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**Travis County Mental Health System Selected for Nationwide Project**

**April 27, 2010** – Austin, TX – Austin Travis County Integral Care was recently chosen to participate in a nationwide pilot program designed to reduce reliance of interventions with law enforcement officers for psychiatric emergency responses and interventions. The goal of the Performance Improvement Project is to demonstrate how mental health systems can take responsibility for citizens with serious mental illnesses who have multiple crises that lead to police involvement and will be piloted through the Mental Health Task Force (MHTF), formerly known as the Mayor’s Mental Health Task Force Monitoring Committee.

Five sites—Travis County, Texas, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Wayne County, Michigan, Multnomah County, Oregon, and Westchester County, New York—were selected by the Judge David L. Bazelon Center of Washington, DC to participate for their long-standing efforts to provide coordinated community services and supports that help avert psychiatric emergencies that lead to law enforcement contacts. These sites are also interested in pursuing policy reforms that support better outcomes for individuals and improved accountability for government investments in mental health and other human services.

In collaboration with four other sites from across the country, and under the coordination of the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, ATCIC will build upon their accomplishments and collaborate with key stakeholders, such as the Travis County Psychiatric Stakeholders’ Group, the Travis County Crisis Implementation Committee, the Integrated Care Collaboration, Central Health, the Community Action Network and the Children and Youth Mental Health Planning Partnership, to further improve the

effectiveness of community mental health services, especially those provided to people with serious mental illnesses in Travis County. The Bazelon Center will provide partial funding for three years to accomplish this goal. Additional funding and support will be provided by the City of Austin, St. David's Foundation, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health and Travis County.

"We are extremely eager to begin to take a look at what works and what fails in our system to provide the necessary services for people with serious mental illnesses in our community," said Susan Stone, executive coordinator for the MHTF. The Performance Improvement Project builds on current monitoring processes and will work to improve the quality of our mental health services.

"Our involvement in the project shows that we are on the forefront of addressing this national problem and that we are invested in providing the most cost-effective and most successful services to assist people with serious mental illnesses. The results from this project will improve the health and vitality of our community," said David Evans, executive director of ATCIC.

"We look forward to involving the many important local stakeholders in this initiative to better our community. The fact is, when we reach the point where members of our community who have serious mental illnesses interact with law enforcement, our system has failed them – and the community. Our citizens deserve better," said Stone. Find more information about the program at [bazelon.org/](http://bazelon.org/) or at [mmhtfmc.org](http://mmhtfmc.org). This week, the MHTF will be presenting to the Austin City Council and will present to Travis County officials next month.

*Formed by former Austin Mayor Will Wynn, the Mayor's Mental Health Task Force Monitoring Committee was a broad based collaborative appointed in May of 2005. In 2010, the committee shifted its efforts in measuring system change, to effectuating system change over the next two years and is now known as the Mental Health Task Force (MHTF). An **Indicator Improvement Initiative** has been convened to carry out this work comprised of local expert panels strategizing about issues related to five identified behavioral health community indicators. For more information, visit [mmhtfmc.org](http://mmhtfmc.org). The MHTF is a subcommittee of the Austin Travis County Integral Care Board of Trustees.*

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