



PRESS RELEASE

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California awards \$2 Million to the Community Health Trust to open a mental health drop-in center for Pajaro Valley youth

[Watsonville, California – December 28, 2023] The Community Health Trust of Pajaro Valley has been awarded \$2 million in start-up funds from the State of California to open an [allcove™ youth drop-in center](#) in Watsonville.

On December 21, as part of Governor Gavin Newsom's [Master Plan for Kids' Mental Health](#), the Department of Health Care Services announced \$50 million in grant awards to 69 organizations to fund youth-driven centers that provide safe spaces, where young people can access a variety of mental health services and supports in a single location. [Governor Newsom's press release can be read here.](#)

In addition to the [Community Health Trust](#), the organizational partners for the new allcove™ Pajaro Valley include the [City of Watsonville Parks and Community Services](#), [Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County](#), [Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance](#), and the [United Way of Santa Cruz County](#). The partners, with diverse areas of expertise working with youth and in behavioral health, offer a wide array of experience to contribute to the development and long-term success of the new youth center. allcove™ Pajaro Valley is estimated to open in downtown Watsonville in 2025.

"This is an incredible opportunity for organizations and individuals vested in the mental health of youth to leverage what already exists and build

something with, by, and for youth that helps them be well,” said DeAndre’ James, Executive Director of the Community Health Trust.

According to the Santa Cruz County California Health Kids Survey, 44% of Santa Cruz County students in 2021 indicated they felt sad and hopeless almost every day. In this same year, 14% of Santa Cruz County students surveyed indicated that they had seriously considered attempting suicide; more than one-third (36%) of LGBTQIA+ students contemplated suicide.

Local pediatrician and project partner Dr. Garry Crummer has witnessed a significant uptick in emotional and mental health issues in youth.

“Approximately two-thirds of my daily clinic visits involve child and adolescent psychiatric issues,” said Dr. Crummer. “Our youth are feeling isolated and disconnected.”

The new center will be an integrated, holistic mental health drop-in center for young people ages 12–25, following the [allcove™ model](#) developed by Stanford University’s Center for Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing. The center will provide support for mild to moderate needs in mental health, physical health, substance use, peer support, family support, and supported education and employment. The design of the new allcove™ center will be youth-driven with ongoing participation from youth through the establishment of a youth advisory group. The goal is to decrease the stigma surrounding youth mental health, encourage early access to supports and care, encourage help-seeking, and help increase the knowledge, understanding, and importance of youth mental health and well-being.

About Community Health Trust of Pajaro Valley: Founded in 1998 and serving a tri county area, the Community Health Trust is recognized for its leadership as a convener in the South Santa Cruz County area. CHT is motivated to foster an equitable Pajaro Valley with health, wellness and a full quality of life for all through access to resources, activities, and choices that help prevent illness and improve quality of life. Learn more at <https://pvhealthtrust.org/>.

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