Community-Based Prevention and Early Intervention Programs are Underway in Santa Clara County

Several promising new programs provided by the Santa Clara County Mental Health Department and partner agencies are tackling some of Santa Clara County’s most serious problems with proven approaches, including:

- Providing a county-wide hotline and training program to reduce suicide attempts and deaths
- Partnering with primary care providers to provide mental health services to refugees and other underserved groups at local community-based health centers
- Providing screening to children and services to their parents to address emotional and behavioral problems as early as possible

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.

Santa Clara County has tailored its services to best reach its diverse population. With almost 1.7 million people, nearly 40% of residents are foreign born and over 50% live in homes where one of more than 143 languages other than English is spoken. As a result of prevention and early intervention programs, thousands of children, youth, families and older adults are now receiving culturally-relevant services.

For More Information

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Santa Clara 24-Hour Suicide and Crisis Hotline
1-855-278-4204
suicideispreventable.org
elsuicidioespreventible.org
reachouthere.com
buscaapoyo.com
dignityandrecoverycenter.org
walkinsonshoes.org
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Proven Programs for Unique Communities

The Santa Clara County Mental Health Department has five 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 Santa Clara residents—have served over 60,000 residents. 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.

Partnerships Make It Happen!

Key partners and supporters in the County include ethnic and community cultural organizations; ethnic peer/consumer groups; health care providers; FIRST 5; Kids in Common; National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI); Parents Helping Parents; Probation, law enforcement, and Social Services; Superior Court; and school superintendents, other education leaders and advocates. In addition, the Santa Clara County Mental Health Department works closely with the Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits and the Association of Mental Health Contract Agencies. These partners are working collectively to improve the health and social status of County residents.

Goals

The Santa Clara County Mental Health Department’s prevention and early intervention programs will:

- Improve access to mental health services among underserved cultural populations
- Increase knowledge of mental illness, and reduce stigma and discrimination
- Prevent mental health disorders or address them at the earliest possible stage
- Foster resiliency, confidence, good social skills and positive family relationships among children and parents
- Reduce the length of time that illness is experienced for those with serious psychiatric illnesses
- Decrease suicide deaths and attempts

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

Addressing Early Signs of Mental Illness in Youth

Strengthening Families and Children provides parent education, support services and access to screening for emotional and behavioral problems in youth. This program prevents and addresses mental illness at the earliest possible stages and targets geographic regions with high need. Services reach underserved cultural populations, stressed families, individuals exposed to trauma, and children and youth at risk for school failure or juvenile justice involvement. The County and providers are partnering with local schools to deliver services. A family-focused approach provides services to the entire family to foster mental health, resiliency and positive family relations. Over 32,000 students and their families are eligible for services.

Reducing the Symptoms of Depression and Mood Disorders

Primary Care Behavioral Health Integration provides mental health services to refugees and other underserved groups at local community-based health centers. Older adults are also screened for depression and provided with or connected to appropriate services. This project reduces symptoms of depression, increases awareness of symptoms, and educates patients on how to maintain their well-being and to seek additional treatment as needed. Coordination between primary care providers and mental health professionals helps identify and treat more patients. Over 5,000 patients have access to mental health services at 10 clinic locations.

Helping Youth and Young Adults with Serious Psychiatric Illnesses

Early Intervention for Individuals Experiencing the Onset of Serious Psychiatric Illness is a program targeting youth and transitional age youth from 10 to 25 years. This project increases mental health and functioning for individuals who are at risk of or experiencing the onset of serious psychiatric illness with psychotic symptoms. A range of services is provided to youth and their families to prevent the onset of more serious mental illness. As of December 2012, the program has served 97 youth and young adults.

Preventing Suicide

The goal of implementing the County’s first Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention is to reduce suicide attempts and deaths among all age groups. While services to underserved cultural populations are prioritized, especially those groups with higher rates of suicide than the general population, services are available to all County residents. The Santa Clara County Mental Health Department has partnered with community-based mental health providers and crisis lines—such as crisis lines for domestic or teen violence—to better provide suicide prevention services. The County’s Suicide and Crisis Services 24-hour hotline served over 24,000 clients of all ages and cultures in 2012. The County also provided suicide/crisis prevention training to over 2,000 partners, clients and consumers.