

## Target Population

PET is intended for children, adolescents, adults, and older adults from culturally diverse backgrounds.

## Location

PET services are provided at ICBHS Outpatient Clinics, Resource Centers, and community outreach events.

## Precautions

Individuals visiting ICBHS outpatient clinics will be aware of the presence of trained dogs and will have the option to request for the dogs be removed, if necessary.



# Positive Engagement Team P.E.T

MHSA Prevention and Early Intervention Program

## Imperial County Behavioral Health Services

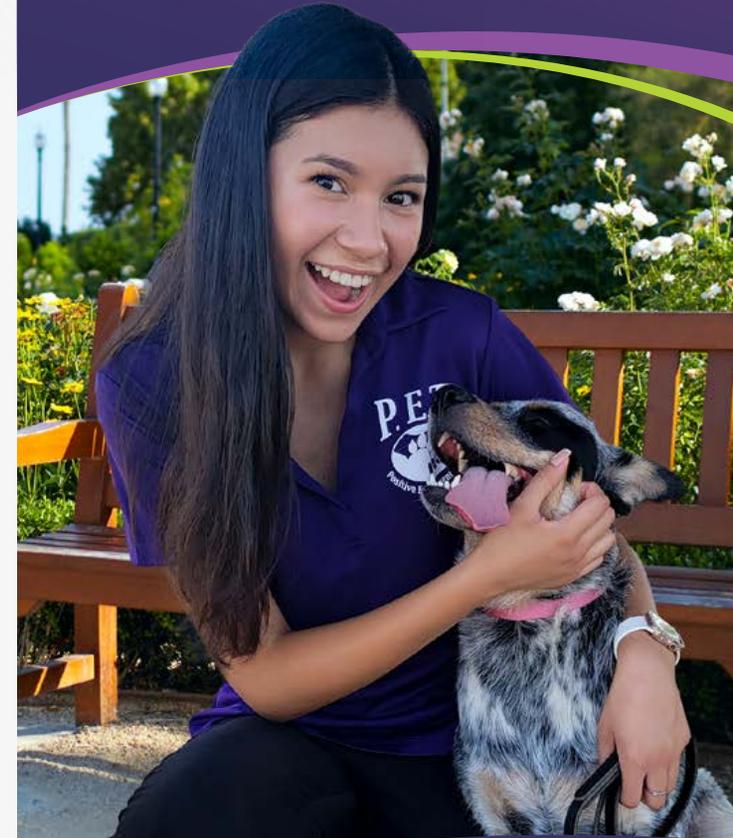
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WELLNESS • RECOVERY • RESILIENCE

1/5/23

# POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT TEAM P.E.T.



IMPERIAL COUNTY  
**Behavioral Health Services**  
MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE USE RECOVERY

## Changing Public Perception of Mental Illness

Public attitudes towards mental illness are more rejecting than accepting. Print, news and social media outlets often depict individuals with mental illness as violent, dangerous, uneducated, and unproductive.

As a result of the stigma associated with their disability, they are often denied employment, education and housing opportunities. Individuals often avoid or delay seeking treatment due to concerns about being treated differently or because of fear of losing their jobs and livelihood.

With proper mental health treatment and supports, individuals with mental illness can recover, thrive, flourish, and become productive members of society. Despite this knowledge, the negative perception and beliefs surrounding mental illness remain.

In order to combat the stigma and negative public perception of mental illness, ICBHS contracted with the local Humane Society of Imperial County to provide trained animal handlers and dogs to help decrease stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness.

## Positive Engagement Team (PET)

The Positive Engagement Team is a Stigma Reduction program, utilizing trained dogs to reduce negative feelings, attitudes, beliefs, stereotypes, perception and/or discrimination related to being diagnosed with a mental illness, having a mental illness, or seeking mental health services.

The goal of the program is to provide mental health services to unserved and underserved individuals in our community by increasing acceptance, dignity and equity for individuals with mental illness, and members of their families.

## Components of PET

### Engagement in Outpatient Clinics:

- Promote trust, and increase client engagement into treatment with the presence of trained dogs.
- Assist in creating a positive, welcoming, and engaging experience during scheduled appointments.

### Outreach in the Community:

- Professional mental health staff and trained dogs participate in community outreach activities, to include Health/Career Fairs and speaking engagements in efforts to combat multiple stigmas that have been shown to discourage individuals with mental illness to seek treatment.
- Create a positive association with mental health services and replace or eliminate the negative perception and destigmatize mental illness by engaging and motivating individuals in the community.

