



EDC COB <edc.cob@edcgov.us>

Letter For Public Comment on May 8th, Agenda Item 1806-1

1 message

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Mon, May 7, 2018 at 11:33 AM

To: EDC COB <edc.cob@edcgov.us>

To Whom it May Concern,

I have attached a letter from NAMI El Dorado in reference to the BOS meeting on 5/8/18, Agenda Item 1806-01 Annual Behavioral Health Commission Update. I hope to have the opportunity to read the letter on 5/8/18 during Public Comment.

Thank you very much,
Juline Aguilar
Co-President, NAMI El Dorado



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National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI | El Dorado County

May 7, 2018

TO: The Honorable Members of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT: Public Comment on 5/8/18 BOS Item 1806-01 Annual Behavioral Health Commission Update

As May is Mental Health Awareness month, NAMI El Dorado would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the great effort that El Dorado County is making to improve the lives of individuals with mental illness. Since 2008, hundreds of safety officers on both slopes have received Crisis Intervention Training. The Community Hubs have been implemented in our local libraries to increase the public's access to a public health nurse and community advocate. Our county now has a Homeless Outreach Team and since January, a Psychiatric Emergency Response Team is already logging great results in helping to connect individuals to supports and services instead of unnecessary incarceration or hospitalization. Approximately three years ago, the Board of Supervisors signed a declaration supporting the objective to reduce the volume of incarcerations of the mentally ill, specifically by participating in a national initiative known as The Stepping Up Initiative. While much progress has been made with CIT, HOT and PERT, disappointingly little progress has been made on the Stepping Up Initiative.

NAMI El Dorado would like to take this opportunity to publicly reinforce our support for the National Stepping Up Initiative. The importance of this initiative is clear. According to the Stepping Up Initiative's website, approximately 2 million people with serious mental illness are admitted to jails across the country annually. Once incarcerated, people admitted to jails with mental illness tend to stay longer than those without mental illness and upon release are at a higher risk of returning to jail than those without mental illness. In addition to this human toll, there is a staggering cost to taxpayers. Jails spend two to three times more on individuals with mental illnesses that require intervention than those without those needs and do not see improvements to public safety or on these individual's health. We cannot afford to wait any longer to implement Stepping Up.

We have advocated for treatment, not jails, for years and have specifically educated ourselves about Stepping Up and have taken a vocal and active role in promoting the Stepping Up Initiative by attending meetings and meeting with implementation representatives. We are grateful that the Board Of Supervisors signed a declaration supporting the objective to reduce the volume of incarcerations of the mentally ill in this county (and the Stepping Up initiative as a whole) some three years ago. Let's keep moving in the right direction and walk our talk.

We would like encourage all of you to participate in the "Stepping Up Day of Action" on May 16th which will be held at Lake Tahoe Community College from 12pm to 1pm. Please join us to

hear from our Chief Probation Officer regarding progress on the initiative. The media and general public will be there as well.

Let's articulate where we know we must improve. Can we acknowledge that this county does not use best practice for tracking data around this topic? Let's acknowledge where we are falling short with regard to jail diversion, drug testing, jail entry methods and jail re-entry methods and certainly the provision of treatment for those in psychosis or de-compensating while incarcerated in El Dorado County. Can we yet answer the first question out of the six questions that comprise this initiative? We ask that you put yourself in the shoes of a parent with a loved one incarcerated after just getting a diagnosis of schizoaffective disorder, someone who had high marks in school, well socialized and educated but slowly deteriorated into someone they did not recognize. Imagine your young adult child breaking into a home just to take a bath because they simply felt dirty. In psychosis, un-medicated, they get incarcerated. Their brain is unable to realize they are ill because that lack of insight is part of the illness. Now imagine if your child were diverted to a "quality" Behavioral Health Court and given treatment, how different his life, his self-esteem, his long-term cognition would be.

We respectfully request that the project as a whole be given the highest prioritization and funding to promptly achieve where we have stalled for so long. Lives are at stake and as Ron Powers says in his book with the same title aimed at raising awareness, "No one cares about crazy people." We have heard from scores of families every year across all five supervisorial districts. In many cases we used our network to connect with El Dorado County leaders to run interference. The following quotes are from families that represent the 4-7% incarcerated that do NOT have a violent history but were incarcerated directly due to untreated Serious Mental Illness.

"My adult son has been incarcerated for being mentally ill. He is clearly in psychosis, not being given the medication that works for him because it is not on the jail's formulary!"

"My son went in well and came out completely unwell"

"The guard in SLT jail was having a bad day and so canceled everyone's phone privileges because of the poor behavior of one person. I have serious mental illness and no history of violent criminal or gang behavior. I am in a private cell for my own safety but my lifeline is my daily call to my Dad. I didn't sleep for 24 hours knowing he would be worried about me. My anxiety was overwhelming and my internal itching unbearable. The jail does not support giving me the Gabapentine I have taken daily prior to incarceration as it is not on their formulary and there is no substitute."

"My loved one entered with his medication and elected to stop taking it. When I visited him we discussed this and he agreed to go back on his medication (something he has been on successfully without fail for years.) The jail nurse told him that **he needs to wait a week before a psychiatrist can re-evaluate** him to get back on the medication he was taking daily for years. Oh by the way it is very risky to stop this medication without tapering off. The jail nurse did nothing to encourage support, notify family or a

psychiatrist. My family could have intervened promptly to help me explain to the nurse that I've been taking that medication for years. Those that think "oh he is safe in jail" need to learn brain science to understand the very serious impact to the brain of not getting treatment promptly."

People living with Serious Mental Illness may make unfortunate choices while incarcerated without caregiver/family support assisting in their daily treatment.

"My loved one is in psychosis screaming seven days a week, 24 hours a day. We know this because we visited other friends in nearby cells. He needs to be in a psychiatric hospital but no steps have been taken to get him care."

This screaming must certainly be impacting the mental health of others incarcerated too. Delaying hospitalization (treatment) may be causing permanent long-term cognition issues. Where is the county's responsibility? The brain is just another organ. If he were having a heart attack would they not get him the treatment he deserves?

"The intake form does not standard best practice and the re-entry form is not using the GAINS RE-ENTRY model – standard best practice. Instead El Dorado County has invented a form and process that is riddled with gaps and detrimental to our loved ones. Because of this our community members exiting incarceration in this county are at great risk."

"The diversion court in South Lake Tahoe is broken on many levels; refer to the input NAMI El Dorado provided to the Behavioral Health Commission and the findings. We spent hours conveying opportunities for improvement without seeing valuable operational changes implemented – leadership and governance opportunity knocking."

"If it had not been for NAMI and their community connections I would have lost my studio apartment because the county took nearly two months to reinstate my disability after a four month incarceration. The county jail needs to strengthen their re-entry process."

El Dorado County has demonstrated a commitment to improving the lives of people living with mental illness on many levels. We expect to see this Stepping Up Initiative implemented with a passion as if every person on the team has a personal loved one incarcerated and living with a Serious Mental Illness. **The feeling that bondage is worse than death often arises for families of those incarcerated with Serious Mental Illness. That feeling is what fuels our passion for an expeditious implementation. Imagine this was your loved one? How would you advocate?**

Jeanne Nelson
President, NAMI El Dorado

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FACEBOOK: [NAMI El Dorado County](#)

Juline Aguilar
Co-President, NAMI El Dorado