



November 14, 2013

Lee County Florida Legislative Delegation
c/o State Representative Matt Caldwell, District 79
15191 Homestead Road, Building A
Lehigh Acres, FL 33971

As you know, SalusCare, Inc. was created when two long-time providers of prevention and treatment services combined forces on July 1st, 2013. SalusCare represents over 75 years of service to the substance abuse and mental health needs of the citizens of Southwest Florida, a commitment that was strengthened when the two Boards chose to combine and create SalusCare. With the goal of increasing access to and quality of care provided, we are encouraged by the early returns outlined below:

- For the first three months of FY 2013-14, there was a **greater than 10% increase in numbers of people served** at our Evans and Ortiz Avenue campuses compared to the same time in the prior year.
- SalusCare's Community Action Team (CAT) was serving over 40 area youth and families with intensive, community based services with the goal of **allowing these youth to remain in the community rather than be placed in expensive, out of home placements.**
- SalusCare has six trained staff to offer Mental Health First Aid, the **strategy chosen to help identify and intervene when individuals have undetected mental illnesses in our community.** In addition, we sponsored six Lee County school staff being trained as part of the effort to reduce the risk of a Newtown type tragedy occurring in our community.

Our Boards chose to move forward and merge our companies into one as part of our plan to better serve our community and its behavioral health needs. This was the number one guiding principle that they considered in moving forward.

We request your support as members the local delegation and members of the Florida Legislature, specifically in the following areas:

Sustain the \$675K for the Community Action Team (CAT) which is achieving early success in helping young people and their families in a cost effective manner. CAT was funded due to the extraordinary efforts of Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto during the last session. We ask the entire delegation to support sustaining this much needed and valuable resource.

FORMERLY

Lee Mental Health



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Fort Myers, Florida 33901
239.332.6937
239.332.6985 FAX
www.SalusCareFlorida.org

Support increased funding for mental health and substance abuse treatment services, as Florida's base funding ranks as one of the lowest commitments nationally of state resources to these critical areas. In addition, rates used for state contracts have not changed for over 15 years, while the costs of doing business continues to mount, thus reducing the number of Floridian's receiving critically needed care.

Strengthen the state's investment in prevention and treatment services for both substance use disorders and mental illnesses, which are treatable, chronic, brain-based disorders. For too long Florida has paid for the consequences of untreated diseases in our criminal justice, child welfare and healthcare systems. Please invest in front-end, problem solving strategies that our company can offer.

Thanks for your past support, and for your continued attention to this critical area for our state. You can make a difference, and we look forward to partnering with you this session.

Sincerely,



Kevin B, Lewis, MSW, CAP

Chief Executive Officer