



CALIFORNIA STATE TREASURER JOHN CHIANG

NEWS RELEASE

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Treasurer Chiang Funds Mental Health Programs

State grants pay for more than 1,200 new beds

SACRAMENTO – Thirty-seven California counties have opened or will open more than 1,200 new beds to treat mentally ill patients as part of an ambitious program administered by State Treasurer John Chiang.

The final grants were approved Thursday by the California Health Facilities Financing Authority, which is chaired by the treasurer. The Legislature passed the “Investment in Mental Health Wellness Act of 2013” to support new and expanded mental health services. They include beds for crisis residential treatment, crisis stabilization and peer-respite. The latter employs specially trained, recovered, former clients with experiences in the mental health system to provide client counseling and guidance.

An additional \$4 million in annual personnel funding also was allocated to staff newly established and equipped mobile crisis support teams.

“California is experiencing dramatic growth in mental illness cases that often go untreated until a crisis requires a patient be admitted to a hospital emergency room, a costly intervention,” said Treasurer Chiang. “These grants will allow county health officials to offer more effective, more efficient and more economical care in smaller, state-of-the-art facilities.”

The announcement of the awards comes at a fitting time: the tail end of National Mental Health Awareness Month.

The 2013 legislation earmarked \$142.5 million in competitively awarded grants to counties, awarded in five rounds over the past three years. The final round winners were named Thursday. The program is slated to expire on June 30.

The fifth-round help from the State Treasurer’s Office couldn’t have come at a better time, said Erik Riera, director of mental health and substance abuse services for Santa Cruz County.

Part of the state funding will help pay for the purchase of a building to replace rented quarters that no longer were available. “We couldn’t have cut it closer,” he said. “Now we have a permanent home” and can afford to operate in a high-cost, coastal county.”

The state grant will help San Bernardino County “expand and increase access to community-based behavioral health crisis services,” said CaSonya Thomas, the local program director. The result, she stressed, will offer “relevant alternatives to hospitalization and incarceration.”

Read this press release in Spanish.

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