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DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

http://dmh.lacounty.gov

December 30, 2009

To: Each Supervisor

From: Robin Kay for
Marvin J. Southard, D.S.W.
Director of Mental Health

SUBJECT: **DECEMBER 1, 2009, BOARD MOTION 75-B: EXPAND PSYCHIATRIC EMERGENCY TEAM TO ADDITIONAL HOSPITALS**

INTRODUCTION

On December 1, 2009, Board Motion 75-B directed the Chief Executive Officer and the Director of Mental Health to report back to the Board in 30 days on the feasibility of expanding the Psychiatric Emergency Team (PET) to additional hospitals throughout the County of Los Angeles and the Department of Mental Health's (DMH) Psychiatric Mobile Response Teams (PMRT).

PETs are mobile response teams operated by private psychiatric hospitals approved by DMH to provide Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 5150 and 5585 evaluations. PET responds to community calls involving clients with Medi-Cal or other health insurance in specific geographical areas. PET provides limited response to the indigent or uninsured population. They do not respond to homeless encampments, school violence scenarios, natural disasters, or acts of terror.

PMRT are mobile response teams operated by the Department of Mental Health. PMRT provide WIC 5150/5585 evaluations, homeless outreach, case management and engagement services. PMRT are primary responders to acts of targeted school violence. Furthermore, PMRT are emergency responders to fires, earthquakes, acts of terror, and other critical incidents.

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

DMH's Emergency Outreach Bureau (EOB) oversees and coordinates the field response to mental health-related crises and homeless situations. EOB Field Response Operations include PMRT, Homeless Outreach Mobile Engagement (HOME), and Law Enforcement Teams (LET) with Los Angeles Police Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Metropolitan Transit Authority, Long Beach and Pasadena Police Departments. These teams perform over 21,000 field evaluations annually, of which approximately 3000 are homeless outreach contacts.

Field contacts involving the homeless are almost always handled by PMRT and HOME. PET does not provide homeless outreach and engagement, case management services, or housing assistance. While DMH has expanded field operations in the past, more recently funding limitations decreased After Hours services from nine to three teams during Fiscal Year (FY) 2009-10. Subsequently, After Hours coverage increased by two additional teams so that there are five of the original nine field teams available to respond to mental health – homeless crises after regular business hours and on holidays/weekends.

STRATEGIES/SOLUTIONS

PMRT, HOME, and the other County operated field teams referenced above are the primary resources for the uninsured homeless population. Expanding PMRT and HOME will positively impact the response and service capacity. Additionally, the full restoration of PMRT After Hours services and weekend/holiday coverage will enhance timely field response to this at-risk population.

PET expansion will not address the homeless situation. PET functions primarily to hospitalize involuntary patients with Medi-Cal or other form of insurance. It is highly unlikely that PET will expand their services to the homeless population without reimbursement.

In recognition of the importance of these services and the constraints imposed by reduced funding, DMH is planning to submit the cost of service expansion in the unmet needs portion the Department's FY 2010-11 proposed budget.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Los Angeles County continues to experience an increasing demand for field-based responses to those who are homeless and uninsured. Currently, the Department's PMRT and HOME programs represent the most practical resource for uninsured persons and the homeless population. As currently configured, PET does not provide homeless outreach and engagement or case management services. Enhanced staffing of HOME, combined with full restoration of PMRT After Hours services including weekend and holiday coverage, will significantly improve the field response to the homeless uninsured population. As noted in the preceding section, DMH intends to submit the proposed expansion of PMRT and HOME as an unmet need in the FY 2010-11 proposed budget.

Please contact me or your staff may contact Tony Beliz, Ph.D., at (213) 738-4924 for any further questions.

MJS:TB:ic

c: Chief Executive Officer
Acting County Counsel
Sachi A. Hamai, Executive Officer