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**DSHS Awards \$4.1 Million to
MHMR Tarrant County**
Funds Designated for Community Mental Health Crisis Services

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has awarded \$4.1 million to Mental Health Mental Retardation of Tarrant County as part of a statewide initiative to enhance mental health crisis services. These funds will be added to the \$496,109 already granted by the state to create a Mobile Crisis Outreach Team in Tarrant County.

The funds are part of an \$82 million two-year appropriation from the Texas Legislature to improve the provision of public mental health crisis services.

"We appreciate the Legislature's commitment to developing a more effective response system for Texans dealing with mental health crises," said Dr. David Lakey, DSHS commissioner. "The additional money will help people get the best possible care in the best possible setting."

Jim McDermott, Ph.D., chief executive officer of MHMR Tarrant County, pointed out the funds are bolstered by a matching grant of \$500,000 from Tarrant County.

"The County's support allowed us to be highly competitive as we sought these grants," he said. "Our County commissioners understand the importance of improving mental health care in our community."

He added another supportive factor in Tarrant County's receiving the grant is the strong collaboration of mental health care providers throughout the community.

"The State could see that the collaboration allows us to make the best use of these funds while serving the most people in need."

Among the agencies that will contract with MHMR Tarrant County to provide some of the services are All Church Home for Children, JPS Health Services and Union Gospel Mission.

"We are able to use the expertise and existing resources of these agencies, allowing us to place more of the funds in direct patient care instead of building a new infrastructure," said McDermott.

New services that MHMR will provide are:

Competency Restoration Services (\$556,628)

MHMR Tarrant County will implement a community program for individuals who have been found incompetent to stand trial. In the past, these individuals have spent time at state hospitals until competency was restored. The average length of stay at the state hospitals has been 90 days. For the past two years, state hospitals have not had the necessary beds to admit all the jailed patients needing services. The result has been an average wait of 80 days for admission, with 20 Tarrant County offenders on the waiting list at any one time.

Recent legislation allows competency restoration in the community instead of state hospitals. The funds for this project will allow MHMR Tarrant County to work with offenders, getting them the treatment they need sooner and helping them to maintain their recovery.

Crisis Stabilization Unit (\$1,294,931)

The Crisis Stabilization Unit will provide short-term emergency care for individuals who need a safe and secure environment for treatment. This unit will offer immediate psychiatric services in an environment that is less restrictive than a hospital. However, if an individual needs an even more restrictive environment for his or her safety, the unit will transfer the patient to the psychiatric emergency center at JPS.

Crisis Respite Unit (\$1,037,867)

The Crisis Respite Unit will provide services for adults who are at risk of a psychiatric crisis, but not at risk of immediate harm to themselves or others. In many cases, these individuals are facing a crisis due to housing issues or family problems. The respite unit will house these adults for up to seven days to help stabilize their situations. It will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week throughout the year. This community-based respite care will cost 54 percent less than in-hospital care, which – until now – has been the only option.

Crisis Residential Unit (\$1,232,677)

The residential unit will provide less restrictive care to adults in crisis who need monitoring and treatment, but do not need the more restrictive environment of the crisis stabilization unit. Some individuals will move to the residential unit from the stabilization and respite units, resulting in continuity of care, longer-term care and support for patients as they re-establish themselves in the community. Individuals can stay in this unit for up to 14 days. This type of community-based service reduces costs by 48 percent when compared to in-hospital care.

To access any of these services, Tarrant County residents should call the MHMR Tarrant County crisis line at 817-335-3022.

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