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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**May 21, 2007**

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## **PROP. 63 MENTAL HEALTH FUNDS HELP SAN DIEGO COUNTY'S HOMELESS YOUTH**

**(San Diego, CA)** – Today, state and local leaders held a press conference at the Providence Community Services Center in San Diego to recognize May as Mental Health Month and to applaud the Catalyst program, which provides much needed mental health services for youths between the ages of 16 to 25 years. Funding for the Catalyst program stems from the passage of Prop. 63, the Mental Health Services Act.

“We have to reach out to vulnerable young people before they fall through the cracks,” said Wesley Chesbro, a commissioner of the state Mental Health Oversight and Accountability Commission. “This program serves a critical need.”

Today's event was the second of four statewide events promoting innovative new programs that are being funded by Prop. 63, the Mental Health Services Act. Programs in Bakersfield and Sacramento will also be visited within the coming weeks. Prop. 63 was approved by voters in 2004 to expand mental health services statewide through a 1% tax on personal income above \$1 million. More than \$1.7 billion has been collected to date and is in the process of being distributed statewide.

San Diego County will receive nearly \$60 million annually in initial MHSA allocations, which will be used to serve nearly 65,000 children and adults. Statewide, 120,000 people came together in local communities to identify priorities for serving people with mental illness. Counties submitted plans to the California Department of Mental Health and funding for approved programs began in January 2006.

“We're delighted to see the great impact these programs are having and how they are improving people's quality of life.” said Alfredo Aguirre, San Diego County's Mental Health Director.

Catalyst is focused on helping young adults (16 to 25 years old) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, have been involved with the criminal justice system or are aging out of foster care. Catalyst offers mental health services including therapy, substance abuse treatment, crisis intervention and medication services as well as housing and education assistance, job development and training in life skills.

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