



The Priority Center
Ending the Cycle of Generational Trauma

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THE PRIORITY CENTER GEARS UP FOR NATIONAL MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK

[Mental Health Resources](#) Now Online for People in Need

SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA – Sept. 25, 2020 – With [National Mental Illness Awareness Week](#) set for October 4-10, [The Priority Center](#) in Santa Ana, California, is placing additional focus on its programs for people experiencing mental health crises and challenges. Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) is an annual event sponsored by the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Originally known as the Child Abuse Prevention Center, The Priority Center broadened its mission last year to include programs and services for both children and adults. The nonprofit organization is dedicated to breaking the generational cycle of trauma of all kinds – including mental health traumas which can have a lifelong effect.

As part of its support for MIAW, The Priority Center is offering [free suicide prevention, child abuse prevention and other resource information](#) to anyone in need at www.theprioritycenter.org.

According to Lisa Fujimoto, executive director, “The Priority Center is the only nonprofit organization in Orange County that offers in-home crisis stabilization for both adults and children. During the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to follow federal, state and local health guidelines and stop all in-home services and in-person community outreach. We adopted a distance model using phone and video conferencing as well as webinars instead of in-person meetings.

“It hasn’t been ideal, but we couldn’t allow the outbreak to completely shut down our ability to serve people in need – especially when so many are experiencing isolation, job loss and other situations that can trigger a mental health crisis.”

The Priority Center’s Adult In-Home Crisis Stabilization Program serves individuals who are experiencing suicidal or homicidal ideation and are in danger of hospitalization or out-of-home

placement. The adult crisis program receives referrals from the County of Orange's Crisis Assessment Team and crisis stabilization units. The program received its first referral in August 2018.

Over the past 24 months, the center has had to expand its staff and services in order to accommodate the deepening need. From August 2019 through June 2020, The Priority Center experienced a 45 percent increase both in referrals and admissions compared to the same period August 2018 through June 2019.

The center's Children's In-Home Crisis Stabilization Program serves suicidal and homicidal children between the ages of 5-18. The child could have active suicide attempts, suicidal or homicidal thoughts and plans, or self-harming behavior. Many times, the young person is also self-medicating. The program provides short-term, in-home therapy (individual and group), case management and mental health rehabilitation with a focus on maintaining family stabilization and preventing hospitalization.

The children's program receives referrals from county agencies and hospitals. According to Fujimoto, referrals to the children's program were down from March through July of this year, primarily because children were out of school. School can be a major stressor for children, she said. "However, referrals have picked up over the past several weeks as children have had to adapt to distance learning or return to the classroom."

The Priority Center's Connected Care program, which is offered to people who have completed either the adult or the children's crisis program, was launched in August 2019. Over the past 12 months, the Connected Care program managed more than 1,330 calls and visits to people needing post-crisis assistance.

The Priority Center's core Outreach and Engagement program provides resources, education and awareness services throughout the community, including schools. The program covers such topics as growth and development, bullying, anger and stress management, healthy communications and healthy relationships to support emotional and social well-being. As with the other programs, Outreach and Engagement had to convert to web-based communications but has recently started providing resource information in person at food distribution sites.

The Priority Center also received some funding from the CARES Act to help its clients adversely affected by COVID-19. Through this funding, the center is able to provide assistance with rent, utilities, groceries and other basic needs, as well as transportation.

For more information about The Priority Center or its crisis prevention services, please visit www.theprioritycenter.org or call 714-543-4333.

The Priority Center

Established in 1983, The Priority Center (formerly known as the Child Abuse Prevention Center) serves at-risk adults, families and children in crisis to prevent and break the generational cycle of trauma and abuse. The center matches individuals and families at risk of trauma with professional caseworkers who work with them directly within their homes. The Priority Center also works with adolescents and adults in crisis who need intervention services dealing with a mental illness and suicidal ideations.

According to a report by the Orange County Health Care Agency, suicide in the county is at an all-time high with a rate of 10.9 people per 100,000 people. The Priority Center teams work with adolescents and adults experiencing suicidal ideation and self-harm. ***The Priority Center is the only nonprofit organization in Orange County offering in-home crisis stabilization for children, adults and families.*** The center employs 123 professional staff members, two-thirds of whom provide direct services to individuals in need. In 2019, the center's programs served more than 6,000 individuals in crisis and families. The corporate offices for the center are located at 1940 E. Deere Ave., Suite 100, in Santa Ana, Calif.

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