



COUNTY OF YOLO

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mental Illness Awareness Week – October 3-9

Yolo County Criminal Justice Partners are working hard to decriminalize those who commit crimes due to mental illness

(Woodland, CA) – **October 1, 2021** – Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) is October 3-9. During this week, across the nation we educate, fight stigma, and empower the community. The theme this year is “Together for Mental Health” where we all focus on advocating for better care for people with serious mental illness.

The criminal justice system in Yolo County has changed and evolved with respect to how it addresses people who commit crimes as a result of their mental illness. The goal, while keeping public safety in mind, is to decriminalize and help these individuals get well and become thriving members of society. In 2013 County partners launched Mental Health Court, a collaborative program between the DA, Public Defender, Probation, Health & Human Service, the court, and the Sheriff’s office. This program increases participant’s insight into their mental illness by connecting them with community treatment services, reducing recidivism and enhancing public safety. <https://yoloda.org/progressive-programs/mental-health-court/>.

This fall, the Public Defender and DA partnered to write a proposal asking the Community Corrections Partnership (<https://www.yolocounty.org/government/general-government-departments/law-justice/community-corrections-partnership>) for funding to start a Mental Health Diversion Program with the goal of addressing the needs of an underserved population who live with mental illness and are involved in the criminal justice system (<https://www.yolocounty.org/Home/Components/News/News/12722/26?npage=2>). This exciting new program will be launched during Mental Illness Awareness week and the team is pleased to announce that Communicare will be providing the treatment component.

During MHAW, Yolo NAMI will be coordinating many events that are open to the public. For more information see: <https://namiyolo.org/namiyolo-events/annual/mental-illness-awareness-week-2021/>.

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