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California Counties Faulted in not providing Bedell Proactive Treatment
Unimplemented law might have prevented Pentagon tragedy

Arlington, VA, March 7, 2010

"John Patrick Bedell did not have to rock the nation's sense of calm and security by meeting his death on the Pentagon steps" Jim Pavle, Executive Director of the Treatment Advocacy Center said today. "Like many of our citizens with mental illness, Bedell was just too sick to stay in treatment on his own and another preventable tragedy occurred."

"California has a law that could have prevented Bedell's death and the officers' injuries," said Carla Jacobs, California Board Member of the Treatment Advocacy Center. "Unfortunately, neither of the counties where Bedell lived has implemented it."

Since its passage by the California State Legislature in 2002, Laura's Law has been implemented in two counties only-Los Angeles and Nevada County. Laura's Law allows counties to place ill individuals with severe mental illness into a court-ordered community based treatment program known as Assisted Outpatient Treatment. Each County Board of Supervisors must pass a resolution to use the law in their specific county.

Eligibility for Assisted Outpatient Treatment is based upon the individual's past history of hospitalization or arrests. It allows a community to intervene with help before that person is in danger or becomes dangerous.

California's Laura's Law was modeled after Kendra's Law in New York. A recent independent evaluation in New York found that for those in the Kendra's Law program:

* 74 percent fewer experienced homelessness;
* 77 percent fewer experienced psychiatric hospitalization, reducing the most expensive form of psychiatric treatment;
* 83 percent fewer experienced arrest; and
* 87 percent fewer experienced incarceration.

"Requiring a separate act of implementation by each county to establish Laura's Law has resulted in a political stalemate and discrimination against those individuals who are too ill to accept or access treatment in the current community mental health system," said Carla Jacobs, "Laura's Law will save counties money by stopping the expensive revolving door of failed psychiatric hospitalizations, homelessness, arrests and death."

The Treatment Advocacy Center is dedicated to eliminating barriers to timely and humane treatment for the mentally ill. Current federal and state policies hinder treatment for psychiatrically ill individuals who are most at risk for homelessness,

arrest or suicide. An estimated 1.5 million individuals with severe mental illness are not being treated at any given time in the United States. The Treatment Advocacy Center is a catalyst to achieve proper balance in judicial, legislative and policy decisions that affect the lives of those suffering from serious brain disorders.

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