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For Immediate Release

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District Attorney Summer Stephan Brings Community Together to Tackle Mental Health Issues, Homelessness in the Criminal Justice System

Symposium Today Will Identify Gaps, Develop Effective Plan of Action

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) today brought together stakeholders from across the region for a Mental Health Symposium, the first of-its-kind for San Diego County to address the intersection of mental health issues and homelessness in the criminal justice system. On average, more than 30 percent of inmates in San Diego County jails take medication for a mental health issue. In San Diego's 2017 Annual Point-in-Time-Count, nearly 40 percent of the homeless population reported instances of mental health issues while on the street.

The symposium will review current resources, identify gaps and needs, and prioritize responses to develop a collaborative and effective action plan. Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey will deliver a keynote address at the symposium, which will be held at the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation.

EDITORS: DA Summer Stephen is available for interviews today from 12:30 p.m. to 1:00 at the Jacobs Center, 404 Euclid Avenue. Contact steve.walker@sdca.org

“This is a priority for me. We need to make sure we’re not working in silos and instead are sharing information and resources across our county and community systems so we can coordinate a plan to address the complex issues of the many individuals with mental illness who intersect with our criminal justice courts, jails and with homelessness,” said District Attorney Summer Stephan. **“A great example of how we’re addressing this issue is ‘[PROGRESS](#),’ a program for mild to moderate mentally ill offenders who are transitioned to a facility outside the jail to promote healthy reintegration into the community. Other coordinated programs we’ve put in place are Behavioral Health Court, and Veterans Treatment Court which address the underlying mental health issues of defendants and**

provide wrap around services to keep them out of jail and out of the criminal justice system.”

The Symposium will utilize **Sequential Intercept Mapping**, a dynamic, interactive tool for developing criminal justice-mental health partnerships used by communities to assess their resources, gaps and opportunities at each of five “intercept points.” The mapping exercise aims to identify potential opportunities for diversion, or alternative justice and behavioral health interventions for people with mental illness and co-occurring disorders, within each of the five intercepts. This is a model that has been successfully used in many other counties.

The symposium will also include an update on San Diego County’s ‘[Stepping Up Initiative](#),’ a national strategy involving more than 200 government agencies across the country. Stepping Up allows the County to collaborate with experts and national partners on best practices to reduce the number of people with mental illness in jails.

County agencies participating in the DA’s Mental Health Symposium include the San Diego County Superior Court, San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency, San Diego County Sheriff’s Department, San Diego County Public Defender’s Office, San Diego County Board of Supervisors, San Diego Police Department, San Diego City Attorney’s Office and the Council of State Government.

According to the National Association of Counties (NACo), an estimated 2 million people with serious mental illness are admitted to jails across the nation each year, and about three quarters of them also have substance abuse disorders.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office

The San Diego County DA’s Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue justice and support victims daily across San Diego County. DA Summer Stephan has devoted her life to protecting children and families and providing justice to the voiceless and most vulnerable. She is a national leader in the fight against sexual exploitation and human trafficking, and has served as a Deputy District Attorney in San Diego County for 28 years.

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