



# Steps on our Journey to Better Health

The County of Santa Clara Health System is dedicated to the concept of **Better Health for All**. In recognition of the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing effects of health disparities, we have adopted “**Journey to Better Health**” as our north star to signify our shared commitment to learning, growing and changing to meet the needs of our community. The lessons of yesterday and today will prepare us for the tomorrows to come.



## GROUNDBREAKING FOR NEW BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES CENTER

“A dream long in the making,” the facility will offer inpatient **mental health treatment** to children and adolescents who previously had to travel far away from home and their community of support to receive the care they need. Separate service areas for adults are also planned. Construction is underway for a 2025 opening.

## HELPING PEOPLE KEEP HEALTH COVERAGE

Annual Medi-Cal reviews and renewals were paused during the COVID-19 public health emergency. The Health System joined the state's Department of Health Care Services, our Social Services Agency and other partners to help people **keep their Medi-Cal coverage** or transition to other types of coverage. A coordinated outreach and awareness effort is underway to help ensure patients and clients can quickly and easily access the care they need without worrying about finances.



## ADDRESSING THE OPIOID CRISIS

Our county saw a 55% increase in fentanyl-related deaths from 2020 to 2022. This spring the Behavioral Health Services Department began receiving funding from the Opioid Settlement Fund, with a first payment of \$5.9 million to support **expanded opioid abuse prevention and treatment services**. Behavioral Health and the Public Health Department will work together to develop a robust plan for the most impactful use of these funds based on best practices, local data, and stakeholder input. In March, the Behavioral Health Services Department also received \$402,000 from the California Department of Health Care Services to help **prevent opioid overuse and addiction in young people ages 12-24**

## GROWTH AT O'CONNOR, ST. LOUISE HOSPITALS

O'Connor Hospital and St. Louise Regional Hospital joined the Health System in 2019. In January 2023, it was reported that **both hospitals have seen significant growth** since joining our System: the average daily census at O'Connor has increased by almost 70%, and at St. Louise by more than 93% since the acquisition, showing the County's investment in maintaining access was a critical decision — especially as COVID impacted our community, requiring every bed available.



## OUR PUBLIC HOSPITALS RATED AMONG AMERICA'S 250 BEST

Santa Clara Valley Medical Center, O'Connor Hospital and St. Louise Regional Hospital were **ranked in the top 5% of all US hospitals** by Healthgrades, a marketplace to help people find doctors and hospitals for consistently delivering clinical quality. All three hospitals also received Healthgrades' **Critical Care Excellence Award™** for 2023.

## BETTER HEALTH THROUGH EQUITY

In January 2023, our Health Equity team facilitated a **week of programming for all Health System employees**, including our first annual **Health Equity Transformation Awards**. The team has formed the **Health Equity Advisory Committee**, with representation from groups within Santa Clara Valley Healthcare, Custody Health, Behavioral Health Services, Public Health and the County's Division of Equity and Social Justice. The committee will focus on increasing staff engagement and support, expanding or launching projects already in development, and integrating diversity and equity efforts across the Health System. By advancing equitable access to quality health care for all, we can improve the care and service we provide and improve health outcomes .



## ONE OF THE HEALTHIEST COUNTIES IN CALIFORNIA

Santa Clara County once again ranked in the **top 5 healthiest counties in our state** in the 2023 “County Health Rankings and Roadmap” from the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute. Our county consistently ranks in the top 5 California counties for overall health, maintaining the healthy-county status throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, thanks in part to our robust healthcare delivery system.

## PARAMEDIC TRAINING BOOST

Between 2020 and 2030, emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics were projected to leave their professions at a higher rate than all other occupations in the U.S. economy. Our county is impacted by the national shortage of paramedics and EMTs. At a January 2023 educational stakeholder meeting, the EMS Agency reported on progress toward establishing an additional **paramedic training program** within Santa Clara County. Santa Clara County is one of only 24 California counties with a paramedic training program in place.



## NEW PROGRAM OFFERS AN EASY, AFFORDABLE WAY TO START A RESTAURANT BUSINESS



Under a new County ordinance, food industry entrepreneurs can apply for a permit to **legally prepare, cook, and sell food out of a private home kitchen**— called Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations, or MEHKOs. MEHKOs are required to obtain a Health Permit and are subject to inspections by the County of Santa Clara Department of Environmental Health, part of the Public Health Department.

