

CONGRATULATIONS SERVICE AREA VII

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Tuesday, July 30, 2013 was an auspicious occasion in which the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) received four NACo (National Association of Counties) awards for 2013. These prestigious awards are given to innovative programs that increase service to county residents.

One of the programs honored was the “Promotores de Salud Mental” project in Service Area 7 (southeast cities of Los Angeles). This program is funded by the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) component of the Mental Health Services Act. Marvin Southard, DSW, Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, and Cathy Warner, Deputy Director of Adult Systems of Care were on hand to receive the award by the Board of Supervisors.

This program was started due to the leadership of Ana Suarez, District Chief of Service Area VII, who had the vision and foresight to hire community leaders as consultants to provide mental health presentations in Spanish to the underserved communities of Service Area VII. The Promotores address disparities in access to services in the Latino community, due to language barriers and strong stigma against seeking mental

health treatment. Utilizing PEI funding, Ana Suarez hired trainer Sylvia Esqueda, LMFT, to provide the needed training for Promotores in giving presentations. At present, the “Promotores de Salud Mental” have 10 separate presentations on mental health issues that are offered for free. Thus far, the Promotores have been in the following venues: faith-based organizations, public schools, mental health clinics, drug & alcohol centers, parks, senior centers, hospitals, etc. The presentations have been well received. Since the inception of the program in 2011, they have completed **795** presentations to over **5,838** people.

On hand to be honored today were 6 of the 19 Promotores: Marta Montelongo, Maria Elsa Barajas, Teresa Alejandre, Teresa Robles, Norma Ramirez and Ana Bertha Chan. Administrative staff that helped move the project forward include: Alicia Llamas, Susan Donner, LCSW, Analia Barroso, PhD, Nyja Tapscott, Judith Quiroz, Arturo Gomez and Ruth Tiscareno.

Congratulations to all for making such great strides in outreach, and making the Department of Mental Health shine! To paraphrase William Fujioka, the Chief Executive Officer of Los Angeles County: “These county employees demonstrate the best that the County offers!”