

I am writing to recruit your support in ensuring both that family voice is heard at the state and local levels and that families and youth can access an important therapeutic service.

I am the mother of a child whose mental illness led us into the scary maze of county and state agencies trying to find treatment and services. I am also the family representative on the Emily Q Settlement Team, which is working at the state and county level to improve the delivery of Therapeutic Behavior Services (TBS) to youth and families in California.

TBS is an important one-on-one service available to children and youth with full-scope Medi-Cal and mental illness symptoms/behaviors that put them at risk of being removed from their homes and communities and placed in high-security facilities. The TBS coaches work with the youth in a very focused way to help them change those target behaviors to be able to stay in their homes, schools, and communities.

The Emily Q Settlement Team is led by Special Master, Rick Saletta, and leaders of the California Departments of Mental Health and Health Care Services.

For a very useful website, go to:

http://www.dmh.ca.gov/Services_and_Programs/Children_and_Youth/EPSTDT.asp. You will find up-to-date information on TBS, child/youth eligibility, and info on what YOUR county is doing to provide this service to its children and youth.

The Emily Q Settlement Team and its colleagues developed a Nine-Point Plan, approved by a federal judge, that mandated that the state/county mental health departments and programs increase access to TBS, create a best practices manual, support multiagency coordination and cooperation (including Juvenile Justice, Education, and Social Services), create a statewide TBS coach training program, and MOST IMPORTANTLY, specifies outreach to families and youth to inform them and ask for their input to improve the delivery and use of TBS.

Family voice is a key component of the Plan.

So here is why I am contacting you:

- We want to spread the word to youth and families around the state about the outreach effort for TBS – to make sure they know what TBS is and how it might help their children, how they can get updated information from the website on the service, and how to get support if they are having trouble accessing TBS from their county. Check out the TBS website (listed above) for info.
- We want youth and families to have a voice at the local level on how TBS is made accessible, and how it is performed with best practices. This is an important part of effective TBS delivery, and helps ensure that counties are held accountable. We are asking families and youth to contact their local mental health departments and ask to be invited to the TBS meetings being held in their county. Here is a contact list created by the State Department of Mental Health to help you contact your local department:

http://www.dmh.ca.gov/Services_and_Programs/Children_and_Youth/default.asp

April 2010

- We want to get families and youth directly involved in training TBS staff. The State and its contractors will provide trainings tailored for the counties. They want to include family and youth with TBS experience in those trainings.
- We want to find families and youth willing to share their TBS experiences with us, to help us keep improving the service and its delivery. I participate in the monthly Emily Q Settlement Team meetings to represent your voice– please contact me to share your perspective and experiences!

If you or someone you know are interested in being part of the family voice bringing the best therapeutic services to California families, PLEASE email or call me with your contact information (email address or phone number, and county where you live). I will make sure that your voice is heard. I will ensure your privacy, if you feel more comfortable providing input to the Emily Q Settlement Team that way.

Let me know if there are other family advocates or organizations who I should contact to include in this process.

We can work together to make things better for our families.

Best regards,

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