

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES – DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

F A C T S H E E T

**APPROVE EXPENDITURES FOR THE FIFTH ANNUAL
CONNECTIONS FOR LIFE THROUGH
EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION CONFERENCE
(ALL SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICTS)
(3 VOTES)**

SUBJECT

Request approval to host and conduct the Fifth Annual Connections for Life Through Employment and Education Conference at the California Endowment Center for Healthy Communities.

REQUEST

Authorize the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to expend funds to conduct the Fifth Annual Connections for Life Through Employment and Education Conference to be held on April 6, 2011, at an estimated total cost of \$12,000, fully funded by Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Training funds; authorize DMH to purchase food and beverages as an exception to the Los Angeles County Code Section 5.40.097, Incidental Expenses, which limits such purchases to \$500 per occurrence and \$5,000 annually, for County employees and consumers attending the conference; authorize DMH to execute an agreement with the California Endowment Center for Healthy Communities (Endowment) for the conference's catering services at an estimated total cost of \$6,050; and authorize DMH to execute an agreement with the California Certified Interpreters for the conference's interpretation services at an estimated total cost of \$1,800.

PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION

These actions will allow DMH to host and conduct the Fifth Annual Connections for Life Through Employment and Education Conference to be held on April 6, 2011, at the Endowment. In support of promoting the wellness and recovery of mental health clients in Los Angeles County, the conference will offer consumers the information and community resources that support their journey to independence and self-determination. This conference also includes an award ceremony to recognize the successes consumers have achieved in attaining their employment and/or education goals. Furthermore, Spanish-speaking interpreters are required at the conference to translate for the monolingual consumers in attendance.

The conference is required at this time as it supports DMH in accomplishing elements of its State-approved MHSA plans. A major mandate of the MHSA is to reach unserved and underserved populations to support their recovery from mental illness. This

conference provides an important opportunity to support the tenet of recovery by offering a learning opportunity to consumers who are reticent to work or attend school because of their mental illness.

BACKGROUND

Since 2007, DMH and the Mental Health Commission have sponsored an annual Connection for Life Through Employment and Education Conference. This conference unites consumers who are employed, volunteering and/or attending school, consumers whose recovery goals include employment and/or education and professionals who work in the employment and education field. This conference supports the tenet of recovery contained in the MHSA.

Connections for Life Through Employment and Education is a truly transformative conference that offers a learning opportunity for consumers who are reticent to work or attend school because of their mental illness. Many of the consumers who attend the conference were gainfully employed or enrolled in school prior to being diagnosed with a serious mental illness. These consumers will learn about the successes other consumers have achieved in attaining their employment and/or education goals. Consumers will acquire a more fundamental understanding of the “no wrong door” approach to obtaining employment. Consumers will gain a heightened awareness of their employment and/or educational capabilities.

Connections for Life Through Employment and Education also provides valuable community resources to consumers that are needed to support their interest in employment and education. The community resource providers available to consumers at this conference include: Los Angeles Unified School District, State of California Department of Rehabilitation, Self Help and Recovery Exchange (SHARE), In Home Supportive Services, WorkSource Centers, Social Security Administration, County Client Coalition and National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

At this conference, consumers will join in a dialogue of hope, recovery and wellness. This unique opportunity will reinforce the power of hope and positive thinking and provide an environment that envisions solutions to the many challenges of having a mental illness.

This is an all day conference with about 250 DMH consumers attending. Catering services are needed because many of the consumers attending the conference do not have the financial resources to pay for breakfast and lunch and/or lack the transportation resources to access a restaurant and have breakfast and lunch within the

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allocated break times. Serving breakfast and lunch at the conference also provides consumers with the opportunity to network and share personal resources.

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