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California Mental Health Commission Authorizes Funding to Prevent or Reduce the Negative Impacts of Severe Mental Illness

Today, the California Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) authorized \$2,071,177 in Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funds for Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) programs in San Mateo County.

PEI is the MHSA program that has the goal of transforming the mental health system from “fail first” to “help first”. According to MHSOAC Chair Linford Gayle, “These PEI plans will help counties to be better prepared to offer the ‘right care, at the right time, and in the right place’.” “If we can catch mental illness early, we have the opportunity to help clients build coping skills sooner and to promote positive emotional development for individuals at risk,” said Gayle.

The San Mateo PEI Plan has six projects:

- Early Childhood Community Team
- Community Interventions for School-Age and Transition Age Youth
- Primary Care/Behavioral Health Integration: IMPACT Model
- Total Wellness for Adults/Older Adults
- Stigma Initiative
- Youth/Transition Age Youth Identification and Early Referral

MHSOAC Vice Chair Andrew Poat said, “The PEI program is designed to save Californians millions of dollars by lowering use of emergency services, keeping kids in school, and increasing job retention.”

In 2004, the Mental Health Services Act was approved by California voters as Proposition 63 to provide for increased mental health services in California. A Field Poll released in June 2008 shows 73% - or 7 in 10 - of California voters surveyed oppose cuts in mental health services to balance the state budget.

This MHSOAC meeting is one of many Commission meetings that take place around the state. The intent of these meetings is to conduct business where the public can have access to the Commission and where the Commission can bring information regarding mental health oversight and accountability to the public.

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