



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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COUNTY CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES WINS NATIONAL AWARD ***County is First Organization to Receive The Karl Dennis: Unconditional Care Award***

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) has won a national award for its work on behalf of children with mental health issues.

The Karl Dennis: Unconditional Care Award is a national award presented annually to an individual or organization that has made a lasting contribution to children's mental health at the national level. For nearly three decades, Dennis was Executive Director of Kaleidoscope, Inc., one of the first programs in the United States to provide intensive in-home services to children in foster care.

The award had always gone to an individual and never to an organization. However, Karl Dennis was so impressed by the outstanding mental health programs the County of San Diego provides to children, he presented HHSA the award bearing his name.

"County Mental Health Services provides excellent services to children and families suffering from a mental illness," said Chairman Greg Cox, County of San Diego Board of Supervisors. "It's great to see that their outstanding work is being recognized with this prestigious award."

Some key services recognized by the award include:

- In 1998, the County received a grant to provide mental health services designed specifically for children, youth and their families. When the funding ran out, the County continued to provide, promote, and increase services showing it's commitment to better serve the needs of families.
- The inclusion of input from children, youth and families in a client's mental health care.

HHSA's Mental Health Services aids children and adolescents who are emotionally disturbed, and their families through a wide variety of services, from early intervention to residential services. Annually, about 17,000 children under 18 years of age take advantage of services provided through County-operated services or through the County's many mental health partners.

"This is a great achievement for the County," said Alfredo Aguirre, Director of HHSA's Mental Health Services. "Kudos to all our staff and many partners for providing family-centered services that meet the unique linguistic and cultural needs of the diverse clients we serve."

People suffering from depression or another mental illness are encouraged to call the County's Access and Crisis Line at (800) 479-3339.

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