

# City of Poulsbo

Office of Mayor Rebecca Erickson



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## Poulsbo Employee is Expert Panelist at National Conference

**Poulsbo** –Kimberly Hendrickson, project manager for the City of Poulsbo's innovative Behavioral Health Outreach Program, was asked to participate in a roundtable discussion in Washington DC earlier this month. The event focused on the need to develop new approaches to care for people with severe and untreated mental illness.

Also on the panel: Miami-Dade Judge Steve Liefman, preeminent authority on court-based diversion programs; E. Fuller Torrey, the psychiatrist who founded the Treatment Advocacy Center; Kenneth Dudek, considered a pioneer in the field of community mental health and psychiatric rehabilitation; and journalist Pete Earley, whose 2007 book "Crazy: A Fathers Search through America's Mental Health Madness" was a finalist for a Pulitzer. And Poulsbo's Hendrickson.

"It was an honor to sit among those nationally recognized experts and share what we're doing here in Poulsbo," said Hendrickson. "Here we are, a city of just 10,000 people, facing the same big, complicated problems that other, larger cities in America are facing—and our program was selected as one that others might learn from."

"It was a validation that we are doing something right in Poulsbo."

The Behavioral Health Outreach Program is a multi-city, multi-agency criminal justice initiative facilitated and coordinated by the City of Poulsbo and supported by 1/10th of 1% Mental Health, Chemical Dependency and Therapeutic Courts Grant funding.

The goal of the program is much like the very successful Kitsap Drug Court—to divert away from incarceration and toward rehabilitation. The program focuses on individuals with behavioral health disorders (mental illness or co-occurring substance abuse disorders) who have been charged, or have been identified by police as being at risk of arrest or crisis.

The Program is staffed by three behavioral health specialists, one who works for the City of Poulsbo Police Department and two of who work for Kitsap Mental Health Services. The Specialists do outreach, county wide, after receiving police and court referrals. “We’re reaching out to people who, for whatever reason, have not had access to the help they need,” said Hendrickson. “We’re meeting people where they are and connecting them to treatment and services.”

The national panel on which Poulsbo’s Hendrickson participated was organized by Mike Biasotti, retired chief of police and past president of the New York State Association of Chiefs of Police, currently serving as chairman of the Committee on Untreated Severe Mental Illness. It was part of a day-and-a-half long workshop sponsored by the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security, held in the Washington DC area at the end of March. Its purpose was to exchange ideas and expertise to form the foundation of new programs to support state and local efforts to address untreated, severe mental illness.

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