



## **Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services**

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### **MHSA to fund expanded peer-support services**

The Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services will receive more than \$800,000 to fund an integrated continuum of services for at-risk youth transitioning to adulthood.

Funding comes from the Mental Health Services Act, also known as Proposition 63, which was passed by California voters in 2004. MHSA levies a tax of one percent on personal income in excess of \$1 million a year, with funds used to support a broad range of prevention, early intervention and other service needs, along with the infrastructure, technology and training necessary to sustain them.

DHHS's Innovation Plan project, approved last week by the MHSA Oversight and Accountability Commission, will allocate \$818,700 to hire and train peer-support specialists who will provide mentoring and referrals to assist with housing, education, health care, targeted mental health services and the development of independent living skills.

DHHS Director Phillip R. Crandall said peer-support for young adults and foster youth will bridge critical service gaps for this age group and expand the department's array of transitional youth services.

"Studies show that up to 80 percent of foster children suffer mental health issues as a result of trauma. In California, only half of foster children graduate from high school, and only 3 percent finish college," Crandall said.

"More than 50 percent become unemployed or homeless once they reach age 18 and are removed from the foster care system."

Crandall added, "These services will strengthen our support of transition-age youth and help them find housing, food and a path in life, whether that be college or vocational training for a living-wage job."

Karolyn Rim-Stein, director of DHHS's Mental Health Branch, noted that youth "aging out" of the foster care system are particularly in need of these services.

The plan includes guidelines for measuring the project's success. Indices include fewer hospitalizations, fewer psychiatric emergencies, decreased incarceration, and increases in recovery, housing, education, vocation and relationship permanency.

The hiring of the peer-support specialists is expected to begin in Fall 2010. It is anticipated that as many as 60 young adults will be helped.

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