



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION
June 6, 2008

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COUNTY PROGRAM REDUCING USE OF EMERGENCY RESOURCES BY CHRONIC ALCOHOLICS *Serial Inebriate Program Recognized by State Group*

The County of San Diego's Serial Inebriate Program (SIP) has won a state award for reducing the use of public resources by chronic alcoholics. SIP won the award for Outstanding Achievements in the Alcohol and Drug field from the County Alcohol and Drug Program Administrators Association of California at the association's annual dinner in Sacramento on May 28, 2008.

Established in 2000 by San Diego Police Sgt. Richard Schnell and Officer John Liening, the SIP's goals are to decrease the use of police and emergency resources by chronic alcoholics, divert clients to appropriate treatment and medical care, and reduce the amount of uncompensated medical costs.

"This program helps people who badly need help and saves taxpayers money," said Chairman Greg Cox, of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors. "It's another example of how a partnership between the City and the County can benefit the public."

In addition to SDPD and ADS, the program's partners include the County's Emergency Medical Services, the San Diego City Attorney, the County Sheriff, Public Defender's Office, Superior Court, Scripps Mercy Hospital, the UCSD Medical Center, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and community based treatment providers and sober living environments.

"The success of SIP is due to the great collaboration between all the agencies involved," said Susan Bower, Director of Alcohol and Drug Services (ADS) for the County's Health and Human Services Agency. "We are delighted to see that the program has been a success and that our efforts are being recognized."

According to SIP research, between 2000 and 2003, a total of 308 homeless alcoholics had to be transported to two local hospitals costing nearly \$1.3 million, of which only \$176,715 (13 %) was recovered. A subsequent study revealed a 50 percent reduction in use of emergency resources by this population.

The SIP strategy consists of identifying individuals who have been sent to 4-hour sobering services more than four times in a 12-month period. Those individuals are arrested for public intoxication. When a guilty verdict is rendered and mandatory custody time imposed, clients are offered alcohol and drug treatment instead of incarceration. During their treatment, clients also receive case management, housing, and other services to support their treatment, and recovery efforts to help them obtain self-sufficiency.

On average, SIP program participants have spent nearly 16 years living on the street. Their primary drug of choice is alcohol followed by methamphetamine and marijuana. The Serial Inebriate Program can serve about 15 to 20 clients at a time.

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