

Healthy Communities Need Healthy Mental Health Services

Dear Santa Barbara County Administration and Board of Supervisors:

We, the undersigned, petition the County of Santa Barbara for the following:

SAVE COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES!

For over 30 years, a network of community-based organizations (CBOs) in Santa Barbara County has provided mental health services, housing, employment, a referral and crisis intervention phone line, social rehabilitation day programs, and residential treatment for people with severe mental illnesses. These programs have served thousands of people and their families, providing the critical components for people with mental illness to recover productive, meaningful lives. Through this **public-private partnership**, cost effective community services have resulted in lower utilization of expensive hospital beds and a reduction of homelessness and substance abuse among service recipients.

We believe the programs provided by CBOs are an essential part of the treatment and rehabilitation for the mentally ill adults of our community. Yet, in the face of its current budget deficit, Santa Barbara County Department of Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Services (ADMHS) has chosen to cut CBO services by nearly 60 percent, the result of which will be a devastating increase in human suffering, along with creating major problems for the local business communities. Short-term savings from budget cuts will be quickly offset through increased mobile crisis team use for mental health emergencies, increased \$900-a-day in-patient hospitalization and an increased burden on criminal justice and law enforcement systems to respond to community safety issues.

In Santa Barbara County, 2.6 percent of the adult population – 7,869 people – has a severe and persistent mental illness. Our county system currently serves 2,800 adults. This is not a time to reduce services.

The Board of Supervisors **must** partner with ADMHS, community-based organizations, foundations, and communities to maintain essential and effective services and supports. We ask:

- For the final installment of \$2.3 million needed to complete fiscal year 07/08,
- For a minimum of 6 percent general fund contribution to the ADMHS budget to be funded by county general fund dollars,
- **A commitment to the public-private partnership** with CBO's to maintain an efficient, responsive system of care that maximizes scarce public funds by prioritizing cost effective service delivery models.

As concerned community members, we the undersigned hereby request that the funding to these effective and crucial cost-saving programs be continued.

Sincerely,

Signature

Printed Name

Email (optional)