

HUFFMAN ANNOUNCES HHS GRANTS FOR MENDONOMA HEALTH ALLIANCE

HHS ALLOCATES FUNDS FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES OPIOID RESPONSE, RURAL HEALTH NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

AUGUST 12, 2020

San Rafael, CA – Today, Representative Jared Huffman (D-San Rafael) shared the announcement that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is awarding a \$1 million federal grant to the Mendonoma Health Alliance (MHA) as a part of the agency's Rural Communities Opioid Response program. MHA also received additional funding through HHS for a 3-year Rural Health Network Development grant for 2020-2023 that totals \$898,645.

"I'm incredibly pleased to announce this funding for such an important group in our community. Opioid addiction is an epidemic that has been ravaging communities and taken too many lives," **said Rep. Huffman.** "Mendonoma Health Alliance's focus on wraparound health care services is a unique and effective asset to this geographically isolated community. I am grateful that this collaborative community-oriented organization is getting the support it needs to continue such important substance use prevention work and all they do to connect our region to vital community health resources."

The [Mendonoma Health Alliance \(MHA\)](#) was formed in 2016 by Coast Life Support District, Redwood Coast Medical Services, and St. Joseph's Health System. This integrated rural health network is focused on expanding access to, coordinating, and improving the quality of health care services in coastal northern Sonoma and southern Mendocino counties.

The [Rural Communities Opioid Response Program](#) is a multi-year federal initiative to address barriers to access in rural communities related to substance use disorder, including opioid use disorder. The Rural Health Network Development grant is designed to help fill gaps in community health resources. Mendonoma Health Alliance was one of 44 awardees and the only organization in California to receive this grant.

Statement from Micheline White, MHA Executive Director: "Mendonoma Health Alliance (MHA) is very excited to continue our work in addressing substance use disorder and opioid use disorder (SUD/OD) in our service area (Timber Cove CDP through Irish Beach). Substance and opioid misuse is abundantly prevalent in our isolated community but it's often silenced due to systemic and social stigmas created by a lack of education regarding how addiction occurs in the body and brain and why some communities are more predisposed to addiction than others. This grant award follows MHA's year-long planning grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), a branch of HHS, that funded MHA and its consortium partners to assess SUD/OD in our service area and to conduct research that would help us plan for the implementation and/or expansion of programs. The new grant award will fund MHA and its consortium partners over a 3-year period - from September 2020 to August 2023 - to expand access to behavioral health, addiction treatment services, peer recovery and family-support services, on-going needs assessments and research, and will help us continue our annual prevention education in all of our local schools. Additionally, the funding will help our consortium implement strategies to reduce opioid and substance overdose death rates and hospitalizations for communities like Gualala, Point Arena and Manchester, where rates for these occurrences have been the highest per capita in Mendocino County between 2017-2019.

"MHA's Board of Directors, staff and affiliates feel incredibly fortunate to be the recipients of an additional 3-year grant from HRSA to further our work with our Rural Health Network. The first three years of funding (July 2017-June 2020) were spent creating and solidifying MHA's infrastructure and developing new programs that support the patients of our Network partners, with a goal of assisting and educating individuals to make successful lifestyle changes that are impactful over time. The second round of funding will help us expand free community-wide health screening options, expand the types of health education available throughout our service area and address access to medical care in a variety of capacities.

"I would like to thank and acknowledge our Rural Communities Opioid Response consortium partners for recognizing the issues relating to SUD/OD in our communities and for making a commitment to doing better for, and providing more for, the residents of our community. Our consortium partners include Coast Life Support District (CLSD), Redwood Coast Medical Services (RCMS), Bright Heart Health,

Mendocino County Public Health and the county-wide Safe Rx Coalition, and the Mendocino County AIDS/Viral Hepatitis Network. I would also like to recognize the hard work and buy-in required on behalf of CLSD, RCMS and Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital to help ground MHA and make it a thriving organization that enriches the life of any individual who walks through our doors. We look forward to continued collaboration and work that results in optimal health and wellness for every resident that we serve," **she concluded.**