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MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES IN ALAMEDA COUNTY
Recent Tragedies Warrant Reminder of Mental Health Services in Alameda County

August 15, 2014 (Oakland, CA) – The high profile suicide of beloved Bay Area resident Robin Williams has refocused attention on mental illness and depression. Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in the United States, accounting for the deaths of approximately 30,000 Americans each year¹.

From 2006-2008, Alameda County had 362 suicides, or 7.7 per 100,000 residents.² Under the Affordable Care Act, health plans through Covered California must now cover preventive services like depression screening for adults and behavioral assessments for children. According to the National Institute of Health, many people with clinical depression never seek the help of a professional, yet the majority can get better with treatment. Alameda County's Behavioral Health Care Services has an extensive local suicide prevention program that includes access to a 24 hour suicide prevention hotline, grief counseling, senior and teen counseling, and community education www.crisissupport.org. The *Know The Signs* statewide suicide prevention campaign is another resource at www.suicideispreventable.org.

Teens can text "safe" to 839863 from 4:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. seven days per week, and correspond about mental health issues ranging from stress, anxiety, depression, relationships, or suicide. Teens will be connected to a local counselor to talk about what's on their minds via text message. Other resources include Mental Health Association of Alameda County <http://www.mhaac.org/> and PEERS <http://www.peersnet.org>.

Depression is not the only mental illness that can lead to death. On the same day as Williams' death, Ezell Ford, an unarmed 24 year old African American, known by police to have had what they refer as "mental problems" and "complications", was fatally shot by law enforcement in Los Angeles. To prevent tragedies like this, Alameda County Health Care Services Agency's (HCSA) School-Based Behavioral Health Initiative was formed in 2009 through the Center for Healthy Schools and Communities. This programming can prevent school-based violence and reduce the base rate of aggressive problems in an average school by 25 to 33 percent.³ "Integrating restorative justice, improving school climate, and addressing the social-emotional needs of Alameda County youth while they are in our school systems sets them on a trajectory to be physically and mentally healthy as adults," said Alex Briscoe, HCSA Director.

For more information on the mental health benefits in the Affordable Care Act visit, http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/2013/mental/rb_mental.cfm

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¹ <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars>

² Alameda County Vital Statistics Files 2006-2008

³ <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/overview.aspx?topicId=28>