

2025

HIP ANNUAL REPORT

Rooted in Collaboration, Growing in Impact

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FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Community Partners,

I am delighted to share the Health Improvement Partnership of Santa Cruz County's (HIP) 2025 Annual Report: ***Rooted in Collaboration, Growing in Impact - Nurturing partnerships that transform care and well-being.***

As we reflect on the past year, our team recognizes that it has been one of meaningful transformation—grounded in shared commitment and unwavering collaboration. Despite systemic pressures and persistent threats to healthcare access, our community has responded with clarity and conviction to advancing health equity and the well-being of every Santa Cruz resident. At HIP, we know that lasting impact grows from authentic relationships, collective action, and being in service to patients and their families.

This year marked the launch of our 2025–2028 Strategic Plan. Our first implementation year focused on deepening our investment in the behaviors and infrastructure that embed anti-racist practices and reimagine systems to better serve those most affected by structural barriers. While federal and state policy changes bring uncertainty, they also remind us of the importance of local leadership and innovation in shaping a more just and resilient health system.

Across our programs and initiatives, this shift is already taking root through Medi-Cal service transformation through the PATH Collaborative, SafeRx's expansion of substance use and overdose prevention education, the Health Workforce Council's strides to strengthening local workforce pipelines and retention strategies, advocating to sustain quality care and safety net services with the Safety Net Clinic Coalition, and a new organizational investment to launch the Birth Equity Action Group. This new collaborative brings together community members with lived experience, birthworkers, and local leadership to improve maternal health outcomes by co-creating solutions that reimagine the prenatal-to-postnatal system of care in Santa Cruz County with those closest to the challenge at the center.

This year reaffirmed that collaboration is not only our community's strength but also our core strategy for lasting impact and shared accountability to those we are in service to. Even as we navigate new challenges and shifting landscapes, our direction remains steadfast: to cultivate systems where every voice matters, every partner has a role, and every person has access to care that is just, responsive, and rooted in dignity.

Thank you to every member, community partner, funder, and leader for standing with us in this work. Your continued partnership is essential to advancing our mission and vision.



Adelante!

Maritza Lara

Maritza Lara
Executive Director





SafeRx unites providers, health systems, schools, community organizations, and local governments to address substance use disorders (SUDs) across the region, with a focus on communities most at risk.

Through convenings such as the

- MAT Advisory Group
- Annual Drug Trends Meeting
- Perinatal MAT Subgroup
- Tri-County Adolescent & Young Adult (AYA) SUD Learning Collaborative

SafeRx fosters collaboration, shared learning, and coordinated response.

Beyond convenings, the program leads outreach and education efforts — offering trainings, culturally responsive resources, and expanded naloxone access through partnerships with Non-Traditional Community Partners (NTCPs) and Narcan Distribution Partners (NDPs).

Together, these efforts strengthen community capacity to prevent and respond to substance use.



ROOTED ACTIONS

Since MAT-AG's launch in 2016, the landscape of opioid use disorder (OUD) treatment has evolved, prompting the creation of a Perinatal MAT Subgroup to better support pregnant individuals with SUDs. At the March 2025 convening, partners from across the care continuum came together to identify service gaps and unmet needs impacting this population.

CULTIVATING GROWTH

Through shared dialogue, the group prioritized four key objectives: improving community care coordination, expanding provider education and support, strengthening outreach and access to services, and enhancing holistic support and funding.

BUILDING THE FUTURE

This collaborative focus reflects a deepening commitment to system-level improvements that ensure pregnant individuals facing SUDs receive integrated, equitable, and compassionate care. By aligning partners around shared priorities, SafeRx is helping to build a future where families can thrive, recovery is supported, and every community has the tools to nurture well-being and stability.

PATH COLLABORATIVE

The PATH Collaborative unites local providers, managed care plans, hospitals, and community organizations to address shared challenges in delivering Enhanced Care Management (ECM) and Community Supports.



HIP created spaces where ECM and community-based providers could learn from one another, co-create solutions, and strengthen cross-sector relationships.

Through these collaborative efforts, PATH is helping to align systems, improve care pathways, and foster shared responsibility for member well-being.



ROOTED ACTIONS

Every month we facilitate CalAIM Provider Improvement (CPI) meetings and focused learning circles to provide local providers with opportunities to hold shared dialogue and resource sharing. This year, we hosted our first-ever CalAIM Provider Fair, bringing together over 50 participants and 11 organizations in Santa Cruz County. These spaces allow providers to discuss referral and authorization challenges, data gaps, and barriers that make it difficult for members to access ECM and Community Supports services.

CULTIVATING GROWTH

CPI partners leave convenings with greater clarity on workflows, stronger connections across sectors, and a deeper sense of shared responsibility. When Managed Care Plans announced new ECM priority populations, such as individuals transitioning from incarceration or long-term care, HIP shifted our approach to highlight the expertise of hospitals, county agencies, and frontline providers. This collaborative approach strengthened alignment, clarified referral pathways, and improved responsiveness to complex needs.

BUILDING THE FUTURE

By grounding our approach in shared problem-solving and cross-sector collaboration with provider input, the PATH Collaborative is fostering a more person-centered, coordinated health system. This collective effort matters because it ensures system-wide improvements so that patients experience smooth referrals and care that is responsive to their complex needs—advancing equity and lasting impact across the region.



SAFETY NET CLINIC COALITION

The Safety Net Clinic Coalition (SNCC) provides a coordinated system of high-quality, affordable, and accessible care for all low-income residents. Designed to be patient-centered and responsive, SNCC leverages the strengths and resources of each partner to advance best practices in primary and preventive care, grounded in culturally humble services.

The coalition leads an annual county-wide quality improvement effort to track outcomes, identify opportunities for growth, and support integrated care management with active referrals. Over the past year, as Medicaid cuts threatened critical funding, SNCC leadership united to coordinate collective advocacy efforts— safeguarding essential services while reassuring patients of our ongoing commitment to their care and well-being.



ROOTED ACTIONS

This year, SNCC convened Medical Directors and clinical leaders in person to review findings from the annual Care-Based Incentives (CBI) data collection. This gathering created space for reflective discussion, allowing partners to explore performance trends, identify challenges, and share best practices in quality improvement. Topics highlighted this year included strategies for successful Fluoride Varnish Applications in Medical Settings, Immunizations for Children, Colorectal Cancer Screening, and Well Child Visits in the first 15 months.

CULTIVATING GROWTH

Through these dialogues, clinic partners deepened their collaboration and exchanged strategies for improving care. By aligning approaches and learning from one another, SNCC strengthened cross-clinic coordination and fostered a shared commitment to elevating care quality across the network.

BUILDING THE FUTURE

By embedding data-informed reflection and collaborative problem-solving into its work, SNCC is shaping a stronger, more coordinated safety net. This collective effort ensures patients receive higher-quality, more consistent care, building a more equitable, resilient health system for the entire community despite challenges in the environment.

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY HEALTH WORKFORCE COUNCIL

Rooted in collaboration with over 30 health training programs and healthcare employers, the Santa Cruz County Health Workforce Council strengthens, diversifies, and grows the local health workforce to better meet community needs.



The council fosters cross-sector coordination and shared learning by bringing together educators and employers through the:

- ▶ Monterey Bay Nursing Clinical Education Consortium
- ▶ Health Career Pathway Committee
- ▶ Monterey Bay Community Health Worker Collaborative
- ▶ and Health Workforce Retreats

ROOTED ACTIONS

According to the California Department of Health Care Access & Information, the 2026 forecasted supply-demand gap for LVNs and RNs in the Santa Cruz-Watsonville area is -47.6. In response, HIP established the Monterey Bay Nursing Clinical Education Consortium this year as part of local workforce development efforts. The consortium engages over 20 nursing training programs and healthcare employers across San Benito, Santa Cruz, and Monterey counties to streamline clinical placement systems, improve efficiency, and expand opportunities to scale regional nursing programs and the nursing workforce. By including partners from neighboring counties, the consortium ensures its strategies are responsive to a workforce that often lives and works across county lines.



CULTIVATING GROWTH

By creating shared processes and collaborative problem-solving spaces, the consortium is addressing the significant regional nursing workforce gap. Coordinating clinical placements ensures students complete requirements on time, supporting timely graduation and workforce readiness, while cross-county engagement strengthens connections across the broader Monterey Bay region.

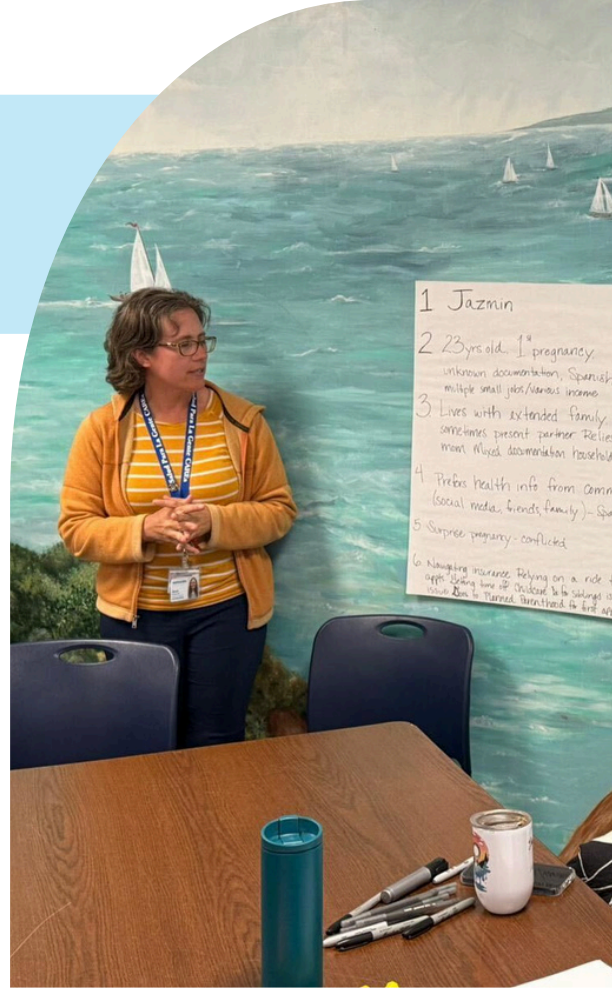
BUILDING THE FUTURE

We remain committed to aligning educational institutions, healthcare employers, and workforce initiatives to sustain strong workforce pipelines. This collaborative approach strengthens the health system's capacity, supports high-quality care delivery, and ensures local residents have access to health careers and opportunities for professional growth across the region.

BIRTH EQUITY ACTION GROUP

The Birth Equity Action Group is a new initiative under HIP that aims to re-imagine and re-design the prenatal to postnatal system of care in Santa Cruz County to improve maternal health outcomes through codesign guided by the people the system serves and with the commitment of the system partners.

HIP and community partners in this work are embracing a human centered design approach. This participatory model ensures that redesign efforts are not only data-informed but co-created with the very communities the system is intended to serve, in turn seeding space to develop new partnerships and deepen the impact and commitment to the health and well-being of mothers, children, and their families.



ROOTED ACTIONS

On July 18, 2025, over 30 stakeholders including county public health officials, hospital administrators, OB/GYNs, family physicians, nurses, midwives, doulas, CBO leadership, and community members with lived experience convened to kick off the Birth Equity Action Group. Participants engaged in collaborative discussion to identify opportunities and shared priorities for maternal health improvement.

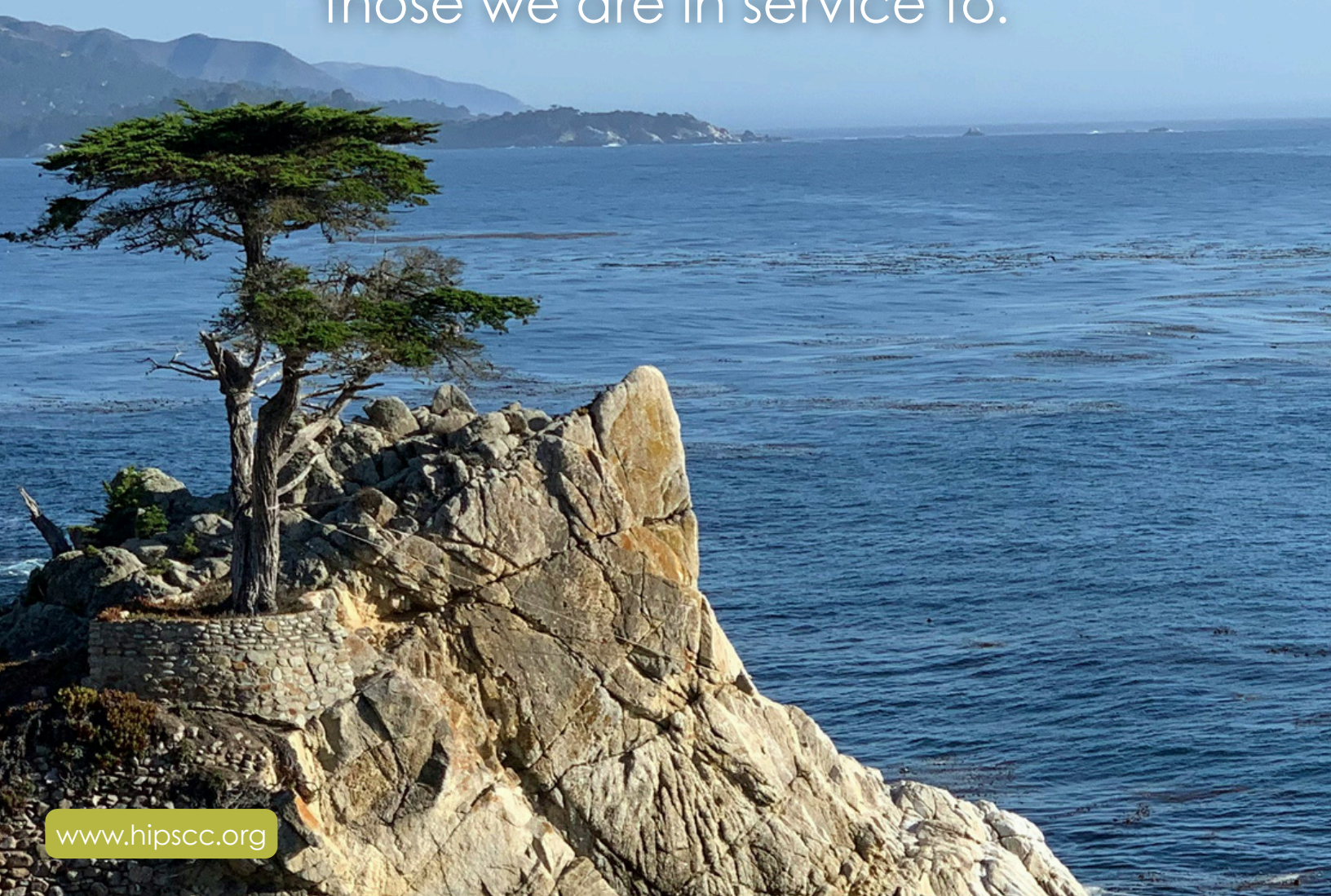
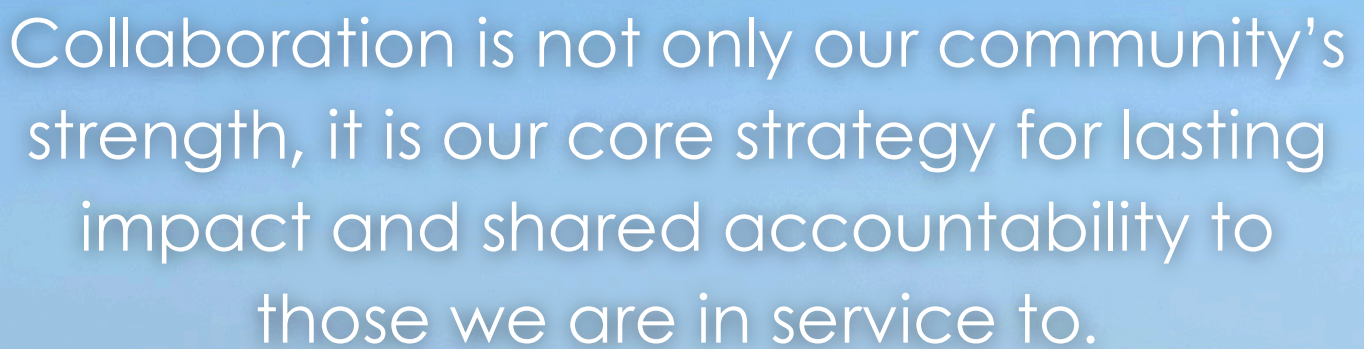
CULTIVATING GROWTH

During this workshop, key priorities emerged: the urgent need for Indigenous and Mixteco language access, better integration of doulas and midwives into formal care systems, strengthening staffing consistency and OB provider recruitment, enhancing postpartum and mental health supports, and developing mechanisms for accountability to communities most affected by inequities. By co-designing solutions with community input, partners began building shared strategies to address systemic gaps and promote equity across the maternal health continuum— laying the foundation and commitment to collective birth equity efforts in Santa Cruz County.

BUILDING THE FUTURE

This initiative is cultivating a maternal health system that centers equity, cultural safety, trust, and dynamic cross-sector partnerships. The Birth Equity Action Group is committed to driving systemic transformation by designing care with patients' health and well-being at the center, ensuring that birthing individuals have meaningful opportunities to directly inform and shape these efforts.



A scenic view of the Lone Cypress tree on a rocky cliff overlooking the ocean, with mountains in the background. The tree is a large, gnarled cypress with a flat-topped canopy, standing on a small, rocky outcrop. The ocean is a deep blue, and the sky is clear. In the background, there are mountains and a small island. The text "those we are in service to." is visible at the top of the image. The website address "www.hipscc.org" is visible in the bottom left corner.