Transforming Mental Health Care

Community-Based Prevention and Early Intervention Programs are Underway in Los Angeles County

Promising new programs provided by the Department of Mental Health and partner agencies are tackling some of Los Angeles County’s most serious problems with proven approaches, including:

- Working with schools and public safety agencies to reduce the threat of school violence
- Operating a 24/7 suicide prevention hotline for Latino teens
- Providing a web-based suicide prevention training program for school personnel
- Developing the Profiles of Hope public awareness campaign to reduce the stigma of mental illness

These prevention and early intervention services are at the heart of California’s efforts to transform its mental health system from the ground up. With Proposition 63—the Mental Health Services Act enacted in 2004—voters elected to build an effective community-based mental health system. State and local governments are working together to implement prevention and early intervention programs to keep people healthy or provide treatment early on in an illness. The California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) helps counties implement programs and learn about successful strategies from across the state. The result is more cost effective services and a dramatic reduction in negative consequences caused by leaving mental illness untreated.

Los Angeles County has tailored its services to best reach its diverse population of nearly 10 million people. Latinos make up almost 50% of the population and 57% speak a language other than English at home. Historically, the County has only had the resources to treat individuals with severe mental illness. Now, prevention and early intervention programs help residents before problems become severe. As a result of prevention and early intervention programs, thousands of children, youth, families and older adults are receiving culturally-relevant services.

For More Information

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http://dmh.lacounty.gov/wps/portal/dmh/about_dmh/mhsa
suicideispreventable.org
elsuicidioesprevenible.org
reachout.com
buscaapoyo.com
dignityandrecoverycenter.org
walkinourshoes.org
speakourminds.org

“The program really addresses all the barriers to helping those contemplating suicide.”

–Participant, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training Program

“I feel the program is helping me. I am able to talk about my mental health now, and I was not able to do that before. The support I got from the therapist helped me be active in the senior center. I wish I met the therapist early on before getting so depressed. I look forward to the session. It is a great help. I am hopeful now. I carry around the quote that my therapist gave me: It’s never too late to be what you might have been. This helps me push forward.”

–Carmelita Rodriguez*, Seeking Safety Program

*Name changed for privacy

“I was feeling down and there was no life for me. Now I’m not feeling down and not thinking of the past. I’m able to stop and think before getting into arguments. I started going to Zumba, I go out more often, and I’m making my doctor’s appointments. I don’t have any depressive symptoms anymore, and if I do, I will go forward—not backward by putting myself down.”

–Bao Yu Li*

An older adult who completed a course on Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Depression

*Name changed for privacy

Los Angeles County

2013
The School Threat Assessment Response Team is a program that provides training in preventing school violence to students, parents, school personnel, mental health providers and law enforcement professionals. The program also provides early screening and treatment of students at risk of acting out violently at elementary, middle and high schools and at colleges. Over 4,000 students have been screened, and the team has taken action over 50 times to prevent violence.

The County of Los Angeles is strengthening families by providing Evidenced-Based Practices such as Incredible Years, Triple P—Positive Parenting Program and Managing and Adapting Practice (MAP). These practices target parenting skills and promote pro-social behaviors in children. The parents and children who have received these services endorse significant reductions in symptoms to below clinically significant levels. Over 17,500 clients have been served by these practices to date.

Los Angeles County’s Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy program helps children, youth and parents overcome difficult life events, such as child sexual, physical and emotional abuse; loss of a loved one; violence at home, at school, or in the community; or living through disasters, terrorist attacks or war. This program can prevent some of the long-term effects of trauma, such as increased risk of substance abuse, suicide attempts, and social and relationship difficulties. Over 10,600 clients have been served by this program to date. Over 40% of parents and caretakers have noticed a decrease in symptoms in children who have completed this program.

The County’s Partners in Suicide Prevention Team increases public awareness about suicide and reduces the stigma about getting help. The team provides educational programs and referrals to community services. The Team is also providing a special two-year training program in suicide prevention for the Department of Children and Family Services staff. During 2011-12, the team participated in 197 suicide prevention events that reached over 4,300 Los Angeles County residents. Over 100 training sessions were held for mental health providers.

Los Angles County’s Department of Mental Health has 10 prevention and early intervention programs funded by CalMHSA. These proven programs—designed and selected based on a comprehensive community involvement process to meet the specific needs of County residents—served over 61,000 residents in 2011-12. They are based on national best practices and similar programs have been proven effective by research. Prevention and early intervention programs are cost effective, produce results and save lives.

Key partners and supporters in Los Angeles County include health care, law enforcement, drug and alcohol services, mental health consumer and family member organizations, unions, education, organizations serving special populations, local government agencies, representatives from the County’s diverse cultural communities, and a host of organizations serving children and families, including the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services and Probation. These partners are working collectively to improve the health and well-being of County residents.

“The Department of Mental Health’s prevention and early intervention programs will:

- Increase knowledge of mental illness, and reduce stigma and discrimination
- Reduce school violence
- Prevent suicides
- Strengthen families
- Reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety among older adults
- Improve access to mental health services for children and youth

Some of the County’s prevention and early intervention programs are described at right.

“Proven Programs for Unique Communities

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Partnerships Make It Happen!

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“We are seeing clients get better and move on with their lives.”

–Service Provider, Prevention and Early Intervention Program

Goals

Reducing School Violence

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Overcoming Traumatic Life Events

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Strengthening Families

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Preventing Suicide

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