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## **CBHDA EMBRACES GROWING TRENDS IN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WHILE PLANNING 2018 CONFERENCE**

Sacramento, CA— The County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California, building from last year’s successful Behavioral Health Policy Forum, is working diligently to deliver yet another exciting conference. This year’s Forum, scheduled December 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco, CA, is already shaping up to be game-changing.

Some of the topics CBHDA will be discussing include:

**If It Bleeds, It Leads: Facing the Media’s Scare-Tactics:** Fear-based news preys on our collective anxiety and comes at a cost to our mental and physical health. This discussion examines the cause and effect of fostering fear as the economic engine for the news business, and what it’s like to live in a world where everyone is aiming to be the next click-bait viral story, regardless of the ethical lines crossed to get there.

**Being Honest about Housing First:** Although many communities have begun to embrace low-barrier, housing-first strategies, Californians with mental health and/or substance use needs still face significant challenges in accessing stable housing. This discussion will examine persistent barriers to housing for people with substance use disorders, mental illness, and histories of criminal justice system involvement. Panelists will highlight promising practices for implementing Housing First in ways that can meet the diverse needs of vulnerable individuals.

**Adventures in Harm Reduction: Common sense, evidence-based medicine, and the long arm of the law:** From supervised injection sites to moderate marijuana use, “radical” harm reduction strategies are gaining traction in California and other states. Do these and other controversial approaches constitute safe and efficacious “treatment” for substance use disorders? Should federal and state laws be changed to accommodate those who may benefit from therapies that aren’t strictly legal? This discussion will investigate 21<sup>st</sup>-century harm reduction practices for people who misuse drugs or alcohol.

**Spiking Suicide Rates: A National Health Epidemic:** Suicide rates have increased in almost every state in the past two decades, with California showing a 15% increase from 1999 to 2016. This discussion will attempt to uncover what’s behind this spike by exploring the anthropological, epidemiological, cultural and societal factors to suicide. Can Counties do more to prevent the continued rise, and what else can we do to improve suicide prevention?

**Treating Away Homelessness:** While California’s affordable housing crisis continues to grow, so does the homeless population, leaving many to wonder what else can be done to fight this rising problem, and if fixing the housing crisis is enough.

This discussion will address the array of factors that contribute to a surging homeless population, all while asking the hard question: “Can you treat away homelessness?”

“We are excited about the level of enthusiasm for our 2018 conference,” said Tom Renfree, Interim Executive Director of CBHDA. “CBHDA looks forward to bringing together experts in both mental health and substance use disorders, elected officials and staff for a substantial discussion of real-world solutions to key issues facing Behavioral Healthcare in California.”

Registration for CBHDA’s 2019 Behavioral Health Policy Forum is open. To register, click [here](#). Press passes for the Forum will be made available.

*The County Behavioral Health Directors Association is a statewide non-profit association that represents all 58 county behavioral health directors and 2 city mental health programs (Berkeley and Tri-City) which is dedicated to advocating for public policy and services on behalf of people who are living with substance use disorders and mental illness.*

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