

MEMORANDUM
PLACER COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Children's System of Care

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: Richard J. Burton, M.D., M.P.H.
Placer County Health Officer and Director of Health & Human Services
Richard S. Knecht, Director of Children's System of Care

DATE: March 26, 2013

SUBJECT: Child Abuse Awareness Month and Early Trauma Community Education

ACTION REQUESTED:

In support of Child Abuse Awareness Month occurring in April 2013, receive a report from staff regarding recent local efforts to address severe forms of child abuse and neglect.

BACKGROUND:

The Placer County Children's System of Care (CSOC) joins with our many community-based partners, particularly our Child Abuse Prevention Council, KidsFirst, Inc., in celebrating Child Abuse Awareness Month.

In recent years, effective research has established the role and influence of early trauma on the wellbeing and health of child abuse victims. In response to this emerging knowledge, communities around our region now widely practice evidence-based parenting education and deliver early parenting interventions which are proven effective for parents of young children who may be at risk. In Placer County, Family Resource Centers and other partners provide effective prevention services to more than 12,000 caregivers each year. Sadly, we do not reach every family before tragedy occurs.

Of particular focus in recent years is the role that severe acute child abuse, in all forms, often plays in the development of mental illness and social impairment. When very young brains are exposed to and victimized by severe life stressors, including physical or sexual abuse, the effects are often tragic. The more acute stress a child is exposed to, the more likely it is that he or she will have difficulty with social and emotional functioning in childhood, exhibit cognitive problems, fail in school, and have high levels of mental health and substance abuse challenges as an adult. Chronic health conditions (including heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and lung disease) have been documented to occur in the presence of unmitigated and untreated trauma. Research attention and concordant enhancements in the development and delivery of evidence-based therapies have shown remarkable results.

Placer County's CSOC, with support of the SMART Policy Board, has recently engaged in regional and statewide conversations in an effort to not only further the dialogue, but to deliver on a long standing need to actually serve our most severely affected trauma victims with timely and effective care. On February 8th, CSOC, along with the First 5 Placer-Children and Families Commission, hosted a day long conversation with 17 other Northern California counties to identify willingness and desire to form a regional approach to treatment of early severe trauma. There was great energy and desire expressed to mobilize further and to seek out new private and philanthropic partners in order to potentially create a regional treatment center for early childhood trauma.

Likewise, on February 22nd, one of Placer County's newer partners, Courage House, Inc., sponsored a symposium attended by over 400 persons, with the intent to raise awareness about a specific form of trauma - the trafficking and selling of young people for sex. This hideous and despicable abuse victimizes hundreds of California teens each year. "The Response", hosted by William Jessup University in Rocklin, was a great success, and sponsors are looking forward to an annual event in this regard.

Together, these two recent efforts have enhanced awareness for trauma, have emphasized the need for further training and highlighted the ongoing need for implementation of evidence-based programs. Placer County's Systems of Care teams are poised to participate and lead, if necessary, the local collaborative efforts to prevent severe abuse, and to enhance the community's capacity to effectively mitigate severe trauma when it occurs.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.