

NEWS!

For release: Tuesday, January 25, 2011

Contact Greg Markell: greg@lakeadamhs.org or 440 350 2193

ADAMHS BOARD APPROVES FUNDING TO RESTORE AFTER-HOURS SERVICES FOR VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS

Painesville, OH – At its regular January meeting Monday night the Lake County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board voted to allocate funding that restores after-hours services to victims of violent crime through a new partnership with the Lake County Prosecutor's Victim Assistance Program.

Established by Ohio statute, the ADAMHS Board is responsible for planning, funding and evaluating Lake County's network of mental health and recovery services.

The Prosecutor's Victim Assistance Program offers support, information, and guidance to victims of sexual assault, domestic abuse and other violent crimes. Trained Victim Advocates are deployed to hospital emergency departments and police departments to help victims and their families cope with the trauma, understand and deal with medical examinations and other procedures, and connect with resources. Victim Advocates are also sometimes asked to accompany law enforcement officers to homes when a death notification is necessary.

For decades, the program team was available on an around-the-clock basis, but after-hours services were eliminated last November – the result of economy-related budget cuts within the Prosecutor's Office. The ADAMHS grant will restore the program to its 24/7/365 status effective February 14 via the creation of a new ADAMHS Victim Advocate Team that will handle the after-hours calls.

more...

Lake County Prosecuting Attorney Charles Coulson says his office tried valiantly but unsuccessfully to avoid the program cuts last year. “I was sick over this decision,” he recalls. “This program provides incredibly important help to people who have been violated – sometimes in horrific ways. But our financial realities simply didn’t leave us any choice.”

A letter from Coulson delivered the sad news of the cuts to area hospitals and law enforcement agencies in the fall of 2010. When a copy of that letter found its way to the desk of Lake County ADAMHS Board Executive Director Kim Fraser, she called program director Peggy Grant. “I wasn’t at all sure if we could help at that point, but I did want to at least learn more about the nature of the gaps that resulted from the cuts and explore the possibility of our system getting involved” Fraser said.

Fraser, Grant, and Coulson met and discussed the program’s realities, needs, and importance. “I came away from that meeting feeling that there might just be a way for the ADAMHS system and the Prosecutor’s Office to work collaboratively toward a solution,” Fraser said.

Internal brainstorming among the ADAMHS management team followed, and a plan began to take shape. “We knew that there were people working at ADAMHS agencies who would be very qualified to help provide these services,” Fraser said. “So I contacted our agency directors and asked them to help us get the word out. The response was encouraging. We also knew that we had engineered new efficiencies into our system that might let us squeeze out a little – not much but perhaps enough – funding to fill this need.”

On January 12, a full day victim assistance training session led by Grant took place at the ADAMHS offices in Painesville. Twenty-one people – most of them counselors, case managers and other direct service providers from ADAMHS agencies – completed the training. Pending final approval by the leadership group, those individuals will comprise the new ADAMHS Victim Advocate Team which will mesh gears with the Prosecutor’s Office Victim Assistance initiative effective February 14.

more...

“I’m proud of this collaboration,” Coulson said. “Crime doesn’t just impact people on a nine-to-five basis, so the loss of those after-hours services was huge to this program. Anyone who has been the victim of a serious crime can tell you how vital it is to have someone at your side to help you get through the initial shock and anger, and connect you with resources that can help you start to heal and recover from the experience. This is a big win for the people of Lake County.”

More information on the ADAMHS Board and its network of service providers is available at www.HelpThatWorks.us.

###