

# ✓ *Homes* Needle exchange supported

Sentinel staff report

5259

SANTA CRUZ — Four county supervisors decided Tuesday that the spread of the AIDS virus here is sufficiently threatening to declare an emergency.

The action clears the way for greater cooperation between county health officials and a clandestine needle-exchange program run by volunteers here since 1989. Such programs are illegal, but health officials say they help stop the spread of the disease among people who inject themselves with illegal drugs. That, in turn, helps protect drug users' families and sexual partners.

Aptos Supervisor Walt Symons was absent with a toothache, according to an aide. In the past, Symons, has voted against such programs. Wednesday, Symons did not return phone calls seeking his position on the issue.