

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Catholic Charities of Northwest California Awarded Federal Grant to Launch New Youth Shelter**

**SANTA ROSA, CA (November 24, 2025)** - Catholic Charities of Northwest California (CCNWC) has received a \$350,000 federal grant to launch a new trauma-informed, low-barrier emergency youth shelter for adolescents ages 14-17 in Santa Rosa. The grant was awarded through a highly competitive national process that ran July 9-28, with only a small number of recipients selected nationwide.

### **Why It Matters**

Following the closure of Social Advocates for Youth (SAY), local homeless shelters immediately saw minors as young as 15 arriving at their doorstep with no safe place to go. Due to state licensing, youth are restricted from residing in adult shelters—leaving no emergency shelter options for minors north of San Francisco.

Mayor Mark Stapp, City of Santa Rosa: "Since SAY's closure, Santa Rosa and Sonoma County have had an urgent need for services helping homeless and at-risk youth. Catholic Charities is stepping into this gap, for which our community is grateful. Hopefully even more housing and related resources can be found to support local young people who need our assistance."

Renovations will update a Catholic Charities' property into a licensed youth shelter, providing safety, stability, and a pathway to long-term support for unhoused teens in our community. The program will open as soon as renovations are completed, and the remaining funding for operations is secured.

CCNWC leadership emphasized urgency of the issue and the community-driven nature of the solution

**Jennielynn Holmes, CEO, Catholic Charities of Northwest California:** “Youth homelessness was happening right in front of us, and too often going unseen. When kids started showing up at our shelters with nowhere safe to go, we couldn’t look away. Law enforcement, community partners, and our team all recognized the urgency, and we knew we had to respond. This new emergency youth shelter in Santa Rosa is our answer to that call. This grant moves us closer to opening, but we still need our community’s help to make it real. Every young person who walks through those doors deserves to know they belong and that they have a future.”

#### **What the new Youth Shelter Will Provide**

- Emergency Shelter (24/7, low barrier): Safe, trauma-informed, youth-centered temporary housing
- Comprehensive Case Management: Individualized service plans, counseling, and family reunification support when safe
- Education and Employment Resources: School re-engagement, GED preparation, tutoring, job readiness, and placement
- Health and Mental Health Referrals: Coordinated access to youth-focused care with local providers
- Street Outreach and Community Engagement: Proactive efforts to connect with youth in crisis

The grant reflects strong coordination between city and county leaders, who backed the application with letters of support and rapid collaboration.

**Supervisor Chris Coursey, Sonoma County Board of Supervisors (District 3):** “When Catholic Charities called, we got to work—elevating the urgency, coordinating letters of support, and helping our partners move quickly. This grant proves what is possible when county, city, and community unite their efforts. This new youth shelter will give vulnerable teens a safe place to land and find stability.”

Even amid national budget uncertainty, this award brings critical federal dollars to Northern California—helping re-establish critical homeless youth services.

**U.S. Senator Alex Padilla (CA):** “I’m proud to support federal grants that help Catholic Charities, local leaders, and community partners provide the safety and stability our youth deserve. Children should be dreaming about their future, not worrying about where they’ll sleep tonight. As this new youth shelter opens, I’ll keep fighting for the federal policies and investments our young people need to be safe, learn, and thrive.”

## **Youth Homelessness: Why Low-Barrier, Trauma Informed Care Matters**

- **Scale and Visibility:** Nationally, millions of youth and young adults experience homelessness each year; displaced minors are often hidden or in unstable conditions
- **Risk and Trauma:** Within days on the street, youth face heightened risks of exploitation and violence; along with elevated rates of depression, PTSD, and suicide
- **Education and Long-Term Impact:** Homelessness disrupts school attendance and completion; lacking a diploma is strongly associated with future homelessness
- **What Works:** Culturally responsive, trauma-informed, low-barrier shelters with comprehensive wraparound support provides stability, safety, and better access to education and healthcare

**U.S. Congressman Mike Thompson (CA):** “Young people facing homelessness are navigating challenges no child should ever have to face. A stable home is more than just shelter; it’s the foundation every young person needs to grow, thrive, and feel safe. Catholic Charities of Northwest California has supported the most vulnerable in our community for decades, and their experience and compassion make them trusted leaders in this work. I’m honored to support their efforts to give youth the tools they need to heal and build brighter futures.”

## **Help Open This Emergency Youth Shelter in Northern California**

Renovations and licensing efforts are in the planning stages, with activity anticipated to start soon. Program launch will begin as soon as renovations are completed and the remaining operating funds are in place.

Community partners, businesses, and donors are invited to help close the final funding gap. To discuss partnership or philanthropic support, contact Carey Dougherty, Chief Development Officer, at [cdougherty@ccnwc.org](mailto:cdougherty@ccnwc.org) or visit [ccnwc.org](http://ccnwc.org) to learn more.

## **About Catholic Charities of Northwest California:**

Catholic Charities of Northwest California (CCNWC) a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to serving and advocating for vulnerable individuals and families of all cultures and beliefs. Since 1954, CCNWC has provided innovative, compassionate services across Sonoma, Napa, Lake, Mendocino, Humboldt, and Del Norte counties, helping 10,000 people annually achieve housing stability, financial security, and immigration progress. Through shelter, supportive services, and community partnerships, we empower individuals on their path to self-sufficiency and dignity.

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