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ADMHS Statement on the Isla Vista Tragedy

May 30, 2014

For Immediate Release:

On behalf of the several hundred staff members of the Santa Barbara County Department of Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Services (ADMHS), in this time of sorrow, our hearts are with the families and friends of those impacted by the tragedy in Isla Vista. Events like this highlight the importance of access to care, early identification, intervention and treatment for those experiencing symptoms associated with mental illness.

While recent high profile mass shootings appear to have a mental health component, it is important to recognize that people with mental illness are more likely to be victims of violence, not perpetrators of it. Department of Justice data show that only 4.3% of perpetrators of homicide had a history of mental illness. We hope that the tragedy in Isla Vista does not increase the stigma of those with a mental health diagnosis, as this would only discourage people from getting the care they need. This is particularly critical, as 25% of adults in the US population have a mental health illness.

For those who do need mental health and substance abuse services, over the past year, ADMHS has been working on a Systems Change initiative to strengthen the Santa Barbara County system of care and recovery. Over \$11 M in grant funding was recently secured to establish new countywide crisis response and triage 24/7 field teams, a crisis stabilization unit in partnership with Cottage Hospital and a crisis respite house. Outpatient programs are being restructured so they are more accessible and better able to address the needs of complex and dually diagnosed individuals.

In addition, we are working with Marian Medical Center to develop additional inpatient psychiatric beds. A number of other enhanced services have been proposed to improve our work with the mentally ill homeless individuals and for people with mental illness involved with the criminal justice system. For a complete listing of all ADMHS services, please visit www.countyofsb.org/admhs/

Specific to the Isla Vista incident, Federal and State privacy laws and internal policies prevent the Department as a healthcare entity from discussing calls that may or may not have been received or how any specific calls may have been handled. However, given the focus on the ADMHS "hotline," called ACCESS, the following provides a general overview of the service:

- An ACCESS Line is available to the community 24/7/365 to link callers, or those calling with concern for another, with specialty mental health service needs at the appropriate level of care as determined by telephone screenings.
- ACCESS call screenings are conducted by trained qualified mental health professionals.
- Routine calls are transferred to an outpatient clinic during working hours to link the caller to services ranging from information only to brief therapy or ongoing care.
- If there is a concern about the immediate safety of an individual or situation, law enforcement is contacted to conduct a wellness check to ensure the safety of a person of which there is concern. If law enforcement determines a need for an onsite psychiatric evaluation, the ADMHS CARES mobile crisis team is available 24/7 to conduct 5150 psychiatric evaluations in the field.

In response to the tragic event in Isla Vista, approximately 50 mental health professionals from throughout the county worked together to provide counseling and support to community members impacted by the event. Leaders in Santa Barbara County will continue to work collaboratively to build and sustain the community partnerships necessary to provide the early intervention and prevention services that are proven to be humane and cost-effective in addressing mental health challenges. ADMHS will continue to improve the accessibility and quality of mental health and substance abuse programs and services within the county, and the county will be reassessing Laura's Law to determine if it is appropriate for implementation in Santa Barbara County.

How to Obtain Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Services

ADMHS provides treatment, rehabilitation and support service to approximately 7,600 clients with mental illness and 4,500 clients with substance use disorders annually. Individuals needing assistance may call an Access Line, 888-868-1649, which is available to the community 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The content of telephone calls to the Access Line are confidential in accordance with W&I 5328 and California Civil Code 50.1.

For more information, please contact Suzanne Grimesey, MFT, ADMHS Chief Strategy Officer, desk: 805.681.5289; cell: 805.886.5403.

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