



LOCAL NEWS

Napa County officials: Mobile health unit a success in first four months

The unit has helped the county reach its Latino and Spanish-speaking populations



Napa County Health and Human Services is providing health services countywide with its “Be Well Mobile Services” program. (Courtesy Napa County)



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Napa County's new RV-style mobile health office helped over 120 people connect with social and health services in the four months after it launched, officials said.

The 34-foot mobile unit, which started up Sept. 29, regularly travels to different county locations. Then bilingual staff members who run it provide screenings for behavioral health care such as mental health and substance use treatment, along with helping people enroll in the state's Medicaid, food assistance and direct aid programs as well as maintain benefits.

The intent of the mobile unit, part of the "Be Well Mobile Services" program, is to bring services to Napa County residents who otherwise face language, culture or geographic barriers to accessing such services, according to Jennifer Yasumoto, director of the Napa County Health and Human Services Agency, or HHSA.

Yasumoto told the Napa County Board of Supervisors on Feb. 10 the agency has increased its presence around the county for that purpose over the years, and the mobile unit is the latest major addition to that effort.



"We know there's a lot happening right now directed at the safety net that is regressive, and we want to highlight things that we are doing to counterbalance that and be progressive and show how we're caring for our community by increasing access to foundational benefits and services in a person-centered, equitable and thoughtful way, meeting people where they are," Yasumoto said.

Casey Rockwood, assistant director of the agency, said at the meeting the mobile unit travels to seven different recurring locations around the county — not including one-off events, which the unit had been to 36 of by Feb. 3 — and partners with other service providers such as Puertas Abiertas and UpValley Family Centers to maximize outreach.

For example, the unit partners with Abode Services — Napa County's homeless services provider — and collaborates with the CommuniCare+OLE mobile health clinic when operating at Heritage House, a permanent supportive housing facility in Napa.

Staff in the mobile unit can also remotely connect people to the agency's various offices for services in case the unit doesn't have staff members there who can provide them, Rockwood said.

"At each location, we operate really as a mini-HHSA," Rockwood said.

Rockwood added that, so far, the unit has helped the agency reach Latino and Spanish-speaking populations, so far at a higher proportion than at agency campus locations. Of the 121 people who have been helped by the unit team from Sept. 29 to Feb. 3, 74% identified as Latino and 65% received service in Spanish.

"We're really meeting that desire to meet our most vulnerable populations where they are at," Rockwood said.

Yasumoto noted that the county is working on data collection to figure out the best locations for the unit to go. It takes at least an hour-and-a-half to set up the unit and take it down, she said, so the team is working to make sure the unit travels to where it can make the most impact.

Napa County Supervisor Liz Alessio said at the meeting that she hopes the

"What you're doing cannot be understated," Alessio said.

The schedule for upcoming stops is posted on the county's website: napacounty.gov/3924/HHSA-BE-WELL-Mobile-Services. The vehicle is also regularly available 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Mondays in the county's Sullivan Parking Lot, located at Third and Coombs streets in downtown Napa.

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