

Testimony to Ways and Means by Tamara Sale, 3/25/15

Co-Chairs Nathanson and Bates and members of the committee,

My name is Tamara Sale and I'm the director of the Early Assessment and Support Alliance or EASA Center for Excellence at Portland State University. Last year EASA served 547 young people who were confronting psychosis for the first time. 83 additional young people and their families are in services so far as a result of the most recent new investments into EASA. Without a program like EASA, psychosis is life-threatening and leads rapidly to family trauma and long-term disability. With EASA, we've found that families stay together and the majority of young people stay out of the hospital and continue in school and work. Congress recognized the significance of early psychosis intervention in 2014 and mandated that all states begin to develop programs. Oregon's EASA program has been identified by the federal government as a national model.

All the remaining parts of Oregon except four counties applied for the EASA new investment funding and have started programs. Clackamas, Douglas and Lane came on in spring of 2014, and Klamath, Jackson and Josephine began accepting people in late summer and early fall. An Eastern Oregon coalition hired a full-time EASA coordinator and assigned local clinicians who are developing a rural version of EASA. We are seeking ways to get EASA going in the remaining four counties building on momentum in other areas.

EASA tries to be there for people early to prevent hospitalizations and trauma. Nationally when psychosis develops the average delay to treatment is one to two years. EASA teams are currently doing community presentations at a rate of one per day of the year. EASA's approach is to reach out to engage the person proactively, offering evidence-based care including psychiatry, counseling, supported employment and education and family support.

EASA graduates have created a statewide Young Adult Leadership Council which is playing an important role in decision making and program development. Their vision is to help create a thriving community and revolution of hope. We are beginning to get a glimpse of what that might look like.

In order to support the development of the EASA service network, we are working to increase private insurance reimbursement, realign existing funding and leverage new ongoing dollars. Thank you again for your commitment to our young people, and for holding us all accountable. Please help us spread the word about EASA so that when young people develop the frightening symptoms of psychosis, they experience rapid support, healing and an investment in their futures.