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PRESS RELEASE

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LACDMH AND WHITTIER POLICE DEPARTMENT ADDRESS NEED FOR MENTAL HEALTH EVALUATION TEAM

New collaboration will help meet the growing need for mental health services.

Los Angeles, CA – In an effort to deliver mental health services to an increasing number of people in need, and to positively impact the community, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) has partnered with the Whittier Police Department to create the Whittier Mental Health Evaluation Team (WMET). The team was officially launched on Sept. 20, 2016, to address the growing need for mental health services in the community. The team will respond to critical in-progress incidents, address other mental health crisis situations and provide homeless outreach for individuals with mental health challenges in the community. Additionally, WMET will provide extensive follow up and case management services for individuals with chronic mental illness, substance abuse and who are homeless. By addressing these concerns on a regular basis, WMET can help to alleviate the burden placed on patrol resources and provide expert assistance to those in need.

This cooperative effort revolves around a co-response model that includes a licensed clinical social worker, provided by LACDMH, and a sworn police officer, provided by the Whittier Police Department, to aid patrol officers in handling calls involving persons who may be in a mental health crisis or may need social services. Additionally, WMET will build cooperative relationships with service providers in the Whittier area.

The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health is the largest county-operated mental health department in the United States, directly operating programs in more than 85 sites, and providing services via contract program and LACDMH staff at approximately 300 sites co-located with other County departments, schools, courts and other organizations. Each year, the County contracts with more than 1,000 organizations and individual practitioners to provide a variety of mental health-related services. On average, more than 250,000 County residents of all ages are served every year. The Department's mission—enriching lives through partnership to strengthen our community's capacity to support recovery and resiliency—is accomplished by working with stakeholders and community partners to provide clinically competent, culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate mental health services to clients in the least restrictive setting.

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