

NEWS

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County awarded funds to expand mental health services

SAN BERNARDINO – With the State’s approval, San Bernardino County will begin implementing a multi-million dollar plan to provide additional mental health services, as well as expanding on existing services to thousands of county residents.

Department of Behavioral Health Director Allan Rawland announced the formal approval of the county’s Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Community Supports and Services plan during the June 27 San Bernardino County Board of Supervisor’s meeting.

For the next three years the county will receive over \$50 million for programs and services to assist the unserved and underserved populations, including those who are frequent users of expensive inpatient services, and individuals who are exiting from the foster care system, juvenile hall and the county jail programs. Programs have been earmarked to address specific mental health needs of children and youth, transitional age youth (between 18 and 25), adults and older adults, who are isolated and need mobile outreach services to receive care.

In the letter of approval, Stephen W. Mayberg, director for the California Department of Mental Health, commended the county on the diversity of services contained in its plan that are designed “to address the unique needs of various age groups.”

“You have taken the vision of hope contained within the Mental Health Services Act and translated it into services for persons with the most serious needs,” wrote Mayberg.

San Bernardino County Supervisor Josie Gonzales, who also chairs the county’s Mental Health Commission, also praised staff for the way they came together to develop an effective plan for the county. “It was a true collaboration that must continue as we work even more aggressively to fill the necessary positions and provide the housing and services that are greatly needed in our communities,” said Gonzales.

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Under the county, Mental Health Services Act programs and services will be provided for approximately 6,500 new clients who have not accessed traditional mental health services.

"Most importantly, the funds will allow more creativity, innovation and flexibility in planning and implementing mental health programs that meet the needs of our county's ethnically and culturally diverse populations," said Rawland.

"I believe that one of the greatest aspects of the Mental Health Services Act is the ability to place consumers in some type of shelter or independent living situation once they are released from jail or the hospital," said Chris Massa, a member of the county Mental Health Commission and the TEAM House. "Many times these consumers will come to the TEAM House after hours looking for placement, but the homeless program staff has already left for the day."

"Speaking from the consumer standpoint," added Massa, "MHSA will be a great opportunity for consumers to go to work under the act. I believe once the consumer has a steady income source and his/her living conditions are stable they will be able to provide peer counseling support to others."