



Santa Cruz County Women's Commission

701 Ocean Street, Fifth Floor, Room 510
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
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commissions@santacruzcountyca.gov
www.sccwc.org

Notice of Public Meeting and Agenda

Date: Thursday, August 20, 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 *June 18, 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. Janus of Santa Cruz Presentation – Vero Campos (*Perinatal Program Manager*)
 - 4.2. Status of Women and Girls: 2026 Education Report Update and Draft Review
 - 4.3. Consider *Request for a Proclamation Recognizing the United Nations' Designation of 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer*
 - 4.4. CEDAW Recommendations Implementation Status Report and Next Steps
 - 4.5. Ad Hoc Subcommittee Procedures Overview
5. Ad Hoc Subcommittee Reports
 - 5.1. Ad Hoc Resource Directory Subcommittee Update (*Rogers, Gordon*)
 - 5.2. Ad Hoc EEO/CR Advocacy Subcommittee Update (*Doty, Sanchez*)
6. Priority Reports
 - 6.1. Social Media Outreach Report (*Gordon*)
 - 6.2. Immigration Enforcement Activity Report
7. Staff Report
8. Correspondence
9. Emerging Matters
10. Adjournment

The next scheduled regular meeting will be on Thursday, September 17, 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, June 18, 2026
TIME: 6:00 PM
LOCATION: County Government Building, 701 Ocean Street, 5th Floor Redwood Conference Room
PRESENT: Paige Gordon (1st District), Tasha Fareed (1st District), Brenda Rogers (2nd District), Allison Albert (3rd District), Ariel Young (5th District), Kate McGrath (5th District)
EXCUSED: Gail Michaelis-Ow (2nd District), Suzanne Doty (3rd District), Rita Sanchez (4th District)
ABSENT: None
STAFF: Kaite McGrew (Commissions Manager)
GUESTS: Camille Zaug (WSWA Organizer), Daniel Thurmond (WSWA Administrative Assistant), Soledad Garcia, (WSWA Member Delegate) and 1 member of the public were present.

1. Call to Order/Roll Call/Agenda Review

Meeting convened at 6:10 PM.

2. Approve April 16, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve April 16, 2026 Meeting Minutes as written

Motion/Second: McGrath/Albert

Motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Comment: None

4. New/Continuing Business/Action Items:

4.1. Western Service Workers Association (WSWA) Presentation

Zaug, Thurmond, and Garcia provided an overview of their organization's history, mission, and services. The organization has served the community for more than 50 years, providing emergency food, clothing, diapers, formula, referrals, advocacy, and other support services. Representatives described their disaster response efforts, including assistance during the Pajaro River flooding, and highlighted their extensive volunteer, outreach, and community mobilization networks. They also outlined their 11-point benefits program, which includes access to health, dental, legal, childcare, employment, and information services, as well as their broader mission of poverty reduction through advocacy, education, and community action. The presenters noted ongoing needs for volunteers, including medical professionals and translators, and emphasized their role in connecting community needs with available resources.

5. Ad Hoc Subcommittee Reports

5.1. Ad Hoc 2026 Status of Women and Girls Report Subcommittee Update (Albert, Gordon)

Albert and Gordon provided an update on their research related to the status of women and girls' education. The data reflects that women and girls tend to outperform their male counterparts scholastically except for the rate of girls in special education for learning disabilities. While it has been speculated that autism and ADHD may be more prevalent in boys, it is also possible that girls are being underdiagnosed because cultural influences modify the behavior of girls more

significantly than they do for boys, thereby masking commonly recognized neurodiversity characteristics. For this reason, girls with ADHD and/or on the autism spectrum may perform better academically than their male counterparts and therefore do not seek special education supports. The subcommittee is reworking the format of the report and will meet again before the August meeting to begin working on a draft.

5.2. Ad Hoc Resource Directory Subcommittee Report (Rogers, Gordon)

Staff reported adding immigration safety resources to the Commissions resource directory.

5.3. Ad Hoc EEO/CR Advocacy Subcommittee Report (Doty, Sanchez)

Staff reported meeting with the EEO Officer to update her on the Commission's planned approach. Doty and Sanchez continue their review of County department EEO/CR plans.

6. Priority Reports

6.1. CEDAW Recommendation Implementation Status Report

Stafford reported that Supervisor Cummings intends to bring the matter back before the Board for follow-up. The item will be added to the Commission's August agenda for discussion and potential feedback on County department responses to the CEDAW recommendations.

6.2. Social Media Outreach Report

Gordon reported a revised approach to social media outreach, limiting Instagram posts to Commission agendas and items that have existing artwork. Commission outreach will focus on the Facebook platform because of the relative ease of reposting. Commissioners discussed following other California Women's Commissions.

6.3. Immigration Enforcement Activity Report

Staff reported that the County recently announced its intention to sign an amicus curiae brief in support of litigation brought by the California Attorney General and Santa Clara County regarding a planned federal immigration enforcement facility near Gilroy.

7. Staff Report: None

8. Correspondence: None

9. Emerging Matters

Young shared concerns about proposed parking fees at County parks and encouraged Commissioners to attend their respective Supervisors' Commissioner mixers. Women's Equality Day subcommittee will meet to consider options.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:59 PM.

Respectfully submitted by: Kaite McGrew, *Commissions Manager*

5 Education in Santa Cruz County

5.1 Intro

The Women's Commission finds the status of women and girls' education in Santa Cruz County to be above average when compared to men and boys. By exploring performance in primary school and post secondary education attendance and attainment, it is clear that female students in Santa Cruz County are engaged in educational pursuits and often outpacing their male counterparts. However, reviewing economic outcomes, despite being the more educated population, women's median income remains lower than that of men with equal education.

A note on terminology; data sets utilized in this report are disaggregated by sex or gender. While these terms are not interchangeable, female populations are the closest representation for women and girls available for this analysis. When referencing a specific data source the terms female/male or woman/man will be used as corresponds to the data set. Additionally, non-binary designations are available in some data sets, however were not included in this report as the population is often too small to be shared by the source for privacy concerns.

For this analysis, primary sources utilized are The California Department of Education database QuestData and US Census data with supplemental sources as needed.

5.2. Primary School: Lower Education (K-12)

The most current available data on Santa Cruz County's lower education, Kindergarten through 12th Grade, students indicate female students are, in most instances, outperforming male students

Areas that female students outperform male students include:

- English/Language Arts Standardized Testing
- CAST (science) Standardized Testing
- Physical Fitness Testing
- Graduation Rates
- Graduates meeting UC/CSU Requirements
- Dropout Rates (lower)
- College-Going Rates
- Suspension Rates (lower)
- Absenteeism Rates (lower)
- Stability Rates

Areas that male students outperform female students include:

- Mathematics Standardized Testing
- Enrollment in Students with Disabilities subgroup (a deviation highlighted later in this report)

5.2.1 Standardized Testing

English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA) and Mathematics

According to CAASPP Standardized Testing averages, female students outperform male students in English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA), while male students outperform female students in Mathematics.

- ELA - On average 47.7% of female students met or exceeded the ELA standard compared to 39.93% of male students.
- Mathematics - On average 30.64% of female students met or exceeded the Mathematics standard compared to 34.9% of male students.¹

There are no notable deviations between female and male students' Achievement Level (AL) trends by grade. When female students' ALs decrease, male students' ALs typically also decrease. The same is seen for increases. There is no indication of a performance drop off for female students in ELA or Mathematics as compared to male students.

Santa Cruz County ELA and Math AL averages are about 4.5-5% below California averages².

California Science Test (CAST)

According to CAASPP Standardized Testing there are no notable deviations between female and male students' Achievement Level(AL) trends by grade³.

- CAST - On average 35.52% of female High School students met or exceeded the CAST standard compared to 34.91% of male high School students.

When female students' ALs decrease, male students' ALs typically also decrease. The same is seen for increases. There is no indication of a performance drop off for female students in science as compared to male students.

Santa Cruz County Science AL averages are about 2.5-3% above California averages⁴.

Physical Fitness Test

According to California Physical Fitness Report 2018-19 data, the most recent available, female students meeting all 6 physical fitness standards surpass male students in all grades tested⁵.

- Grade 5 - 24% of female students met 6/6 standards compared to 21.1% of male students.
- Grade 7 - 32.8% of female students met 6/6 standards compared to 27.9% of male students.
- Grade 9 - 40.5% of female students met 6/6 standards compared to 35.7% of male students.

Santa Cruz County Physical Fitness averages are between .01-8.1% below California averages⁶.

5.2.2 Student Enrollment

Student population averages in Santa Cruz County and California broadly are about 49% female and 51% male⁷.

¹ Table 5.2.1A

² Table 5.2.1B

³ Table 5.2.1C

⁴ Table 5.2.1D

⁵ Table 5.2.1E

⁶ Table 5.2.1F

⁷ Table 5.2.2A

Student Enrollment by Subgroups

Subgroups include: English Learners, Students with Disabilities, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, Migrant Youth, Foster Youth, and Homeless Youth.

Of these groups, Students with Disabilities and Foster enrollment percentages deviate from the 49/51% gender enrollment average⁸.

- Students with Disabilities are 35.6% female and 64.4% male. This is also reflected in the California Students with Disability average⁹. The Women's Commission inquired about this deviation with subject matter experts, see section 5.2.5.
- Foster students are 59.3% female and 39.5% male.

Student Enrollment by Ethnicity

Ethnicity groups outlined are: African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Filipino, Hispanic or Latino, Pacific Islander, White, and Two or More Races.

No significant deviations from the 49/51% gender enrollment average are seen in any ethnicity group¹⁰.

5.2.3 Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Rates

Graduation Rate and Graduates Meeting UC/CSU Requirements

Female students on average outperform male students in Graduation Rate and Graduates Meeting UC/CSU Requirements¹¹.

- Graduation Rate - Female students had a 89% Graduation Rate compared to male students with a 87.7% Graduation Rate.
 - Santa Cruz County female students' Graduation Rates are slightly lower at 89% than the California average at 89.3%.
 - Santa Cruz County male students' Graduation Rates are higher at 87.7% than the California average at 85.8%.
- Graduates Meeting UC/CSU Requirements - 50.1% of female graduates met the UC/CSU requirements compared to 45% of male graduates.
 - The rate of Santa Cruz County female Graduates Meeting UC/CSU Requirements is lower at 50.1% than the California average at 59.1%.
 - The rate of Santa Cruz County male Graduates Meeting UC/CSU Requirements is lower at 45% than the California average at 48.9%.

Female students outperform male students in Graduation Rate for all subgroups aside from Migrant Education where the female Graduation Rate is 84.6% compared to the male Graduation rate of 90.5%¹².

Female students outperform male students for Graduates Meeting UC/CSU Requirements by 10+ percentage points in the following subgroups:

⁸ Table 5.2.2B

⁹ Table 5.2.2C

¹⁰ Table 5.2.2D

¹¹ Table 5.2.3A

¹² Table 5.2.3B

- English Learners - 25.4% of female students met UC/CSU requirements compared to 13.3% of male students.
- Migrant Education - 43.6% of female students met UC/CSU requirements compared to 15.8% of male students.
- Students with Disabilities - 26% of female students met UC/CSU requirements compared to 15.9% of male students.

Dropout Rates

Dropout Rates are lower on average for female students at 8.5% than male students at 10.6%. This remains true across subgroups¹³.

Santa Cruz County female and male Dropout Rates are both over 1 percentage point higher than the California average¹⁴.

College-Going Rate for California High School Students

College-Going Rates are higher on average for female students at 71.4% than male students at 61.7%. This remains true across subgroups¹⁵.

Santa Cruz County female and male College-Going Rates are 0.6% and 1.1% point higher than the California average respectively¹⁶.

5.2.4 Suspension, Expulsion, Absenteeism, and Stability Rates

Suspension Rates

Suspension Rates for female students are lower at 1.4% compared to male students at 4%.

Santa Cruz County female and male College-Going Rates are 0.4% and 0.1% point lower than the California average respectively. Of students receiving suspensions, female students are less likely to have multiple suspensions at 21.9% compared to male students at 31.5%¹⁷. This remains true across subgroups¹⁸.

Expulsion Rates

Both female and male Expulsion Rates are effectively 0% in Santa Cruz County, however there were 6 expulsions in the 2024-25 school year, all of whom were male students¹⁹.

Absenteeism Rates

Average days absent are the same for female and male students at 12.5 days. Unexcused absences for female students are lower at 30.2% compared to male students at 32.6%²⁰.

Among the subgroups, one deviation from the averages is Foster Youth where female students have higher average days absent and higher unexcused absences²¹.

¹³ Table 5.2.3C

¹⁴ Table 5.2.3D

¹⁵ Table 5.2.3E

¹⁶ Table 5.2.3F

¹⁷ Table 5.2.4A

¹⁸ Table 5.2.4B

¹⁹ Table 5.2.4C

²⁰ Table 5.2.4D

²¹ Table 5.2.4E

- Average Days Absent for Foster Youth are 14.1 days for female students compared to 11.4 days for male students.
- The Unexcused Absence Rate is 51.1% for female Foster students compared to 19.1% for male foster students.

Chronic Absenteeism Rates are 18.1% for female students compared to 18.2% for male students.

Santa Cruz Chronic Absenteeism Rates are over 1 percentage point lower than California²². The only significant discrepancy between female and male students' Chronic Absenteeism Rates across subgroups is Foster Youth where female students have a 27.9% Chronic Absenteeism Rate compared to 14.3% for male students²³.

The small Foster Youth population size should be considered, meaning averages are less reliable indicators of trends. The Foster Youth population is 97 and represents 0.25% of the total population. Reviewing Foster Youth Absenteeism data from 2017-2025 there is no indication of a trend of discrepancies between female and male students²⁴.

Stability Rates

Stability Rates for female students are higher at 92% compared to male students at 90.9%. Among subgroups, both female and male Foster Youth students' Stability Rates are over 30 percentage points lower than the average²⁵.

Santa Cruz County female students' Stability Rate is higher than the overall California female Stability Rate at 91.7%, while Santa Cruz County male students' Stability Rate is lower than the overall California male Stability Rate at 91.3%²⁶.

5.2.5 Perspectives from Local Education Leaders

To supplement the publicly available data presented in this report, the Women's Commission consulted with two education leaders from the Santa Cruz County Office of Education: Jessica Little Austin, Executive Director of the North Santa Cruz County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA), and Marcia Russell, Associate Superintendent of Educational Services. These conversations provided local context about the experiences of girls in special education, athletics, and STEM. Their professional observations are intended to complement—not replace—the quantitative findings presented elsewhere in this report.

Austin reported that boys are identified for special education services more frequently than girls across most disability categories, consistent with broader state and national patterns. She explained that differences in how students present their needs may affect identification: boys may be more likely to exhibit outwardly disruptive behavior, while girls may be more likely to withdraw, potentially making their needs less visible. Austin also described an overall increase in special education needs since 2020, alongside greater mental health challenges, chronic absenteeism, and more complex student needs following the COVID-19 pandemic. She

²² Table 5.2.4F

²³ Table 5.2.4G

²⁴ Table 5.2.4H

²⁵ Table 5.2.4I

²⁶ Table 5.2.4J

highlighted local efforts to support earlier and more equitable identification, including K–2 reading screeners, multi-tiered systems of support, and greater attention to implicit bias in referral and identification practices.

Russell reported that comprehensive high schools throughout Santa Cruz County continue to offer a wide range of athletic opportunities for girls, including volleyball, softball, soccer, basketball, cross-country, track and field, flag football, golf, lacrosse, wrestling, water polo, tennis, swimming, and cheer. She had not observed a recent decline in girls' athletic opportunities or participation, although countywide participation data were not available to confirm this quantitatively. Russell also identified girls' participation in STEM as an area that merits continued attention and indicated that Santa Cruz County appears to follow national participation patterns. Additional local data would be needed to evaluate that comparison and identify any differences among schools or student populations.

5.3 Post-Secondary Education

5.3.1 College Attendance and Attainment Rates

The female population continues to pursue higher education at a rate greater than the male population as indicated by current college admissions at UCSC and Cabrillo College as well as Santa Cruz County residents' educational attainment rates.

University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) Admissions

Fall 2025 enrollment to UCSC consists of 20,140 students, 50% identify as women, 44.9% as men, and 5.1% other/unknown²⁷.

Cabrillo College Admissions

Fall and Spring 2024-25 enrollment to Cabrillo College consists of 2,786 full time students, 53.8% identify as women and 46.2% as men²⁸.

Educational Attainment by Age Group

Among the population aged 18-24 years in Santa Cruz County, the female population attained Bachelor's Degrees or higher by over 10 percentage points compared to the male population, meaning the female population is seeking higher education at a greater rate than the male population²⁹.

The same is seen in populations 25 years and older. Of the female population 20.7% have acquired a Graduate or Professional Degree compared to 17.5% of the male population³⁰.

5.3.2 Women in Sports

Women make up nearly half of UCSC student athletes and over 1/3 of Cabrillo student athletes. Both colleges are allocating a greater proportion of expenses to the women's teams by percentage of student athletes.

²⁷ <https://admissions.ucsc.edu/posts/statistics>

²⁸ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1w9XUHTxEDHSqi1EXrAKIKNF7HWtMX6Wf/view>

²⁹ Table 5.3.1A

³⁰ Table 5.3.1B

UCSC

Women's sports teams include Basketball, All Track Combined, Golf, Soccer, Swimming, Tennis, and Volleyball. Women make up 47.9% of all student athletes. 54.3% of the sports specific expenses are allocated to women's sports³¹.

Cabrillo

Women's sports teams include Volleyball, Soccer, Basketball, Tennis, Beach Volleyball, Swimming, and Softball. Women make up 33.47% of all student athletes. 39.9% of the sports specific expenses are allocated to women's sports³².

5.3.3 Title IX, Equity and Equal Protection (EEP)

University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) Report³³

During the 2023-24 Academic year UCSC's Equity and Equal Protection (EEP) received a total of 794 reports, including Sexual Violence & Sexual Harassment (SVSH), Discrimination & Harassment, Other, No Basis, Whistleblower, or a combination of the four. This count also includes duplicate reports that often occur when, for example, more than one reporter submits the same incident. Compared to the year prior, there is an increase in total reports & report types across all case types. Below is a breakdown of the reports by category.

Report Category	Instances	% of Reports
SVSH	578	64.2%
Discrimination	150	18.2%
No Basis	92	11.2%
Other	38	4.6%
Whistleblower	5	0.6%
Unknown	4	0.5%
SVSH & Discrimination	6	0.7%

528 cases related to Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment were reported to the Title IX Office. 6.3% (30 cases) proceeded through the Title IX Office's investigation process. Of the 30 cases that went through the Investigation process, 76.7% (23 instances) resulted in a substantiated policy violation under the UC Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policy by the Civil Rights Investigator assigned to the case. 23.3% cases (7 instances) did not result in a substantiated policy violation under the UC Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policy by the Civil Rights Investigator.

³¹ https://goslugs.com/documents/2026/7/6/EADA_FY25.pdf?path=general

³² <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1w9XUhtxEDHSqi1EXrAKIKNF7HWtMX6Wf/view>

³³ <https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:ce419304-a9fd-440e-8357-e7f1fee27ef2>

21 cases went through the hearing process. The Hearing Officer found that 76.2% (16 cases) of Respondents engaged in conduct that violated the UC Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policy. Respondents were not found to have engaged in conduct that violated the UC Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment policy in 14.3% of hearings (3 cases). 9.5% (2 cases) of cases that went to hearing are still in the hearing process as of this report.

Sanctions and corrective action that were issued after undergoing the full adjudication process for cases from the 2023-2024 academic year are as follows:

Sanction or Corrective Action	Instances	% of Instances
Suspension	7	11.7%
Exclusion From Areas on Campus and/or Official University Functions	13	21.7%
Educational Training	7	11.7%
Continuation of No Contact/Stay Away Order	7	11.7%
Termination of Employment	3	5%
Documented Discussion	1	1.7%
Counseling	1	1.7%
Dismissal	10	16.7%
Counseling Memo	1	1.7%
Demotion	1	1.7%
Letter of Censure/Warning	1	1.7%
Loss of Privileges and/or Exclusion from Activities	1	1.7%
Other	3	3.3%

5.4 Economic Outcomes

Despite the overall higher education levels of the female population in Santa Cruz County, the median income of the female population is typically lower than the male population. However, there are a few occupations where the female median income is greater than the male median income.

Median Income by Education Level

The median income for female residents in Santa Cruz County is between \$12,916-\$49,260 below male residents with equivalent education levels. The most dramatic difference is between

females and males with graduate or professional degrees where median incomes are \$74,782 and \$124,042 respectively³⁴.

Population in Poverty by Education Level

Despite education level, female residents are more likely to have an income under the poverty level in Santa Cruz County. Excluding the High School Graduate (Including Equivalency) category which is split 50% for both female and male residents, female residents make up 58-59% of the population below the poverty line³⁵.

Median Income by Occupation

Based on 2024 data, the female median income is 67.8% of the male median income. However, female median income exceeds male median income in certain occupations in Santa Cruz County. These occupations, along with what percentage of the occupation is female and female median income, are outlined below:

Occupation	% Female within Occupation	Female Median Income
Life, Physical, and Social Science	48.5%	\$71,773
Community and Social Service	58.9%	\$51,511
Legal	50.8%	\$151,719
Health Technologists and Technicians	40.5%	\$55,350
Healthcare Support	88.4%	\$31,393
Law Enforcement Workers Including Supervisors	18.3%	\$100,510
Personal Care and Service	78.5%	\$27,182
Office and Administrative Support	81.3%	\$46,053
Transportation	8.1%	\$38,773

All other occupations in Santa Cruz County show male median income exceeds female median income. The occupation with the greatest discrepancy is Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media where female median income is 18.7% of the male median income³⁶.

5.6 Conclusion

Women and girls are embracing education and in many instances outperform men and boys. Female students display higher standardized test scores in multiple categories, lower disciplinary rates, and greater college going indicators. Currently, female students will likely

³⁴ Table 5.4.1A

³⁵ Table 5.4.1B

³⁶ Table 5.4.1C

continue to pursue higher education at a greater rate than male students. Currently, the Santa Cruz County adult female population is more educated than the male population.

Despite this, at every education level the female population is more likely to live in poverty and earn a lower median wage compared to the male population.

However, higher education is still a path to greater financial stability as median income increases regardless of sex with each education level advancement. Additionally, there are occupations that deviate from this trend and appear to provide greater financial opportunity to the female population. Women and girls are exceeding in education, but more work must be done for this success to translate to the workforce.

DRAFT



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August 20, 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,

Paige Gordon, *Commission Co-Chair*

Allison Stafford, *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.

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.

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

802EF9EE4E6A45D...

Suzanne Doty, *Commission Co-Chair*

Signed by:

Claire Protti

500150CB608D42F...

Claire Protti, *Commission Co-Chair*

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.

✗ 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.



Santa Cruz County Women's Commission

701 Ocean Street, Fifth Floor, Room 510

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

(831) 454-2772 TTY/TDD: 711

commissions@santacruzcountyca.gov

www.sccwc.org

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.