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New Seneca Family of Agencies Behavioral Health Center Opens in Salinas to Support Monterey County Youth in Crisis

Salinas, California, June 16, 2025 — In a major step forward for children's mental health services on the Central Coast, Seneca Family of Agencies, in partnership with Monterey County Behavioral Health, announces the launch of two new crisis programs at a dedicated behavioral health center in Salinas, California.

Located on River Road and nestled in the hillside of a quiet agricultural community, the newly developed facility will house a four-bed Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) and a four-bed Children's Crisis Residential Program (CCRP) for children and youth ages 6 to 17 who are experiencing acute mental health crises. These programs will provide immediate, intensive therapeutic support for youth who do not require inpatient hospitalization but need short-term stabilization and care.

"These programs fill a long-standing gap in our local mental health care continuum," said Dawn Henson, Regional Executive Director at Seneca Family of Agencies. "By offering these essential services within Monterey County, we're helping youth and their families access care more quickly and avoid the need to travel outside the region."

This marks a significant milestone in Monterey County, as the CSU and CCRP will be the first programs of their kind available to Medi-Cal beneficiaries in the region. The facility is designed to provide a home-like, therapeutic environment, integrating state-of-the-art medical and clinical features to ensure safety, dignity, and effective healing.

Unlike traditional locked inpatient psychiatric units, this less restrictive treatment setting offers flexibility and personalization, allowing clinicians to tailor services to each youth's individual needs while reducing the potentially negative impacts often associated with psychiatric hospitalization.

LONGSTANDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

The development of the River Road facility is the result of a decades-long partnership between Monterey County and Seneca Family of Agencies. For more than 40 years, Seneca has provided trauma-informed, family-centered services to children, youth, and families across the region.

Once operational, the CSU and CCRP will become part of Seneca's broad continuum of care in Monterey County, which already includes wraparound services, outpatient behavioral health therapy, foster care and adoption support, and mobile crisis response—ensuring continuity and accessibility of care across levels of need.

“Building out the crisis continuum of care has been an identified need and a long-time goal of Monterey County Behavioral Health. The CSU and CCRP programs that will be operated by Seneca take us another step forward in realizing this goal,” shared Melanie Rhodes, LMFT, LPCC, Bureau Chief / Director for the County of Monterey Health Department Behavioral Health Bureau. “Timely access to high quality care is fundamental, and these programs will provide critically needed mental health support and stabilization to the children and youth of Monterey County here locally where they can remain connected to their families and other natural supports”.

FUNDING AND DEVELOPMENT

This project involves the renovation of approximately 6,000 square feet of Seneca's existing 27,500-square-foot building to create space for the CSU and CCRP programs.

The \$5.5 million project was made possible through braided grant funding from multiple sources:

- The California Health Facilities Financing Authority (CHFFA) awarded capital improvement funding to Monterey County Behavioral Health through the Investment in Mental Health Wellness Grant Program for Children and Youth. Established under Senate Bill 833 in 2016, the program is designed to expand youth crisis services across California.
- The Children's Crisis Continuum Pilot Program (CCCPP)—a joint initiative of the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)—provided additional funding to the County for program development and implementation.

- Seneca Family of Agencies also secured funding through the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP), a statewide effort authorized through 2021 legislation to expand behavioral health capacity. With \$2.2 billion available for real estate acquisition, rehabilitation, and mobile crisis infrastructure, BHCIP represents California's largest-ever investment in behavioral health infrastructure.

This collaboration and investment reflect a shared commitment by local, state, and nonprofit partners to strengthen behavioral health access and outcomes for youth across Monterey County.

River Road programming will begin Summer 2025.



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