



LOS ANGELES COUNTY
**DEPARTMENT OF
MENTAL HEALTH**
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LACDMH Expands School Violence Prevention and Intervention Program

LOS ANGELES, CA – The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) has expanded its School Threat Assessment Response Team (START) program in support of back-to-school season and in light of recent mass shooting incidents.

The expansion, passed in a motion authored by County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors Chair Janice Hahn and Supervisor Kathryn Barger, has tripled the staffing and scope of the START program, allowing its teams to provide more training, evaluation, response and follow-up services at school campuses throughout the County.

“I have no doubt that the START program has already saved lives, and this expansion means that we are more prepared than ever to intervene and get help to a troubled student before a violent incident,” said Supervisor Hahn.

The START program is designed to address the need for comprehensive threat prevention and management program in school settings. As part of this program, LACDMH staff, in collaboration with schools and first responders, have responded to numerous incidents in elementary, middle, high school, college and trade school campuses — preventing threats from escalating into more serious and potentially violent situations.

“Preventing campus violence through early identification and intervention is really key,” Supervisor Barger said. “Since START was created a decade ago, it has made immense progress to help protect our students and provide them with the mental health resources they need.”

Key services offered by START staff include:

- **Training and education** to school staff, first responders, students and parents
- **Early screening and identification** of stated, implied or perceived threats
- **Assessment** of risk factors related to the threat
- **Multidisciplinary intervention** in collaboration with the school and law enforcement agencies

- **Case management and monitoring** to ensure safety and wellbeing after the initial response

Since its inception in 2009, the START program have received more than 12,000 referrals and its staff have provided a broad range of services to LA County schools and their communities, including school threat response, psychiatric evaluations, linkage to mental health and supportive programs, educational presentations and situational assessments. To learn more about START, visit <http://dmh.lacounty.gov/START>.

According to Dr. Jonathan Sherin, Director of LA County Department of Mental Health, “Our START teams work in close partnership with schools and first responders across the county using proven strategies. We are here to help people in need which entails a deep commitment to safety and wellbeing in our schools.”

In addition to START, LACDMH is also dedicated to enhancing the mental health and wellbeing of children, youths and young adults through programs within the Community Schools Initiative (CSI). Current CSI programs include continual stakeholder engagement to assess and respond to community needs, service coordination teams to improve school mental health services and a Mental Health First Aid Pilot Program to empower youths to take control of their mental wellbeing.

About LACDMH: The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health is the largest public mental health department in the United States. Consistent with the mission of County of Los Angeles, the department provides services, including assessments, case management, crisis intervention, medication support, peer support, psychotherapy and other rehabilitative services to the County’s most vulnerable residents.

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