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San Mateo County: Together Towards Recovery

New Health System outreach team launches to support people with a serious mental illness

San Mateo, Calif – A specialized service for San Mateo County residents, living with a serious mental illness without psychiatric treatment and recovery support, is now available to provide them with a team devoted to helping improve their quality of life.

The Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) is now operating and open to receiving referrals. Individuals considered for AOT are people living with a serious mental illness who have fallen “through the cracks.” Without proper treatment, people with mental illness experience increased symptoms that can lead to increased hospitalizations or incarceration.

To be eligible individuals must be 18 years or older and a resident of San Mateo County with an untreated serious mental illness that causes them to be unlikely to survive safely in the community without supervision. Additionally, the person’s mental health must have either resulted in a psychiatric hospitalization or incarceration two or more times in the past three years or resulted in threats or acts of violent behavior towards themselves or someone else in the past four years.

Referrals can be made by:

- Immediate family members who are adults
- Adults who reside with the individual
- Director of a hospital, facility or other organization treating the person
- Mental health providers treating the person
- Probation, parole or police officer

AOT services include outreach, assessment, intensive case management, psychiatric interventions, community supports, housing assistance, and a 24/7 response capacity.

To make a referral, call 650-372-6125 or email AOT@smcgov.org.

“Those who qualify for Assisted Outpatient Treatment services are often unable to recognize that they need help or do not know how to get the help they need,” said Stephen Kaplan, Director of Behavioral Health and Recovery Services. “We want to help people recover. Our goal is to reach out to prospective clients, help motivate them to participate in treatment and work collaboratively with, family members, friends and key service providers in order for the individual to live safely and successfully in the community.”

The Behavioral Health and Recovery Services’ AOT team upon receiving a referral will determine if the person meets the criteria for the program and if so, will begin engaging the client in accepting services voluntarily. If that does not occur, the team will make a referral to the San Mateo Superior Court who in some cases may order the person to enter treatment involuntarily. For individuals who do not meet the AOT guidelines, the Team will help connect them to other services in the community.

AOT is the local implementation of the Assisted Outpatient Treatment Demonstration Project Act of 2002, more commonly referred to as Laura's Law. The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously in June 2015 to enact the law on a one-year trial basis.

San Mateo County Supervisor Don Horsley, who moved adoption by the Board of the pilot, said he is eager to see the positive outcome he knows AOT will provide to the participating clients and the community as a whole.

"Research indicates that treatment results in decreased emergency room admissions, arrests and harm. I'm proud our County and our Health System now has this extra tool to provide resources to those who need help , even to those who don't necessarily know they do," Horsley said.

For more information about AOT services, please visit smchealth.org/aot.

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