



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Lesley Kirk (619) 515-6579,
cell (619) 857-9875

750,000 SAN DIEGANS HAVE A MENTAL ILLNESS ***County Launches Massive Campaign to Fight Stigma and Discrimination***

More than 750,000 San Diegans suffer from a mental illness. That's enough people to fill Qualcomm Stadium 10 times! One in four adults and one in five children suffer from mental illness in San Diego County. Unfortunately, the stigma associated with mental illness keeps many people from seeking treatment and from beginning the road to recovery.

The five-year prevention and education campaign called "It's Up to Us," launched today by County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), aims to encourage San Diegans to get help, whether they have postpartum depression after having child, post traumatic stress disorder from combat, general anxiety or more serious disorders. The campaign's goal is to get people to talk openly about mental illness and to seek help because recovery is possible.

"It is shocking that we have so many people suffering from mental illness here in San Diego County, when statistics show that 80 percent of those who seek treatment early have a chance of leading a very productive life," said Chairwoman Pam Slater-Price, County Board of Supervisors.

"A person with mental illness is not always who you think it is--it's not just the homeless, it's your teacher, your mom, your coach, your brother and your best friend," said Nick Macchione, Director of County Health and Human Services Agency. "We are trying to raise awareness with all San Diegans to reduce stigma, so people feel comfortable talking about it and reaching out for help."

It is estimated that self-stigma keeps 50 to 60 percent of individuals with mental health challenges from getting treatment.

"Mental illness is no different than having diabetes, cancer or heart disease. Treatment is available; recovery is possible," said Alfredo Aguirre, Director of County Mental Health. "Don't let the fear of stigma keep you from getting help for yourself or a loved one."

Campaign messages will appear on television, radio, newspapers, Internet, billboards, movie theaters, bus shelters and buses, both in English and Spanish in an effort to change the way people with a mental illness are viewed or view themselves. The campaign is funded by the Mental Health Services Act—

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Proposition 63, a millionaires' tax, which specifically designates funds for mental health services. The measure was approved by voters in 2004.

To get help or to learn more, visit The "It's Up to Us" Web site at www.up2sd.org. Help is also available by calling the County's Access and Crisis Line—24 hours a day, 7 days a week—at (800) 479-3339.

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