



County of Santa Cruz

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HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY ADMINISTRATION

April 3, 2002

AGENDA: April 16, 2002

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Santa Cruz County
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

RE: NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK

Dear Members of the Board:

National Public Health Week was celebrated April 1 through April 7. This year's national theme was "Healthy People in Healthy Communities." This theme appropriately represented the public health mission of the local Health Services Agency and our many partners in the community who care about the people's health. For over one hundred years public health professionals have made a commitment to improving the health of all our people, not just those with the financial ability to obtain health care. We have a long history of public health workers going into the community to serve those in greatest need. Equally impressive has been the long commitment of public health workers for social justice, as demonstrated by participation in the struggle for women's rights, opposition to child labor, support for universal health care, concern for a healthy environment and the demand that people with disease and disability be treated with respect and dignity. The Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency is proud to be associated with this honored history.

But the effort to create healthy people in healthy communities is an ongoing struggle. New threats to the public's health are ever present. One of the latest threats comes in the form of bioterrorism and other weapons of mass destruction. Even before September 11th, HSA has been leading an effort to work with key agencies and individuals to develop local plans to respond to mass casualty situations, caused by biological, chemical, or radiological incidents. Those who care about public health must make even stronger efforts for disease surveillance and monitoring as well as working with our partners and allies to create new strategies to address these and other threats to the community.

Public Health Week is an opportunity to celebrate the success of the work of many individuals in the community to improve the health of our people. We are featuring the success of our Male Involvement Program (**MIP**), which aims to fill in the gaps in reproductive health services for young males in the county, and the many advances made in teen birth rates and other reproductive health outcomes. These examples of our work to promote healthy people in healthy communities do not begin to fully describe the work of the dedicated County staff and the many others in the community who work every day to promote public health. But they are typical examples of how we make a difference.

The Male Involvement Program is part of a community collaborative targeted at reducing teen pregnancy, reducing the incidence of sexually transmitted disease, and improving teen access to health services. Over the years, MIP has served thousands of youth through group presentations, one-on-one interventions, media campaigns, and youth advocacy. The program is unique because it serves underserved youth at alternative high schools and detention facilities.

The 2001 Birth Certificate analysis shows that teen pregnancy prevention efforts at HSA and throughout the county are contributing to the reduction of teen births in the county. Although the percentage of births to teens in the south county area continues to be above the State average, it continues to decline from previous years, and the overall county teen birth rate is below the State average.

Santa Cruz County has more reasons to celebrate. The birth outcomes for mothers and their babies in the county continue to be among the best in the entire State. Santa Cruz County achieved the year 2000 goal of 90% of all women starting prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy. And recent data from the California Department of Health Services shows that our county is ranked number one in the state for breastfeeding initiation during early post partum, 1998-2000.

As the 21st century begins, the work of public health will continue. As we build on our past, we face the future with the confidence that we have the knowledge and the passion to meet whatever challenges arise.

It is, therefore, recommended that your Board accept and file this report.

Sincerely,



Rama Khalsa, Ph.D.
Health Services Administrator

RECOMMENDED:


Susan A. Mauriello
County Administrative Officer

cc: County Administrative Office
Auditor-Controller
County Counsel

Public Health Commission
HSA Administration