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WA Primary Health Alliance

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Media Release

South West mental health services get a boost

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Mental Health services in the South West have received a boost with South West Aboriginal Medical Service (SWAMS) receiving funding to increase its capacity to help Aboriginal people experiencing mental illness.

WA Primary Health Alliance, operator of Country WA Primary Health Network, has funded SWAMS to enhance its delivery of mental health services with a new mental health coordinator and mental health Aboriginal outreach worker.

Country WA PHN regional manager Dianne Ritson said the new initiative delivered by SWAMS will provide culturally appropriate and safe services to meet the mental health and healing needs of Aboriginal people in the South West.

“We know that coordinating care for people who have complex health issues, including mental health, is critical so that they get the care they need,” Ms Ritson said.

“The additional services delivered by SWAMS will build on their existing programs, promote service integration and support Aboriginal people in navigating mental health programs including suicide prevention and stolen generation counselling.”

SWAMS chief executive officer Lesley Nelson said the funding allowed the organisation to increase its reach for what she described as a ‘critical service’. “We recognise the impact mental health issues can have on families and carers and we want to help our clients through education, counselling and open communication,” Ms Nelson said.

Ms Nelson said a key focus of the mental health team would be working on a suicide prevention program in collaboration with various agencies. “We know there is a huge need in our community to support people with mental illness,” Ms Nelson said.

SWAMS will deliver the new service until 30 June 2018.

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