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**CALIFORNIA HOSPITAL MEDICAL CENTER,  
DOWNTOWN CENTER BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT  
DEVELOP NEW PROGRAM FOR HOMELESS COMMUNITY**

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**Training Helps DCBID Ambassadors Spot Mental Illness,  
Provide Access to Treatment and Services**

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**LOS ANGELES** (August 3, 2000) – California Hospital Medical Center (CHMC) and the Downtown Center Business Improvement District (DCBID) today launched a groundbreaking pilot program to help members of the BID’s safety, ambassador and maintenance service teams to identify the mentally ill within Downtown’s homeless community and provide them access to treatment and other services.

“This new initiative is intended to serve as a pivotal component of the Downtown Center BID’s broader effort to address the plight of the homeless, as many as 75 percent of whom are estimated to suffer from mental illness,” said Randall K. Ely, DCBID’s chief operating officer. “We specifically sought out California Hospital to conduct this program with us because of its outstanding reputation for community outreach and its long tradition of concern for the indigent population.”

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Dr. C. Freeman, medical director of CHMC's Renew Program, a 13-bed psychiatric care facility for older adults, said, "We hope this program will help members of the DCBID's 'Purple Patrol,' who interact with homeless people on the streets, more easily identify those with mental illness, and have more understanding and compassion for them. It teaches them when and how to provide access to mental health services for these individuals.

### **Problem Widespread**

"The problem of mental illness and substance abuse among the homeless community is severe, not only in Downtown, but in many Los Angeles communities and across the nation," she continued. "Of the estimated 109,000 homeless people in the City of Los Angeles, a large majority is thought to be mentally ill or drug-dependent. The Downtown Center BID is taking the lead with this program to spot health problems among these individuals, and we believe they are the first in the area to do so."

### **BID A.C.T.I.O.N. Program**

The program is called BID A.C.T.I.O.N., which stands for **A**mbassador **C**ommunity **T**raining for **I**ntervention, **W**ellness, **O**utreach and **N**etworking. The course begins with 16 hours of education and training that focus on the following:

1. Recognizing signs of mental illness among the homeless community.
2. Providing culturally competent and compassionate interaction with the mentally ill.
3. Placing homeless and mentally ill individuals in contact with the services they may need to better serve them.
4. Respecting patient confidentiality in dealing with the mentally ill.

According to Ely, 36 members of the group's 'Purple Patrol' have been trained to date, and 80 are expected to participate by year's end. He stressed that team members do not make any type of medical diagnoses, and refer individuals

to treatment centers and other resources. He also emphasized that receipt of services by the mentally ill is completely voluntary. Individuals thought to have mental or other health issues, and who elect to accept services, will be assessed by CHMC's Renew Program team, and referred to treatment and other resources as appropriate.

### **Program's Second Phase**

BID A.C.T.I.O.N.'s second phase will involve a licensed mental health field worker making face-to-face contact on a regular basis with the homeless community, and offering those in need health care and other related services. The program's ultimate goal is to provide a continuum of care and resources to this population, and eventually transition them into temporary or permanent housing.

CHMC and the Downtown Center BID jointly developed the program. Course instructors include Dr. C. Freeman; Dr. Kendra Fleask Gorkitsky, a family practice/adolescent medicine physician and chair of CHMC's Bioethics Committee; Sybil Cross, PhD and RN; and Renew Program Director Maria Tomas.

Anna Yee, community outreach analyst for the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, said, "The BID-CMHC collaboration to help the homeless mentally ill is a sterling example of community partnership and a welcome signal to all those who are eager to make Downtown a thriving, productive and caring community."

The Downtown Center BID is a coalition of property owners united in their commitment to enhance the quality of life in Downtown Los Angeles. The organization aims to help the 65-block central business district--The Heart of the City--achieve its full potential. Nearly 250 property owners provide funds to the district via a special tax assessment. Further information on Downtown events and real estate opportunities is available at **[www.downtownla.com](http://www.downtownla.com)**.

BID A.C.T.I.O.N. Program/4-4-4

CHMC is a 313-bed private, non-profit acute care hospital that has been serving the downtown Los Angeles area since 1887. With this groundbreaking program, the hospital continues its 112-year commitment to making cost-effective healthcare available to, and improving the health and well-being, of our community by helping people help themselves.

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