

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MEETING DATE: April 20, 2005

SUBJECT: NCACC – Outstanding Program Award

ATTACHMENTS: Yes

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

Henderson County has been awarded an Outstanding County Program Award from the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners for our Mental Health Maintenance of Effort grant program. A representative from NCACC will be at the meeting to present the award.



North Carolina Association of County Commissioners

Mailing Address: P. O. Box 1488, Raleigh, NC 27602-1488

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Application for Outstanding County Program Awards

County (if multi-county entry, list all): Henderson County Government

Submitted by: David E. Nicholson Title: County Manager

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Please see the memo on **AWARDS PROGRAM RULES, CATEGORIES AND CRITERIA BEFORE SUBMITTING YOUR ENTRY. THERE IS NO LIMIT ON THE NUMBER OF ENTRIES FROM EACH COUNTY OR REGION.** Please fax your entry to (919) 733-1065 (attn: Todd McGee) or mail it to: NCACC, PO Box 1488, Raleigh, NC 27602-1488. You can also e-mail the Microsoft Word document to todd.mcgee@ncacc.org. Entries must be received by **Friday, Jan. 28, 2005.**

Project Title: Mental Health Maintenance of Effort Funds Grant Program

Category: Human Services

Please type in the following information or attach a separate document (no more than two typed pages):

1. **Project/Program summary:** Briefly summarize the project's history, purpose, timeline and budget.

One of the major features of the mental health reform legislation is the planned reduction of beds in state mental institutions. Although the planned reduction will take several years to complete, its impacts are already being felt in Henderson County, as well as across the entire state. Local response to mental health emergencies has been an ongoing issue for years. The reform of the mental health system has compounded these issues. Specifically, Henderson County has experienced an increase in the number of psychiatric patients being processed through local hospital emergency rooms, an increase in the number of transports of psychiatric patients by the Sheriff's Department and Emergency Medical Services, and an increase in the number of psychiatric patients being diverted into the County's Detention Facility.

As a general rule, state law requires that each County maintain its levels of funding from year to year for human service activities, including mental health services, in its community. This regulation is commonly referred to as "maintenance of effort" or "maintenance of effort funds." Prior to becoming a member of a regional mental health local management entity (LME), Henderson County directly funded a local mental health service provider. A major question as to how future maintenance of effort funds would be allocated arose after becoming a member of the LME. The County Manager's staff developed a plan that called for the solicitation of grant applications from mental health service providers. It was indicated that special consideration would be given to grant applicants that addressed mental health emergency management/crisis stabilization (as discussed in Paragraph One).

Grant applications (see attached application form) were made available to mental health service providers in mid-September 2004. Applications were due from service providers no later than November 1, 2004

and funding decisions were made on November 15, 2004. In total, \$528,342 in maintenance of effort funds were awarded to three different mental health service providers/programs. These funds are being used to train public school staff in crisis response, establish a therapy/jail diversion program for delinquent or undisciplined adolescent girls, and to develop programs that will increase access to the mental health system. It should be noted that the bottom line purpose of these programs, both directly and indirectly, is to get persons needing mental health services the proper help and divert them from law enforcement, emergency rooms, and detention facilities. Each grant recipient was required to enter into a performance agreement that will ensure certain predetermined benchmarks are met (see attached performance agreements).

2. **Innovation:** Why is this program unique? How does it differ from similar projects?

Staff research and analysis has shown that there are no other grant program like this in North Carolina. The purpose of mental health reform is to bring service level and access decisions to the local and individual level. It is clear that this project has taken state-mandated funds and placed them into a program that allows for spending decisions to be made based on the unique needs of Henderson County.

3. **Project Effort and Difficulty:** How well did the program use available resources, given the limitations on such resources? What obstacles or challenges has to be overcome? How was this done?

Given the magnitude of the issues surrounding mental health emergencies and the limited amount of funds available for addressing these issues, all available resources were allocated in the best manner possible. As can be seen through the attached performance agreements, the local community is getting an extremely large “bang for its buck.”

No notable obstacles or challenges were encountered with this project.

4. **Collaboration:** How did the project involve collaboration with other agencies, jurisdictions, non-profits, businesses, etc.? How well was this collaboration achieved?

Collaboration was a key to the successful implementation of this project. At the onset, there was a great deal of collaboration with local law enforcement, hospitals, and emergency service providers to determine the specific needs of the community in terms of mental health emergency services. Once grants were awarded on-going collaboration in direct relation to this project was initiated with the Henderson County Public School System, the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and Mountain Laurel Community Services. Throughout the process, collaboration with Western Highlands Network (LME) – representing the counties of Mitchell, Yancey, Madison, Buncombe, Rutherford, Polk, Transylvania, and Henderson – was key. This high-level and deeply involved level of collaboration was achieved through both formal and informal processes including meetings, networking, and other discussion driven interaction.

5. **Ability to replicate project:** Can this project be duplicated in other counties? What could counties do to minimize obstacles and problems?

This project can easily be replicated in other counties. In fact, one county has already duplicated the project and another has inquired as to the specifics of the project. The counties within Western Highlands Network have been leaders in mental health reform. Every county in the state could use this process to distributed maintenance of effort funds based on local needs.

In order to minimize obstacles and problems, counties should take the time to evaluate local needs in terms in mental health services prior to developing a grant-based program.