

# **El Dorado County Mental Health Commission 2013 Annual Report**

## **Meetings and Officers**

The El Dorado County Mental Health Commission held eleven (11) regular joint council meetings and two (2) special meetings of the joint council. One (1) closed session was held in 2013.

Officers for the 2013 Mental Health Commission:

### South Lake Tahoe Council

- R.S. Lynn, Chair
- Denise Burke, Vice-Chair

### Western Slope Council

- Linn Williamson, Chair
- Jim Abram, Vice-Chair
- Jane de-Felice, Secretary

### Countywide Chair

- Linn Williamson, Chair

## **Commission Activities and Actions**

This report is a general overview of the activities that the Mental Health Commission participated in over the course of the year 2013. Specific details can be viewed at the El Dorado County Mental Health Commission webpage in the agenda and minutes archives.<sup>1</sup>

On May 3, 2013, a special meeting of the joint councils was held to review and discuss the final two proposals regarding the long-term lease for a facility for the West Slope Mental Health Clinic. This meeting resulted in a recommendation by the Mental Health Commission to the Board of Supervisors that the lease for 768 Pleasant Valley Road, Diamond Springs, be selected as the new location of the West Slope Mental Health Clinic.

The second special meeting was the public hearing for the Fiscal Year 2013-2014 Mental Health Service Act Plan on October 30. Public comment and Commissioner comments were presented. The Commission approved the Plan and recommended it be moved forward for consideration by the Board of Supervisors.

One closed session was held at the end of the regular joint council meeting on June 26 regarding

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.edcgov.us/MentalHealth/Mental\\_Health\\_Commission\\_Meetings\(2\).aspx](http://www.edcgov.us/MentalHealth/Mental_Health_Commission_Meetings(2).aspx).

the appointment of the next Director of the El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency. Pursuant to Government Code Section 54957(B)-Public Employee Appointment, a quorum of Mental Health Commissioners, following a presentation by the Mental Health Commission Interview Committee, held a discussion and review of candidates, and then voted unanimously to recommend that candidate Pamela Knorr be appointed as the Director of El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency. A report out on action taken was given at the July 24, 2013 Mental Health Commission joint council meeting.

## **Joint Meetings - Topics and Discussions**

- **The Relocation of the West Slope Mental Health Division Clinic and Wellness Center**

The two possible sites for the West Slope Mental Health Division Clinic and Wellness Center were reviewed and discussed at the first four Mental Health Commission joint council meetings of 2013. The Commission held a special meeting of the joint councils on May 3, 2013, to discuss, review, and evaluate the final two lease proposals for the new west slope location. After extensive review, the Commission passed a motion recommending to the Board of Supervisors that the new location of the West Slope Mental Health Division Clinic and Wellness Center be 768 Pleasant Valley Road, Diamond Springs. The recommendation of the Mental Health Commission and Health and Human Services Agency was approved by the Board of Supervisors on May 7, 2013. During the May 22, 2013 Mental Health Commission joint council meeting, a motion was passed by the Commission forming an ad hoc move sub-committee to support the transition of the West Slope Mental Health Division Clinic and Wellness Center to the Diamond Springs location, which included advocating for transportation solutions for clients, Wellness Center set-up, covered patio for clients, and an El Dorado Transit bus top at the facility.

The Mental Health Commission move sub-committee met with the Health and Human Services Agency/Mental Health Department and other County Departments, to discuss and accomplish the tremendous task of moving the West Slope Mental Health Division Clinic and Wellness Center to the Diamond Springs location. The move was accomplished in October 2013.

- **South Lake Tahoe's Mental Health Division Location Issues, Problems, Controversy and Subsequent Need to be Relocated**

During the January Commission meeting, comments were presented to the Commission regarding the problems that were occurring between the Mental Health Division Wellness Center and the South Lake Tahoe Senior Center in sharing the same facility.

During the April commission meeting, there was a discussion of the South Lake Tahoe City Council decision to invalidate the lease with the Mental Health Division and have the Mental Health Division move out of the shared facility with the South Lake Tahoe

Senior Center by June 30, 2013. During the May Commission meeting, the Health and Human Services Agency reported the County was looking for a new location for co-location of the South Lake Tahoe Mental Health Division Clinic and Wellness Center.

At July's Commission meeting, it was reported that two sites were being considered.

The location of the South Lake Tahoe Mental Health Division Clinic and Wellness Center had not been fully resolved by the end of the 2013 year.

- **Assisted Outpatient Treatment (Laura's Law) in El Dorado County**

During the January Mental Health Commission joint council meeting, a motion was passed by the Commission requesting that a sub-committee consisting of members of the Mental Health Commission and the Health and Human Services Agency take all necessary steps to support the adoption of Laura's Law (LL) in El Dorado County. There were six (6) Laura's Law Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) sub-committee meetings held in 2013.

At the March 21 sub-committee meeting, Michael Heggarty, Director of Nevada County Behavioral Health, provided the sub-committee with history and background information on the use of AOT and he responded to questions from the Mental Health Commission with a 28 page document detailing the questions and answers.

At the November 15 AOT committee meeting, a presentation was given to El Dorado County stakeholders (Probation, Public Defender, County Counsel, Sheriff) by Michael Heggarty and Nevada County Behavioral Health Judge, Tom Anderson (Nevada County) and Turning Point, on the benefits/funding strategies of AOT.

The process for the implementation of LL carried forward into the 2014 year.

- **Community Corrections Partnership Presentation**

The El Dorado County Community Corrections Center is a multi-disciplinary center where adult offenders can receive combined supervision, training, and treatment, in order to successfully transition back into the community.

Membership of the Community Corrections Partnership includes Probation, Superior Court, Chief Administrative Officer, District Attorney, Public Defender, Sheriff, Placerville Police Department, South Lake Tahoe Police Department, Health and Human Services Agency and Department of Education, amongst others.

- **Jail Medication Issues Related to Mentally Ill Inmates During Their Incarceration and Follow-up Upon Their Release from Jail; and**
- **Effects of AB 109 Realignment on Services Mandated to the County by the State**

In November, there was a presentation on El Dorado County Jail inmate medication

policies and procedures by Captain Randy Peshon, El Dorado County Sheriff's Office. According to Captain Peshon, approximately 18% of inmates have a serious mental illness. The Jail currently contracts through California Forensics Medical Group for dental, medical, vision, and mental health services for inmates. When someone comes into custody, a psychiatric evaluation is completed, if needed. Many mental health clients are already known. The Jail accepts medications that are brought in by family members, etc., for inmates. A psychiatrist will adjust and reset medications if necessary.

- **Senior Peer Counseling**

A presentation was given addressing the issues, concerns, and needs that the elderly are facing and the need for solutions to this ever increasing population in our County.

- **Monthly Staff Reports to the Commission**

Monthly presentation were given by the Mental Health Division reviewing and updating the Mental Health Commission on current services provided, upcoming programs, and staffing changes.

- **El Dorado County Mental Health Commission Bylaws Reviewed**

Discussions on the Mental Health Commission Bylaws related to reviewing and updating them. Included in these discussions were the Bylaws organizational structure and membership ratios reflecting representation on the Commission fairly across entire County.

- **Creation of a Bipolar Support Group/Program by the County Mental Health Division**

- **Adult Services: Presentations and Reviews of Outpatient Services, Wellness Center, and the Psychiatric Healthcare Facility (PHF)**

- **Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)/Multi-Disciplinary Task Force**

Reports were given by the Sheriff's Department about ongoing training of officers, and its relationship with the Mental Health Division. The Commission greatly appreciates the commitment of the El Dorado County Sheriff Office to crisis intervention trainings and programs and the regular attendance of Deputy Jackie Noren at Commission meetings.

- **Children's Services**

The Mental Health Division gave a presentation of the extensive services provided to children through contract providers, including:

1. Individual services provided by sub-contractors including New Morning;
2. Summitview Child and Family Services and Sierra Child and Family Services;

3. Group homes;
4. Therapeutic Behavioral Services (TBS) provided by contractors;
5. Full Service Partnerships (FSPs) offered to children who need an extremely high level of care; and
6. Mental Health Outpatient Clinic based group(s).

- **Public Comments**

A Public Comment period was part of each joint council meeting's agenda in 2013. Some of the topics and concerns brought forth over the course of the year were:

1. Problems at the South Lake Tahoe Wellness Center.
2. Homelessness issues in El Dorado County; Hangtown Haven.
3. Relocation of the West Slope Mental Health Division Clinic and Wellness Center.
4. Problems with psychiatric medications with Jail inmates.
5. Concerns about getting proper mental health treatment for family members.
6. Concerned South Lake Tahoe family member spoke about extreme difficulty in getting help for her loved one and the tragedy that resulted.
7. Reducing the stigma related to mental illness through public awareness and education.
8. Mental Health Service Act Fiscal Year PEI program funding.

## **Conclusions, Concerns, and Recommendations**

2013 was a pivotal year for the Mental Health Division and the Mental Health Commission. A change of Director, a facility move, and the movement and expansion of staff and programs created the need for many meetings and greater involvement of the Commission. Don Ashton, as Director, has been inclusive and encouraging to the Commission's involvement and input into the complex issues that concern the Mental Health Division. The Commission appreciates the respect, involvement, attendance, and openness provided by this Director and current administration staff.

Concern remains for the future of mental health services in El Dorado County. Positive measures have been taken to increase transparency, improve programs, expand housing, and provide treatment options for the Medi-Cal and indigent population that our County serves. Adequate resources, given the ever expanding salary and benefit base, will continue to be a challenge with the drop in available Traditional funding and potentially level MHSA funding. The Commission sees a need to prioritize programs and treatments that are the most effective for the money spent. Staying on top of funding requirements and meeting deadlines so that decisions are made from strength and efficacy of programs rather than the need to expend fund balances is improving. We hope that greater use of outcome measurements and data collecting will provide information that will guide the more efficient use of mental health dollars.

Significant changes occurred with the move of West Slope Mental Health Division Clinic and Wellness Center from Placerville Drive in Placerville to Pleasant Valley Road in Diamond Springs. The extensive planning and involvement of multiple stakeholders in the process of

completing the move, effective leadership and hard work paid off in a relatively smooth transition. Extensive collaboration was used to anticipate possible road blocks and problems, especially for those affecting clients before, during and after the move. The Commission was part of this collaborative effort, pushing to address client needs in transportation and development of the Wellness Center.

Of particular concern is the Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF), the most expensive, and some would say the most essential, part of County's mental health services. Whatever the Board of Supervisors decides is the best option for the PHF, what will need to be clarified is how the connections, support systems and out-patient services will be integrated with involuntary hospitalization. These include law enforcement, hospital emergency departments, Public Guardian, ambulance services, family support, drug and alcohol treatment, as well mental health outpatient services. Mental health treatment does not happen by itself. Hospitalization is only the beginning, hopefully, of the journey to recovery. The services provided by the Mental Health Division must be seen as a priority and given the support it needs to meet the needs of our County's residents.

Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT)/Laura's Law (LL), while applicable to a narrow group of individuals, has the potential of addressing one of the most difficult aspects of mental illness, the inability of some individuals to see their own illness. These individuals are left without any means of being helped and often end up homeless, cycling in and out of hospitals and jail, and unable to hold a job or maintain their personal health. Now that the California Legislature approved the use of MHSA funding for AOT, counties can now act by implementing this useful tool in mental health treatment. The Commission has discussed the adoption of AOT at many of its joint council meetings and has consistently recommended El Dorado County adopt AOT.