

Mental Health Presentation

Meeting of the Lomita Heights Neighborhood Association

January 31, 2013

Neighbors have expressed concerns about individuals seen traveling through the neighborhood who may be mentally ill and/or homeless.

In response, Sonoma County Department of Health Services, Behavioral Health Division was asked to select appropriate staff to speak at a neighborhood meeting. All households in the neighborhood were invited to attend.

Dr. Gary Bravo, Division Medical Director and Ms. Sid McColley, Client Care Manager for the Integrated Recovery Team and Integrated Health Team were our guests. They work at Chanate Hall, the Sonoma County adult outpatient psychiatric facility on Chanate Road, which serves the mental and physical needs of about 700 clients. In addition, the following facilities are across the street: psychiatric emergency, family services, older adult, a community intervention shelter, medical records and administration offices. There is also a Wellness Center which is staffed on a volunteer basis by clients, open 10:00 – 2:00 Monday through Friday, which offers classes and a clubhouse. What is now the Norton Building was formerly called Oakcrest.

Psychiatric emergency services are available 24/7 where clients are evaluated. Patients are not locked in but can be held for 72 hours on what is called a “5150”. Section 5150 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code allow law enforcement to involuntarily confine a person deemed to have a mental disorder that makes them a danger to him- or herself, and/or others and/or gravely disabled. If a patient leaves while under a legal hold the police are called to locate them. Police usually are able to return required patients within a short period of time. Recently the facility has doubled up on security guards.

At the present time if hospitalization is required, patients must be sent out of the County since there is no hospital facility available. However, in the spring a 95 bed hospital will be opening on Fulton Road.

Apparently someone called *The Press Democrat* about people walking along Chanate Road and possibly into the neighborhood. A reporter came to the neighborhood and interviewed some residents. The ensuing article described people escaping from the facility and did not address the issue of whether some people seen wandering on Chanate are actually homeless and may or may not be mentally ill.

Bill Klausing, who lives on the corner of Terra Linda and Chanate has had numerous problems with people knocking on his door in the night, and he has had to called the Police multiple times.

Ms. McCooley stated that very few of their clients are homeless. But neighbors know there are a lot of homeless people living around Sutter Hospital grounds and in the nearby creek area. Homeless tend to avoid mental health services. If a non-911 emergency is seen and a person appears mentally impaired, Psychiatric Emergency Services can be called. There are a few patients who are prison parolees. These patients tend to be non-violent and are compliant since they do not want to return to the prison environment.

After a 72 hour hold, a patient can leave or stay, but staff tries not to let them leave if further treatment is needed. The law is on the side of civil liberty, and patients are not forced into care. About half of the emergencies seen are drug related, 30% suffer from depression or are suicidal. Most having severe psychosis are drug related.

The facility services all of Sonoma County for emergencies, although there are small outpatient clinics in other parts of the County.

If you have concerns about an individual who may be experiencing a mental health crisis, please take the following steps:

If there is an immediate danger, dial 911.

If you have concerns about an individual, but there is no immediate danger, please call the police non-emergency line at 528-5222 and identify yourself as a Lomita Heights Neighborhood Watch resident.

If you have concerns about a family member or friend, Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES) has a crisis line staffed 24/7. 1-800-746-8181. PES provides crisis intervention, assessment, medication and referrals to interim crisis care.

There is a new 24 hour hotline for suicide prevention. 1-855-587-6373.