

COUNTY OF EL DORADO

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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December 16, 2014

Rural Health Network Development Planning Program
Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Re: Barton Health HRSA-15-036 Rural Health Network Development Planning Program Application

Dear HRSA Program Staff:

The Mental Health Division of the County of El Dorado Health and Human Services Agency (El Dorado County Mental Health) provides a wide range of direct mental health services and provides critical leadership and communications for the county's mental health providers, advocates and stakeholders. The vision of the County of El Dorado Health and Human Services agency is "Transforming Lives and Improving Futures," and the mission statement reads, "With integrity and respect, we provide effective, efficient, collaborative services that strengthen, empower and protect individuals, families and communities, thereby enhancing their quality of life." The Mental Health Division has two office locations, one in Diamond Springs on the west slope and one in South Lake Tahoe on the east slope.

In terms of direct services, El Dorado County Mental Health provides a 24-hour hotline for psychiatric emergency services and works closely with other crisis services to provide referrals as appropriate (e.g., domestic violence and sexual assault). We offer outpatient services for adults (people over the age of 18) with serious mental health conditions who meet certain income and/or eligibility requirements, including screening and assessment, medication evaluation and treatment, recovery groups, life skills training, vocational counseling and support referrals, and peer counseling. El Dorado County Mental Health also provides interventions and support for children who have severe emotional disorders. Services include mental health assessments, treatment and support services, (including treatment at the County Juvenile halls), and consultation to schools, law enforcement agencies, community service partners and family support groups. The County Mental Health's Alcohol and Drug Programs offer substance abuse education, prevention, treatment and counseling services directly and through contracts with community agencies. Finally, the County's Psychiatric Health Facility is a licensed residential treatment facility that provides inpatient services for persons requiring intensive, 24-hour psychiatric care.

Vision Statement:
Transforming Lives and Improving Futures

El Dorado County Mental Health serves as a primary source of mental health information and public resources, including a Community Education Center and Mental Health First Aid training. The Community Education Center has a dedicated website that provides research and offers free, interactive online courses in behavioral health; addiction; families, children and adolescents; older adults; and developmental disabilities. Mental Health First Aid is an evidence-based program that introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, builds understanding of their impact, and provides an overview of common treatments, using the curriculum developed by Mental Health First Aid USA. Mental Health First Aid focuses on risk-factors and mental illness in adults, and Youth Mental Health First Aid focuses on risk-factors and mental illness in youth ages 12 to 25.

El Dorado County Mental Health also leads the development and implementation of plans and services associated with the Mental Health Services Act - Proposition 63. The passage of Proposition 63 (known as the Mental Health Services Act or MHSA) in November 2004, provided the first opportunity in many years for the State of California to provide increased funding, personnel and other resources to support county mental health programs and monitor progress toward statewide goals for children, transition age youth, adults, older adults and families. The current MHSA Three-Year Plan covers fiscal years 2013-2016, and the El Dorado County MHSA Project Team posts information, program planning documents, and meeting announcements on the El Dorado County Mental Health website. The El Dorado County Mental Health Commission has two councils – one that meets in South Lake Tahoe and one that meets on the Western Slope of the County. These monthly meetings are facilitated by El Dorado County Mental Health, and are intended to “review and evaluation mental health needs, services, facilities and special problems.”

El Dorado County Mental Health will serve as a critical link to the broader mental health stakeholder community, and will actively engage in the process of reviewing protocols and developing a communications plan for the South Lake Tahoe Network. We will provide at least one representative to the network planning committee, and will aggressively review, revise and communicate our direct service delivery protocols as required to foster the success of the network. We will provide regular updates on network progress to our existing mental health stakeholder groups, and solicit their input and feedback, as appropriate. Based on the results of the gap analysis, we may also advocate for additional resources and support future funding requests to ensure the long term sustainability of the network protocols and communications.

We believe the proposed South Lake Tahoe Health Network serves as a natural progression and result of the MHSA Three-Year Plan, and it will greatly improve the coordination of services and public understanding of available mental health services in El Dorado County. The lack of coordination and public confusion about entry points for mental health and co-morbid health services has resulted in logistical barriers to care for populations that are in most need of support and clinical care. We enthusiastically support this effort to create a cohesive health network focused on behavioral health services, because we believe it will improve mental health care access and patient support.

El Dorado County Mental Health understands that grant funds awarded by HRSA are to be used for the development of the health care network and are not to be used for the exclusive benefit of any one network partner.

Sincerely,

Don Ashton, M.P.A.
Director