representation through its Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights (EEO/CR) Plan, which includes periodic review of workforce utilization data by gender and race/ethnicity.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommend conducting a preliminary internal review of existing workforce and payroll data to identify indicators of potential disparities. This review could examine areas such as step placement at hire, time to promotion, representation across classifications and salary levels, and internal versus external hiring into higher-level positions. Human Resources estimates that such an internal review could be completed through limited custom reporting at an estimated cost of approximately \$2,000 to \$10,000, depending on the level of analysis required.

Additional Option for Board Consideration

Conducting a comprehensive Countywide gender pay equity study through an independent consultant would likely require a significant financial investment. Based on preliminary estimates provided by the Human Resources Department, a full workforce compensation study could cost approximately \$15,000 to \$100,000 or more, depending on the number of classifications analyzed, the complexity of the County’s job structure, and the methodology used. For context, a recent Mid-Management Compensation Study reviewing 23 classification benchmarks cost approximately \$16,000. Santa Cruz County currently maintains approximately 626 job classifications, and a comprehensive pay equity analysis covering the entire workforce would therefore require substantially greater resources, as well as staff time to prepare and validate employee data.

If the internal review identifies areas warranting further examination, the Board could consider authorizing a more targeted independent compensation analysis focused on those issues.

2. Ob/Gyn Care Shortages in South County (Articles 12 and 14)

Recommendation: Establish a task force of County Health Services Agency staff and community partners to examine the root causes of the scarcity of OB/GYN providers in South County and propose solutions that address those systemic root causes (such as provider compensation, cost of living, and the lack of affordable housing).

Beginning in June 2025, the Health Improvement Partnership (HIP) convened a Birth Equity Action Group to address perinatal equity and the shortage of obstetric providers in the community, particularly in South County. This group meets quarterly. According to HIP, the Women’s Commission’s recommendations align closely with the Birth Equity Action Group’s work, particularly regarding limited OB/GYN access in South County. Staff from the Health Services Agency (HSA) Public Health Division’s Children and Family Health (CFH) Branch participate in this group.

Although HSA Health Centers do not provide OB/GYN or prenatal care directly, they support the Birth Equity Action Group's efforts. Because HIP has already convened a collaborative, multi-sector group to assess obstetric provider shortages in the county, with active participation from the Health Services Agency, it may be most effective to leverage and build upon the work of this existing group to promote alignment and avoid duplication of efforts. HIP will also be inviting the Women's Commission to participate in the Birth Equity Action Group.

Every two years, the HSA Public Health Division publishes a birth report. The 2022 Birth Report is attached, and the 2024 Birth Report is expected to be published by the end of 2025. Both the 2022 and forthcoming 2024 reports show a declining birth rate in the county.

While the HSA Behavioral Health Division does not provide OB/GYN or prenatal care, access to timely and high-quality OB/GYN and prenatal care has a direct impact on the mental wellbeing of pregnant and birthing individuals. The Behavioral Health Division provides mental health and substance use services to support individuals during pregnancy and the postpartum period. The physical and mental wellbeing of those who are pregnant or caregiving is critical to supporting healthy child development. Additionally, postnatal care is essential for addressing conditions such as postpartum depression.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommend continuing to support and engage in the existing Health Improvement Partnership Birth Equity Action Group as the primary forum for addressing OB/GYN access challenges in South County, including coordination with community partners and incorporation of the Women's Commission into ongoing efforts.

3. Protecting Access to Reproductive and Gender-Affirming Health Care (Article 12)

Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution to Protect Reproductive and Gender-Affirming Health Care Rights to:

o Establish a County Health Equity Fund to offset the impact of federal and state restrictions by supporting community-based organizations and providers that offer reproductive health services (e.g., elective abortion, contraception), gender-affirming care (e.g., hormone therapy, mental health services), as well as health education and direct services.

o Prioritize grants and contracts with health care providers who continue to offer comprehensive reproductive and gender-affirming care despite funding threats.

The Health Services Agency (HSA) is a trauma-informed, equity-focused organization. HSA's standard contracts include language requiring contractors not to discriminate against individuals based on protected characteristics, including sex, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, and other protected classes. As an organization, HSA does not tolerate discrimination in any form and seeks to prioritize partnerships with providers who demonstrate respect for gender identity and expression.

The HSA Health Centers Division provides gender-affirming medical care and integrated behavioral health services.

The HSA Behavioral Health Division administers Santa Cruz County's Specialty Mental Health and Drug Medi-Cal plans. The Behavioral Health Division recently contracted with the Diversity Center to provide a mandated training for all staff on Gender-Inclusive Care to ensure services are delivered in a manner that enhances access to care for transgender, gender-diverse, and intersex persons. This training is required every two years to ensure that Behavioral Health Division staff remain current on data-driven, evidence-based, and trauma-informed practices for providing gender-inclusive services.

The HSA Public Health Division hosts a monthly Clinician Resource Call for local healthcare providers. The October 2025 webinar focused on gender-affirming care access and treatment and was presented by a Clinical

Professor from the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine Department of Family and Community Medicine. The presentation also addressed the impacts of national and federal policy changes on gender-affirming care.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommend continuing to implement and strengthen existing HSA policies, contracting practices, and service delivery models that promote equitable access to reproductive and gender-affirming health care, including prioritizing partnerships with providers that offer inclusive and comprehensive care.

4. Addressing Prenatal Substance Use Disparities (Article 12)

Recommendation: Support legislation, policies, and programs that address Santa Cruz County's disproportionately high prenatal substance use affecting women and fetuses. Allocate additional funding to the Health Services Agency's behavioral health budget to address substance use and mental health issues in women and children.

HSA provides services to address substance use and mental health needs among women, children, and families.

The health and wellbeing of pregnant individuals is critical to healthy child development, as maternal health can impact fetal growth, birth weight, and long-term physical and mental health outcomes. The HSA Behavioral Health Division has prioritized support for perinatal and maternal substance use treatment. Current divisional contracts with Janus of Santa Cruz provide a range of substance use disorder treatment services for perinatal and parenting individuals. These services include Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), intensive outpatient programs, and residential treatment programming tailored to perinatal-specific populations. Over the past four years, the Behavioral Health Division has expanded funding for perinatal and parenting substance use treatment services by approximately 67%, increasing from \$600,000 in FY 2021-22 to approximately \$1.1 million in FY 2024-25. The Behavioral Health Division will also support Janus' planned expansion by contracting for services at a new facility currently under development that will include 25 residential substance use disorder treatment beds and withdrawal management services for perinatal and parenting individuals.

Additionally, the Behavioral Health Division has provided \$218,917 in Opioid Settlement funding to the Health Improvement Partnership (HIP) to partially support the establishment of a Perinatal MAT convening. This convening focuses on improving access to care and prescribing practices of Medication Assisted Treatment for perinatal individuals struggling with substance use disorders.

Behavioral Health Division staff also meet quarterly with the California Department of Health Care Services to discuss the strengths and challenges within the County's perinatal system of care and to advocate for additional support. The Behavioral Health Division receives federal funding through the Substance Use Block Grant, a portion of which directly supports perinatal substance use treatment and outreach efforts; however, continuation of these funds remains uncertain due to potential federal funding changes.

The Health Centers Division also contracts with Janus of Santa Cruz for substance use treatment services, including services for pregnant patients. Health Centers Division providers offer Medication Assisted Treatment, including services in Spanish; however, the Health Centers Division does not currently provide prenatal care.

Santa Cruz County Family and Children's Services of the Human Services Department (HSD) has initiated the Infants with Prenatal Substance Exposure (IPSE) Workgroup in partnership with the HSA Public Health Division, First 5 Santa Cruz County, and HIP. The purpose of this group is to clarify roles and expectations related to Plans of Safe Care and ensure that infants with prenatal substance exposure and their parents are connected to appropriate services and supports.

HIP has also convened a Perinatal Medication Assisted Treatment Subgroup through the SafeRx Program. This group focuses on improving community collaboration and care coordination, expanding provider education and training, and strengthening community outreach and access to services. HSA staff participate in this effort.

Additionally, the Public Health Division's Children and Family Health (CFH) Branch administers two home visiting programs that serve the perinatal population and families with children up to five years old. Approximately 25% of program participants experience substance abuse challenges. Both programs have experienced steady increases in caseloads, particularly for higher-acuity cases involving substance use, and currently maintain wait lists.

A recent UCSF assessment of the Trauma-Informed Public Health Nursing Program found that 47% of participating families were experiencing housing insecurity and 26% reported past or current substance use. Home Visiting Public Health Nurses (PHNs) regularly participate in rounds at Watsonville Community Hospital and Dominican Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Units. The CFH Branch also facilitates the Perinatal Mental Health Coalition and provides education, training, and resources to providers on best practices in addressing perinatal substance use disorder.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommend continuing to support and expand existing behavioral health, public health, and cross-sector initiatives addressing perinatal substance use, while monitoring funding stability and evaluating opportunities to sustain and enhance services within available resources.

5. Mitigating the Impact of Federal Funding Losses Due to DEI Policies (Articles 5, 10, 11, 13)

Recommendation: Direct the County Administrative Office to work with County departments to assess potential funding shortfalls resulting from federal withdrawal of funds from DEI- aligned programs and identify alternative sources of support. Establish a community task force to identify which community partner safety net services for women and children will be most impacted and identify alternative sources of support.

The County is actively assessing and responding to potential federal funding reductions that may affect safety-net services, including those historically aligned with equity-focused programs. Through ongoing work led by the County Executive Office in coordination with the Health Services Agency and Human Services Department, the County is monitoring federal and State policy changes, evaluating fiscal impacts across departments, and identifying areas of potential service disruption. Initial estimates indicate significant potential reductions in federal funding, with continued analysis informing budget development and mitigation planning.

In parallel, the County is engaging a broad network of community partners to understand impacts on residents and service providers, particularly those serving vulnerable populations, including women and children. These cross-sector convenings function as a coordinated forum to identify service gaps, share information, and develop collective strategies to sustain critical safety-net services.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommend continuing the current coordinated, cross-departmental approach to monitoring funding risks, engaging community partners, and identifying mitigation strategies, including advocacy, resource alignment, and exploration of alternative funding sources, rather than establishing a new task force at this time.

6. Gender-Specific, Trauma-Informed Support for Incarcerated Women (Article 15)

Recommendation: Direct the Sheriff's Office/Corrections to revisit the recommendations made in the 2017 report by Susan Greene, "Gender Matters: A Profile of Women in Santa Cruz County Jail", to determine if they have been implemented, assess the effectiveness of those that have been, and evaluate opportunities to

implement outstanding recommendations. Additionally, ask the Sheriff's Office, Public Defender's Office, and Probation Department to implement and fortify gender-responsive, trauma-informed policies and reentry support programs for incarcerated women in Santa Cruz County.

Many of the recommendations from the 2017 Gender Matters report are currently reflected in existing programming and oversight efforts across the County's criminal justice system.

The Commission on Justice and Gender (JAG) serves as an ongoing forum for evaluating gender-responsive practices and improving outcomes for justice-involved women. JAG's 2023–25 Biennial Report, which is scheduled to be presented to the Board of Supervisors on March 24, 2026, includes an assessment of services and programming for incarcerated women and addresses several of the recommendations outlined in the Gender Matters report.

Programming and services currently available to women in custody at the Blaine Street Women's Facility include trauma-informed substance use disorder treatment, cognitive behavioral therapy curricula tailored to justice-involved women, and a range of educational and rehabilitative programming such as horticulture, culinary classes, employment development through Cabrillo College, yoga, mindfulness programming, and library services. The Women's Recovery and Reentry Program (WRRP) provides a 12-week program focused on substance use recovery, health, and reentry planning and offers continuity of services after release.

The County has also expanded efforts to support reentry and reduce recidivism among women leaving custody. For example, Monarch Services Safe Release Cards are distributed to women prior to release, providing crisis contact information and access to supportive services. In 2024 and 2025, 101 women received Safe Release Cards and were provided a total of 183 bed nights through the program.

Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) is also available for incarcerated individuals, including women, as part of evidence-based treatment for substance use disorders. As of January 2026, 11 women in custody were receiving MAT either as continuation of community-based treatment or following medically supervised detoxification. In addition, incarcerated individuals are released with a 30-day supply of prescribed medication to support continuity of care after release. This practice will align with forthcoming CalAIM requirements for justice-involved individuals beginning in October 2026.

In addition to these efforts, the Blaine Street Women's Facility reopened in May 2023, and the County has been working to expand visitation opportunities and programming that support family connections and rehabilitation. The JAG Commission's forthcoming 2026–27 workplan will include continued collaboration with women with lived experience and system partners to evaluate current resources, identify service gaps, and develop recommendations for future improvements.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommend continuing to utilize the Commission on Justice and Gender (JAG) as the primary forum for evaluating and advancing gender-responsive, trauma-informed practices, including incorporating any remaining or relevant recommendations from the 2017 Gender Matters report into JAG's ongoing and future workplans.

7. Expanding Affordable Housing for Women and Women-Led Households (Article 13)

Recommendation: Direct the Housing for Health Division to conduct a comprehensive analysis of housing trends to identify any disparities disproportionately impacting women (particularly unhoused women) and women-led households, and implement housing programs that prioritize support for women and families.

The Housing for Health Division currently administers housing programs in compliance with federal and state fair housing laws, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender and other protected characteristics.

Consistent with these requirements, Housing for Health could incorporate periodic monitoring of program access and outcomes to identify any disparities affecting women or women-led households and evaluate whether program design or outreach strategies could be adjusted to improve equitable access.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommend continuing to administer housing programs in compliance with fair housing requirements while incorporating ongoing monitoring of program access and outcomes to identify and address any disparities, as appropriate within existing legal and programmatic frameworks.

8. Enhancing Affordable Childcare Access (Articles 11 and 13)

Recommendation: Work with the Human Services Department to expand funding for affordable childcare programs, particularly for single-income, women-led households, and explore additional state and federal grant-funding to expand such program

The County currently supports access to affordable childcare through programs administered by the Human Services Department, including the Child Care Developer Fee (CCDF) loan program, which provides forgivable loans to expand childcare capacity through facility improvements. This program prioritizes projects that increase access to high-quality childcare, including those serving low-income families, and is funded through dedicated developer fee revenues rather than the General Fund. In addition, the County collaborates with regional partners, including First 5 and the Child Care Development Resource Center, to support childcare system planning and resource alignment.

While existing funding sources are primarily restricted to capital investments and do not support ongoing program operations, the County continues to explore additional state and federal funding opportunities, including grants and reimbursement programs, to expand childcare access.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommend continuing to support childcare access through existing programs, partnerships, and external funding opportunities, while exploring additional state and federal resources to expand availability and affordability within existing funding constraints.

9. Support for Justice-Involved Women Affected by Immigration Policies (Articles 9 and 15)

Recommendation: Establish a task force to consider how best to support women and their families who have become justice-involved due to their immigration status. The task force should evaluate the feasibility of and monitor implementation of the following elements among others: Public Defender's Office intervention, County funding for legal representation, and County monitoring of the status of County residents who have been deported or removed due to immigration policies.

The Public Defender's Office currently provides legal representation to individuals accused of crimes in state court, including noncitizen clients whose involvement in the criminal legal system may carry potential immigration consequences. While immigration status itself typically does not create criminal liability in state court, criminal convictions can have significant impacts on an individual's immigration status.

As part of its intake process, the Public Defender's Office identifies clients who are noncitizens and evaluates potential immigration consequences related to their cases. When appropriate, those clients are referred to the office's immigration attorney for legal analysis regarding how criminal charges or convictions may affect immigration status. The Public Defender's Office also assists eligible clients with post-conviction relief and record clearance efforts, including dismissals, sealing, expungement, and motions to vacate convictions that may have been entered without full understanding of potential immigration consequences.

The Public Defender’s Office does not represent individuals in immigration court or removal proceedings. As a result, the office does not track data related to deportation or removal outcomes for County residents.

The Public Defender’s Office also noted that its current staffing resources are fully dedicated to meeting its statutory and constitutional obligations to provide criminal defense representation. Additional responsibilities, such as convening or facilitating a new task force, would require additional capacity and resources.

The County has also recently convened the SHIELD subcommittee to examine issues related to immigration enforcement and community impacts. The work of this subcommittee includes engagement with community partners, assessment of current practices, and identification of potential policy and programmatic responses. The outcomes of this effort may help inform future strategies to support impacted populations, including women and families who are justice-involved.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommend building on existing efforts, including the work of the SHIELD subcommittee and current partnerships with legal service providers and community-based organizations, to assess needs and identify potential strategies, rather than establishing a new task force at this time. The Women’s Commission may also consider engaging with or building upon the findings of the SHIELD subcommittee as that work progresses.

10. Collection and Use of Gender-Disaggregated Data

Recommendation: Require County departments to collect and report gender-disaggregated data in all submissions to the Board, ensuring Board awareness of any gender-based disparities when making funding and policy decisions.

County departments currently collect demographic data, including gender, across a range of programs to support service delivery, program planning, and the identification of disparities, while maintaining compliance with applicable privacy and confidentiality requirements.

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The Health Services Agency (HSA) collects gender and demographic data across its divisions to inform program planning, identify health disparities, and promote equitable access to services. The HSA Behavioral Health Division collects demographic information, including gender, as part of patient records and adheres to strict privacy standards for protected health information. The HSA Health Centers Division also collects gender as part of patient demographic information, although considerations remain regarding the collection and storage of gender data due to potential risks faced by transgender and non-binary individuals. The HSA Public Health Division collects self-reported gender and sex data across major health surveillance systems, including communicable disease reporting, immunization records, vital statistics, and community health surveys, and routinely analyzes this data alongside other demographic factors to assess disparities in health outcomes.

The Human Services Department (HSD) similarly collects demographic data, including gender, across its programs to support program administration, evaluate service delivery, and identify disparities in outcomes. HSD publishes certain disaggregated program data, including gender, on its public-facing website. However, many HSD programs operate under federal and state laws that limit the disclosure of applicant and recipient information. Data sharing and reporting must comply with statutes such as the California Information Practices Act and Welfare and Institutions Code §10850, and the Department applies a “minimum necessary” standard when sharing information.

The County also participates in DataShare Santa Cruz County, a cross-sector data initiative that promotes accessible, reliable, and equity-focused data to inform decision-making. DataShare emphasizes the use of disaggregated data to identify disparities while adhering to established standards for data governance, privacy, and confidentiality, including aggregation and suppression of small cell sizes to protect individual identities.

Expanding gender-disaggregated data reporting in Board submissions would require the development of clear Countywide guidance regarding definitions, reporting standards, and privacy protections. Any such reporting would need to follow established data de-identification practices to ensure individuals cannot be identified, particularly in small populations or specialized programs. State guidance generally recommends reporting data in aggregate form and suppressing small cell sizes (e.g., fewer than 11 individuals) to protect confidentiality. The feasibility of including gender-disaggregated data in all Board submissions may vary depending on the nature of the item, available data, and applicable confidentiality requirements.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommend continuing to collect and analyze demographic data, including gender, within existing programmatic and data systems, and aligning any expanded reporting efforts with established County data governance practices, including those used by DataShare Santa Cruz County, to ensure consistency, equity, and protection of individual privacy.

11. Strengthen the 2024 CEDAW Resolution by establishing a CEDAW Ordinance (Article 7)

Recommendation: Draft and adopt a CEDAW ordinance to further formalize the County's commitment and enhance accountability, transparency, and alignment with community partners, to ensure ongoing commitment to gender equity goals.

This recommendation is currently under review by the County Executive Office in coordination with County Counsel. Staff is evaluating potential approaches, legal considerations, and implementation options.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommend continuing this review process and returning to the Board of Supervisors with a future item outlining options, considerations, and potential next steps. A separate item is anticipated to return to the Board of Supervisors in May 2026 for further consideration.



Santa Cruz County Women's Commission

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March 26, 2025

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors
701 Ocean Street, Room 500
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Re: Women's Commission Recommendations to the Board on CEDAW Priorities

Dear Chair Hernandez and Members of the Board,

On behalf of the *Santa Cruz County Women's Commission*, we write in response to the Board's February 27, 2024, resolution reaffirming Santa Cruz County's status as a *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) County* and directing the Women's Commission to develop recommendations to the Board on CEDAW priorities to further gender equity throughout both the community and the County government workforce.

The urgency of this work has only increased in the wake of the new federal administration's recent executive orders that threaten residents based on their immigration status, access to reproductive healthcare and gender-affirming care for women and the LGBTQ+ community, and Federal funding for County programs and community partners with diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. These federal actions exacerbate existing disparities and create new barriers to equity making it imperative that the County take proactive steps to protect and support women and marginalized communities.

Therefore, the Women's Commission requests that you consider implementing the following recommendations that address critical issues affecting women in our community and propose actionable steps within your jurisdiction to effect lasting and meaningful change in these areas:

1. Gender Analysis of County Workforce Compensation (Article 11)

Recommendation: Direct the County Administrative Office to commission an independent consultant to conduct a comprehensive gender analysis of County workforce compensation to identify and address pay disparities.

2. Ob/Gyn Care Shortages in South County (Articles 12 and 14)

Recommendation: Establish a task force of County Health Services Agency staff and community partners to examine the root causes of the scarcity of OB/GYN providers in South County and propose solutions that address those systemic root causes (such as provider compensation, cost of living, and the lack of affordable housing).

3. Protecting Access to Reproductive and Gender-Affirming Health Care (Article 12)

Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution to Protect Reproductive and Gender-Affirming Health Care Rights to:

- Establish a County Health Equity Fund to offset the impact of federal and state restrictions by supporting community-based organizations and providers that offer reproductive health services (e.g., elective abortion, contraception, etc.), gender-affirming care(e.g., hormone therapy, mental health services, etc.), as well as health education and direct services.
- Prioritize grants and contracts with health care providers who continue to offer comprehensive reproductive and gender-affirming care despite funding threats.

4. Addressing Prenatal Substance Use Disparities (Article 12)

Recommendation: Support legislation, policies, and programs that address Santa Cruz County’s disproportionately high prenatal substance use affecting women and fetuses. Allocate additional funding to the Health Services Agency’s behavioral health budget to address substance use and mental health issues in women and children.

5. Mitigating the Impact of Federal Funding Losses Due to DEI Policies (Articles 5, 10, 11, 13)

Recommendation: Direct the County Administrative Office to work with County departments to assess potential funding shortfalls resulting from federal withdrawal of funds from DEI-aligned programs and identify alternative sources of support. Establish a community task force to identify which community partner safety net services for women and children will be most impacted and identify alternative sources of support.

6. Gender-Specific, Trauma-Informed Support for Incarcerated Women (Article 15)

Recommendation: Direct the Sheriff’s Office/Corrections to revisit the recommendations made in the 2017 report by Susan Greene, “*Gender Matters: A Profile of Women in Santa Cruz County Jail*”, to determine if they have been implemented, assess the effectiveness of those that have been, and evaluate opportunities to implement outstanding recommendations. Additionally, ask the Sheriff’s Office, Public Defender’s Office, and Probation Department to implement and fortify gender-responsive, trauma-informed policies and reentry support programs for incarcerated women in Santa Cruz County.

7. Expanding Affordable Housing for Women and Women-Led Households (Article 13)

Recommendation: Direct the Housing for Health Division to conduct a comprehensive analysis of housing trends to identify any disparities disproportionately impacting women (particularly unhoused women) and women-led households, and implement housing programs that prioritize support for women and families.

8. Enhancing Affordable Childcare Access (Articles 11 and 13)

Recommendation: Work with the Human Services Department to expand funding for affordable childcare programs, particularly for single-income, women-led households, and explore additional state and federal grant-funding to expand such programs.

9. Support for Justice-Involved Women Affected by Immigration Policies (Articles 9 and 15)

Recommendation: Establish a task force to consider how best to support women and their families who have become justice-involved due to their immigration status. The task force should evaluate the feasibility of and monitor implementation of the following elements among others: Public Defender's Office intervention, County funding for legal representation, and County monitoring of the status of County residents who have been deported or removed due to immigration policies.

10. Collection and Use of Gender-Disaggregated Data

Recommendation: Require County departments to collect and report gender-disaggregated data in *all* submissions to the Board, ensuring Board awareness of any gender-based disparities when making funding and policy decisions.

11. Strengthen the 2024 CEDAW Resolution by establishing a CEDAW Ordinance (Article 7)

Recommendation: Draft and adopt a CEDAW ordinance to further formalize the County's commitment and enhance accountability, transparency, and alignment with community partners, to ensure ongoing commitment to gender equity goals.

We appreciate the Board's leadership in reaffirming its commitment to gender equity through its recent resolution, and we welcome the opportunity to collaborate further on these priorities. We look forward to working together to implement these recommendations and make a lasting impact in Santa Cruz County.

Respectfully,

Signed by:

Suzanne Doty

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Suzanne Doty, *Commission Co-Chair*

Signed by:

Claire Protti

500150CB608D42F...

Claire Protti, *Commission Co-Chair*



Santa Cruz County Women's Commission

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Scheduled Meetings

Unless otherwise specified below, regularly scheduled Women's Commission meetings are generally held as follows:

DAY: Third (3rd) Thursday*
MONTH: Every month except July and December
TIME: 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
LOCATION: **Santa Cruz County Government Building ***
5th Floor Redwood Conference Room
701 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

***Unless noted otherwise below**

Locations may vary for outreach, town hall meetings, special meetings, changes of location, or meeting cancellations. Changes to the schedule will be listed on the website at www.sccwc.org as soon as information becomes available.

2026 MEETING DATES		
DATE	TIME	LOCATION
January 15, 2026	6:00 – 8:00 PM	County Bldg – Redwood Rm
February 19, 2026	6:00 – 8:00 PM	County Bldg – Redwood Rm
March 19, 2026	6:00 – 8:00 PM	County Bldg – Redwood Rm
April 16, 2026	6:00 – 8:00 PM	County Bldg – Redwood Rm
May 21, 2026	6:00 – 8:00 PM	County Bldg – Redwood Rm
June 18, 2026	6:00 – 8:00 PM	County Bldg – Redwood Rm
August 20, 2026	6:00 – 8:00 PM	County Bldg – Redwood Rm
September 17, 2026	6:00 – 8:00 PM	County Bldg – Redwood Rm
October 15, 2026	6:00 – 8:00 PM	County Bldg – Redwood Rm
November 19, 2026	6:00 – 8:00 PM	County Bldg – Redwood Rm

Public Participation

- Please check the meeting agenda to learn details about how to participate in the commission meeting.
- If you need special accommodations, please call 454-2935 or TDD: 711 (California Relay Service) at least 48 hours before the meeting.