San Diego County Has Cut Jail & Prison Return Rates by 50%!

If it costs county taxpayers *26 Times more* to put someone back in jail than a helping hand to stay out, why are we not fully funding Project In-Reach?

May 26, 2016 – The San Diego County Behavioral Health Services (BHS) Project In-Reach program successfully helps incarcerated individuals with substance abuse and or mental health disorders prepare for re-entry back into society. Participants focus on their addiction issues, get coaching on day-to-day realities of living on the outside, and are connected to community resources. The program starts 60-180 days pre-release and continues care-coordination 90 days post-release – guiding participants as they transition into a positive new beginning.[i]

How Many Prisoners Return to Jail or Prison Within 6 Months From Release?
Nearly 48% of California Corrections inmates,[ii] and only 25% of <u>Project In-Reach</u> participants[iii]

Jail is Expensive It costs the county about $1,300. to serve Project In-Reach participants or, about $42,000. each year to re-incarcerate them back into our County jail system.[iv] <u>To serve 100 Project In-Reach program participants – the county spends less than $130 thousand – saving *taxpayers nearly $4 million in future jail costs.*</u>

Since Project In-Reach has proven that several hundred of today's inmates could be helped and stop going back to jail, why hasn't the County BHS fully deployed this project with a small investment that saves the county millions? There is new funding for a new Project In-Reach facet of planning and transition services for some chronically mentally ill inmates[v] but, the glaring need to fully fund the foundation of the project remains.

Hundreds of San Diego County men and women have done their time,
including many veterans, and many with critical mentally health challenges,
yet, will never see Project In-Reach – and *will* return to jail and prison.

Facilities & Capacity Project In-Reach currently serves some, not all, levels of prisoners at the East Mesa, George Bailey and Las Colinas facilities. In addition to needing to serve other qualifying inmates at these facilities, the demand exists to serve inmates at four other facilities: San Diego Central Jail, Facility 8 Detention, South Bay Detention and Vista Detention. *<u>Had residents and advocates known about Project In-Reach's successes, and the lack of full deployment within all county facilities, they could have urged County Supervisors to amend the program to help residents get back on track – and also realize significant savings for all taxpayers.</u>*

People of Color Although Project In-Reach was intended to specifically serve African-American and Latino prisoners incarcerated at the three facilities being served, due to the reduced number of available potential candidates, roughly half the population participating in the project are Caucasian. *<u>Had residents and advocates supporting people of color known this shortfall, they could have urged County Supervisors for increased inmate-level coverage at existing facilities and additional funds to serve the entire qualifying population at every facility.</u>*

 Why not help everyone who qualifies to change their life, stay out of jail and save taxpayers millions?

Funding We have more than enough money – especially for programs like Project In-Reach. Local media reported County BHS has been withholding spending a 2013 amount of about $130 million in available cash, above and beyond their $42 million prudent reserve.[vi] These funds were collected from California's wealthiest under Prop 63, a tax specifically to fund MHSA[vii] programs. *<u>Had residents and advocates known about this significant surplus they could have championed programs that were discounted over the past several years for 'lack of resources'.</u>*

What are We Missing? How many other programs have remarkable potential yet, lie dormant due to lack of taxpayer awareness, limiting abilities to provide informed feedback? Anyone in the world can go online and download San Diego County maps and records from the late 19th century,[viii] yet today, residents have a difficult time obtaining, reviewing and understanding the hundreds of contracts that detail behavioral health programs,

projected and actual outcome metrics, and the multi-million dollar expenditures detailed in a dizzying array of financial information processes, systems and records. <u>Had residents been given more timely access sooner, they could have been making more informed contributions, helping more residents and achieving better outcomes.</u>

<u>Informed and engaged citizens without political or funding conflicts want to ensure their local government is doing it's best to serve our most needy populations and the entire county population as a whole.</u> Given the political nature of local and other government, the significant levels of funding, the complexity of funding and program mechanisms – doesn't it make sense to include more people, not just the few serving on the Supervisor-appointed positions on advisory boards, with better financial, procurement and outcome information on a more timely basis?

It's In The Data Programs like Project In-Reach are procured by outlining strategies and tactics contractors will take to achieve projected outcomes. But, this information is not readily accessible. It seems clear an online dashboard of all funded programs, the funding source, both current and past contracts, as well as links to future procurement documents would be helpful. This data, as well as projected total-market demand, the actual number of clients targeted to be served, specific anticipated outcomes, and narratives of the practical and anecdotal challenges contractors and county staff face – could be reasonably organized and delivered online. Not once a year but, on an ongoing basis so we can participate in better-informed conversations and making contributions.

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Which business do you want our County of San Diego to be in:
Enabling re-incarcerating hundreds who need a hand or, maximizing taxpayer dollars?

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What Can You Do? Things you can advocate for today will positively affect not only hundreds of prisoners, their families and communities but, all County residents. Isn't it reasonable for stakeholders to be able to have clear insight through timely, detailed information on how and where we spend hundreds of millions of dollars on programs? **Here's two key points you could urge your County Supervisor to deploy:**

1. **Fund Current Technology Upgrades –** We need to address a systemic lack of timely procurement and evaluation information available to any stakeholder to help them make more informed contributions. *We need more timely and easily accessible planning, procurement, reporting and evaluation data.*

2. **Fully Fund Project In-Reach –** Given there are hundreds more Project In-Reach candidates we could serve, couldn't the county use the future tens of millions of dollars saved? *We need to insist that programs like Project In-Reach be fully funded to achieve maximum program results and cost savings this budget year.*

The County Wants Your Feedback See: http://sandiego.camhsa.org/, the primary MHSA page where you can find budgeting process details and the timeline for feedback. To review the proposed county MHSA FY 2016-2017 Annual Update see: http://sandiego.camhsa.org/files/MHSA-FY2016-17AnnualUpdateFULLREPORT.pdf. You can also give feedback by phone at 619-584-5063 or, email to MHSProp63.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov.

<u>By Jerry Hall, San Diego County resident</u> Although serving on the Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB) Hall does not represent them in any capacity in this communication. All opinions are his own. Suggested improvements of data or conclusions are welcomed at: enjoyPB@gmail.com. Please take some time to make an impact and share!

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[i] In part from http://www.neighborhoodhouse.org/project-in-reach, Neighborhood House Association Project In-Reach $350k, Los Colinas & George Bailey by HHSA-BHS Contract #548930 and $129k, East Mesa by San Diego Count Sheriff)

[ii] http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/adult_research_branch/research_documents/outcome_evaluation_report_2013.pdf, 2014-Jan, p13 CA Department of Corrections Outcome Evaluation Report

[iii] Neighborhood House Association, 2016-Mar-03 Project In-Reach Behavioral Health Advisory Board Report, S.13

[iv] http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_quick.asp?i=1146, 2012, Home Page, Public Policy Institute of California, [Potentially 9% more - see #3]. Not including other public safety, court and related costs.

[v] http://sandiego.camhsa.org/files/MHSA-FY2016-17AnnualUpdateFULLREPORT.pdf, p17,p2 MHSA Annual Update

[vi] http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/2015/aug/22/county-amasses-mental-health-funds-amid-need, 2015-August-22, San Diego UT

[vii] http://prop63.org, Mental Health Services Act – Oversight and Accountability Commission

[viii] http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/cob/bosa/navrecords.html, San Diego County Public Records c1877-present