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KDADS Announces Expansion of Mental Health Training for Law Enforcement

TOPEKA – Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) Secretary Kari Bruffett announced today the funding of several projects to expand the number of Kansas law enforcement officers and those in related fields that are trained to deal appropriately with individuals experiencing mental health crises.

“Some of the most significant recommendations made by the Governor’s Mental Health Task Force address the way law enforcement officers interact with the mentally ill,” Secretary Bruffett said. “The task force emphasized the need for front-line responders to receive instruction in the most effective ways to interact with individuals who suffer from mental illness. In the communities that this training has already occurred, law enforcement and corrections personnel report that it makes a huge difference in way these situations are resolved.”

The projects were developed as a response to recommendations made by the Kansas Governor’s Mental Health Task Force and with the guidance of the Kansas Governor’s Law Enforcement Behavioral Health Advisory Council.

In May, Governor Sam Brownback outlined his administration’s plans for strengthening the delivery of behavioral health services in Kansas. One of the initiatives he announced was the creation of the 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. The council serves in an advisory capacity to review future community grants aimed at helping to keep individuals in the community and out of jails, prisons, and state hospitals. Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) and Mental Health First Aid training is a part of that effort aimed at education for front-line responders.

“This is the first time in history that the State of Kansas has taken a comprehensive approach to allocating funds to train law enforcement and corrections personnel in the area of mental health issues on a statewide level. This is a tremendous thing,” Captain Cochran said.

The projects will:

- Increase the number of the state’s CIT training sessions from two to three to allow an additional 30 officers to participate in the training program in FY15. These training programs include instruction, classroom materials, and student room and board. Each officer trained will earn continuing education hours through the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center (KLETC).
- Develop an online mental health training curriculum in collaboration with the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center. KLETC will produce an online training video and testing instrument for use by law enforcement agencies that are unable to send staff to the training center. The anticipated audience for the video training could be as many as 1,500 to 2,000 officers, or approximately 25 percent of current law enforcement personnel.
- Provide a series of six one-day mental health awareness training sessions that will be presented across the state to lay the ground work for more specialized behavioral health training in the future. Regional training events will target smaller, rural law enforcement agencies that do not have the local mental health resources to provide such training. Those participating in this training will also include law enforcement officers, county jail personnel, parole officers, juvenile justice staff and education personnel.
- Increase the capacity of the Mental Health First Aid training program by having 30 Kansans participate in a “Train the Trainer” session. Preparing 30 additional individuals to lead Mental Health First Aid training sessions in Kansas will increase statewide capacity for Mental Health First Aid training by 21 percent. KDADS also will pay for these individuals to receive additional training and certification to be able to teach this program to the public safety sector and veteran populations.

KDADS anticipates these additional training opportunities will be funded at a level of about \$75,000.

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