

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, February 5, 2016

CONTACT: Mark Freedman, Interim TMBHO Administrator, (360) 867-2558 or
freedmm@co.thurston.wa.us

Access to mental health and substance abuse services to get easier

New regional organization seeks to reduce reliance on jails and emergency departments

OLYMPIA – Thurston and Mason counties announce the implementation of the Thurston Mason Behavioral Health Organization (TMBHO). The new Thurston Mason Behavioral Health Board will oversee and manage integrated state-funded mental health and chemical dependency programs serving Thurston and Mason counties.

In 2014 the State Legislature passed [Senate Bill 6312](#), which directed Washington State Department of Social and Health Services to change how it purchases mental health and chemical dependency services. Under the existing system, services are purchased from two separate systems: Regional Support Networks and counties. Beginning April 1, 2016, these services will be purchased by regionally operated Behavioral Health Organizations (BHOs) through a managed-care structure.

“We are excited for this opportunity to advance community health to a new level, and for our partnership with Mason County,” said Thurston County Commissioner Bud Blake, who will serve as Chairman for the BHO. “This new organization allows us to combine mental health and substance abuse services that are greatly needed in the community.”

The organization’s mission is to create seamless access to publicly funded mental health and chemical dependency services, including services for those with both mental health and substance abuse (co-occurring) disorders. TMBHO aims to reduce gaps and provide more efficient services. A priority will be to reduce the use of county jail and hospital emergency departments for individuals needing ongoing behavioral health care, including the homeless and those needing treatment services to move beyond homelessness.

“The Mason County Board of Commissioners looks forward to having a more direct role in planning and implementing mental health and substance use treatment services for our community,” said Vice Chair and Mason County Commissioner Terri Jeffreys. “We appreciate the innovative work Thurston County Commissioners have provided to this point, and look forward to this new, collaborative partnership and the positive impacts it will have for our citizens.”

Thurston County Commissioner Cathy Wolfe will also serve as on the board of directors. Mark Freedman will serve as Interim Administrator for the TMBHO.

For more information about the Thurston Mason Behavioral Health Organization contact Mark Freedman at (360) 867-2558 or freedmm@co.thurston.wa.us.

-30-