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STATEWIDE NEWS RELEASE

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Jails to Receive Mental Health Consultation and Education

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 12, 2002) – A statewide training program to help jail personnel understand mental illness is included in Gov. Paul Patton's spending plan for this fiscal year.

The spending plan calls for \$275,000 this year for the education of jailers and jail staff on mental illness, suicide prevention and mental health consultation. Another \$275,000 is in the budget contemplated by the General Assembly for 2003-04.

"I'm proud to see our jails working hand in hand with our mental health agency and Justice Cabinet as we strive to improve training and services," Gov. Patton said.

"We are pleased to announce this funding to improve our system of providing for the mental health needs of individuals who come into contact with the criminal justice system," said Margaret Pennington, commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services. "We look forward to working with the Justice Cabinet in developing a training curriculum for jailers and jail staff on screening and responding to the needs of individuals with mental illness in jails."

The Division of Mental Health will provide training on a mental health curriculum specific to the jailers and their staff. Other funds will go to regional MH/MR Boards to assist with their costs of delivering the training and consulting with jail staff on these issues. These funds will be allocated to the regional boards based on the number of jail beds in each region.

The Criminal Justice/Behavioral Health Workgroup, formed by the House Bill 843 Commission created during the 2000 General Assembly to address mental health issues, is specifically charged to develop the curriculum needed for this initiative. When the curriculum is finalized, a "train-the-trainers" session will be hosted by the Department for Mental Health/Mental Retardation Services for the regional MH/MR boards' staff regarding the recommended curriculum. In addition, other training delivery options are being explored.

"The goal of the Criminal Justice /Behavioral Health Interface Workgroup is to ensure that this training provides jailers across the Commonwealth with critical information on suicide prevention, suicide risk management, as well as ways to identify individuals with behavioral health issues who may need intervention and/or treatment referrals as well as special in-house supervision," said Kim Allen, Executive Director of the Kentucky Criminal Justice Council.

Regional MH/MR board personnel will train jail staff in their area. Regions may choose to do a region wide training at a specific site, or they may take it individually to each jail. The curriculum will have the essential components that must be provided, but the MHMR boards may mold the training to meet other needs identified by their jails.

Mental health consultative support will be individually tailored to the needs of the jails in accordance with interagency agreements developed between the jails and the regional MH/MR boards.

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