

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 27, 2014

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Governor Sam Brownback announces programs to strengthen mental health delivery in the state

TOPEKA – Governor Sam Brownback, flanked by cabinet secretaries and advocates from across the state, today announced his administration’s plans to continue strengthening the delivery of mental health services in the State of Kansas.

“I remain committed to strengthening and expanding access to timely, quality mental services and improving outcomes for all Kansans,” Governor Brownback said. “This is one of the priority initiatives of my administration, and we have taken some significant steps forward. We are making direct investments in ways we believe will pull the state together to address this challenge. I have asked all of the state agencies to become actively involved in coordinating their efforts.”

The Governor outlined specific projects the state is launching to address the behavioral health needs of individuals, families and communities. Those include:

- Creating a Behavioral Health Subcabinet composed of agency representatives from the Department of Health and Environment, Department of Children and Families, Department of Education, Department of Corrections, Department for Aging and Disability Services, and the National Guard, which will work to identify common outcomes, coordinate data systems, and look at cost related matters. The Subcabinet will oversee the preparation of a comprehensive review of behavioral health care costs and examination of how funding is allocated throughout the system.
- Appointing a Law Enforcement Behavioral Health Advisory Council, consisting of Attorney General Derek Schmidt, Secretary Ray Roberts, Sedgwick County Sheriff Jeff Easter, and Topeka Police Department Captain Bill Cochran, which will serve in an advisory capacity to review community grant applications for \$500,000 in community grants, funded through the Governor’s budget amendment, that will help keep individuals in the community and out of jail, prisons and state hospitals. Possible grant projects include Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), Mental Health First Aid, Mental Health Courts, Jail diversion programs, and education for front-line responders. The advisory council will also help advise the Governor’s Behavioral Health Planning Council as they work to prioritize and implement law enforcement- and corrections-specific recommendations made by the Governor’s Mental Health Task Force Report.

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- Targeting substance use, which plays a significant role in exacerbating the mental health situation confronting families and institutions in Kansas; Substance abuse destroys lives and affects families, law enforcement, corrections – and ultimately our economic well-being in terms of lost productivity
- Building and enhancing community supports through identifying at-risk communities around the state and helping them create programs that address their specific behavioral health needs. This will include \$10,000 for a data project to identify the most at-risk communities in the state and \$140,000 to help support 12-15 high-risk Kansas communities.
- Increasing investment in family-strengthening programs by establishing prevention, education and family-support projects in communities across the state to help families with members who are experiencing behavioral health challenges using \$7 million in TANF funding.

And that the state will invest additional resources in existing current infrastructure, including:

- \$500,000 for Substance Use Disorder treatment beds that will allow the state us to open 81 additional beds funded through the Governor’s Budget Amendment
- \$1 million in one-time money to be used for Community Mental Health Centers to strengthen their ability to provide treatment to individuals without health insurance

“To this point we have concentrating on building our infrastructure. Now we are beginning to invest in specific programs. What we are doing fits into the Mental Health Task Force’s model of investing at each level – individual, family, community, state – that can impact mental health in Kansas,” Governor Brownback said.

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