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**SAMHSA awards Mercy Behavioral Health
up to \$2 million for
“New Lease on Life” program for homeless individuals**

PITTSBURGH, PA -- Mercy Behavioral Health (MBH) is among a select group of nonprofits across the country that will receive up to \$2 million from The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for programs designed to end chronic homelessness. SAMHSA announced that the MBH program “New Lease on Life” will be awarded \$400,000 per year for five years beginning October 2009.

New Lease on Life will provide a full complement of services for former chronically homeless individuals who now reside in leased apartments throughout Allegheny County as part of the Spectrum Housing Program.

Teams of service coordinators -- along with other medical, psychiatric and treatment staff -- will deliver mobile psychiatric, nursing and physical health care through a modified Assertive Community Treatment model (ACT) that will complement services currently offered to residents of Spectrum Housing. Current programming is funded by a Shelter Plus Care grant from HUD. All program participants are screened and referred via Operation Safety Net®, part of the Pittsburgh Mercy Health System, and the Allegheny Engagement Network.

“This funding will enable the Spectrum Housing Program to fully address the unique needs of the chronically homeless,” according to Gabrielle Strong, program director, Mercy Behavioral Health’s New Lease on Life program. “The grant is designed to complement the tremendous work already being done Spectrum’s service coordinators.”

“We at Mercy Behavioral Health are thrilled to be given an opportunity to add a therapist, peer support, psychiatrist, nurse and physician to our team,” Strong added.

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Mercy Behavioral Health is one of 43 organizations across the United States to receive one of the recently announced grants. Continuation of the awards is subject to both availability of funds and progress achieved by the awardees. Totalling nearly \$81.5 million, the program will be administered by SAMHSA's Center for Mental Health Services. An independent research unit will evaluate Mercy Behavioral Health's New Lease on Life program.

"Homeless people, like anyone else, need clear, reasonable and manageable alternatives if they're going to turn their lives around," said U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. "These grants not only provide a secure place to live but the skills they will need, over the long term, to live independently."

The SAMHSA grant program is focused on serving chronically homeless individuals and families by enhancing existing permanent supportive housing programs and other resources. The programs will provide intensive individualized support services designed to reduce psychiatric symptoms and empower people to regain stability.

"Homelessness is often rooted in underlying mental health conditions and other factors that may require a multifaceted approach," said SAMHSA Acting Administrator Eric Broderick, DDS, M.P.H. "This funding provides the additional help needed to help many otherwise chronically homeless individuals and families retain permanent housing and build more stable lives."

About Mercy Behavioral Health:

Mercy Behavioral Health (MBH) provides a full continuum of recovery-oriented, community-based mental health, mental retardation, and drug/alcohol treatment and prevention services. Established in 1969, Mercy Behavioral Health strives to empower people to overcome barriers and to lead healthy and successful lives in the community. Mercy Behavioral Health is part of the Pittsburgh Mercy Health System and Catholic Health East, sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy. For more information, visit www.pmhs.org.

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