

May 3, 2018

TO: El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
El Dorado County Behavioral Health Commission

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

I am hopeful that we will see many improvements in mental health and wellness in our County, based on the initiatives that are under way:

1. Stepping Up (launched April, 28, 2018),
2. Community Hubs and the ACES Collaborative,
3. PERT (Psychiatric Emergency Response Team),
4. HOT (Homeless Outreach Team),
5. Homeless Coordinator / Continuum of Care, and
6. CIT (Crisis Intervention Training).

It is critically important that you as County leaders continue to actively support, measure, and fund (as needed) these initiatives, so that we can ensure that every resident has the opportunity to be happy, healthy, and productive. Only by investing in our human capital will we continue to have a thriving community that remains an attractive place to live, work and play.

I think it would be helpful to have measures and current data for all of these initiatives published at each Behavioral Health Commission meeting. For example, I would like to see a goal of training all law enforcement officers in 40 hours of CIT, along with the % of officers that have received that amount of training.

I would like to see more MHSA (Mental Health Services Act) dollars flow to fund more PERT teams (including in South Lake Tahoe), and to ensure that all law enforcement officers, including probation officers and those staffing the jail, are given 40 hours of CIT. I am concerned that the MHSA surplus we continue to roll over may be yanked back by the State if we don't use those funds this year. I believe it critically important to invest those dollars in ways to prevent cases like the Castillo murder, in which Mr. Bernardo Castillo killed his mother and seriously injured his niece (ref: Mountain Democrat Nov. 29, 2017). Had a PERT team responded to that call, there may have been a better outcome.

I also know from personal experience that changing how we approach those with mental illnesses would be valuable. My brother was in and out of jail in his twenties due to petty drug crimes and he suffered from severe mental illness. Had he had the benefit of treatment and support, he could have been a contributing member of society. Instead, he passed away much too soon from health complications due to mental illness.

I urge you to move forward quickly so that other families do not have to suffer.

Sincerely, Val Akana
Placerville, CA