

April 12, 2019

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors  
County Administration Building  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Honorable Supervisors,

My name is Dr. Catherine Horton. My Doctorate Degree is in psychoanalysis, and I have treated mentally ill patients with varying success.

When I joined the Board of Families ACT! I was dismayed, sometimes appalled, as I listened to the experiences a mother or father had had when their son or daughter suffered a psychotic break and was arrested and incarcerated. They knew that their son/daughter needed instead to be in a place where they could stay and get treatment, ideally in Santa Barbara County. Too many are suffering horribly in a jail isolation cell, often waiting for a state hospital bed.

On the upside, we are aware of the collaborative spirit that is bringing the County, our hospitals and other stakeholders together to address the epidemic of mental illness and decades of unjust policies.

Families ACT! is working with the Jail Health Oversight Coordinator, the Community Corrections Partnership, and the Stepping Up initiative to find solutions to the dilemma of mentally ill people being housed, by default in our jails.

It has been gratifying to see the County recognize the need to divert people with mental health and behavioral health conditions from our criminal justice system and to see the Sheriff's and Behavioral Wellness departments provide leadership in addressing our County's need for a better system of care.

However, at last count, 60% of our County Jail population had sought, or received mental health and/or substance abuse treatment at some point in the past. If we provided a treatment bed instead of a jail cell even one out of six of those, we would need approximately 100 treatment beds.

Our hope is that this Board will be able to move the needle forward on what we consider to be the most important remaining gaps in our continuum of care for individuals with a range of behavioral health disorders and that is, the lack of a sufficient number of inpatient beds and state-of-the-art-residential treatment beds.



Dr. Catherine Horton  
Families ACT! Board Member