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\$12 Million in Prop 63 Funds Approved for Sacramento, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz Counties and Tri-City Area for Mental Health Services

Today, a total of \$12,192,518 was approved by the California Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) for mental health services in Sacramento, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz Counties and the Tri-City Area. \$6,106,000 was approved for Sacramento County, \$3,754,690 was approved for Santa Barbara County and \$1,555,118 was approved for the Tri-City Area. These funds will be used for Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) programs. \$776,710 was approved for Santa Cruz County for Innovative mental health programs.

The California MHSOAC is a 16-member commission charged with the oversight of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). The MHSA was approved by California voters in 2004 as Proposition 63 to provide for expanded mental health services in California.

Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) funds are approved for programs that apply strategies focused on preventing mental illness from becoming severe and disabling. MHSOAC Chair Andrew Poat said, "Our prevention programs will decrease expensive emergency room visits as we provide prevention services to consumers of mental health services. Prevention and Early Intervention funds will keep kids in school, keep families together, and will avoid long term unemployment."

Sacramento County plans on using their PEI funds for three prevention and early intervention projects: the Strengthening Families project, the Integrated Health and Wellness project and the Mental Health Promotion Campaign project.

Santa Barbara County will use their PEI funds for four projects. One of their projects is the Integrating Primary and Mental Health Care in Community Clinics project which will provide clients with services such as trauma screening, consultation, psychiatric evaluations, counseling and referrals.

The Tri-City Area has a total of five projects in their PEI plan, one of which is their Community Capacity Building Project which will train over 1,000 Mental Health First Aiders to respond to people who are struggling with mental health issues.

Mr. Poat said, "Prevention and Early Intervention programs will transform the mental health system. We will stop requiring consumers to "fail first" before receiving services and we will move to a "help first" system. Prevention and Early Intervention programs are a new approach to mental health in California. This program is a win for both mental health consumers and taxpayers," said Poat.

The funds approved by the MHSOAC for Innovation (INN) purposes will help fund county mental health programs that are novel, creative, and ingenious in their mental health approaches. These programs are also developed within communities in ways that are inclusive and representative. Chair Poat said, "Innovation funds will help to jump start our thinking about how to improve our mental health programs."

Santa Cruz County will be using their Innovation funds for what they call Work First for Individuals with Co-occurring Disorders. This program pilots "work first" as its core treatment for transition age youth and adults with co-occurring disorders. These individuals will be given an opportunity to engage in work and employment activities as a first step in their recovery process.

The MHSOAC met on Thursday, March 25th via a teleconference call.

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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