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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

**Subject: First District and City Council Legislative Department Staff Attend Mental Health First Aid Training**

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Councilwoman Lena Gonzalez's First District staff are attending a Mental Health First Aid Training provided by Mental Health America of Los Angeles this week. The training begins on Wednesday, April 1<sup>st</sup> from 12:30pm to 5pm and Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> from 8:30am to 1pm at the Downtown Long Beach Associates (DLBA) office at 100 West Broadway, Suite 120.

"This training is essential for all of my staff. It will help them identify and understand the mental health issues that may affect many folks in the First District," said Councilwoman Gonzalez.

The goal of Mental Health First Aid is to help individuals to overcome apprehension to this issue and to engage others in a conversation that may lead to the person in distress receiving the care they need.

"Often, people notice that a colleague, co-worker, friend, family member or even a stranger is in distress but are unsure as to how to approach them or are fearful of saying the wrong thing," said Chad Costello, Director of Public Policy at Mental Health America of Los Angeles. "You are far more likely to encounter someone experiencing a mental health crisis than a physical health crisis, yet far too few of us know how to respond to someone experiencing a mental health crisis."

Mental Health First Aid is an eight-hour interactive course that gives participants skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The course is offered to individuals and groups that are service providers, primary care workers, first responders, educators, employers, human resource professionals, civic groups, members of faith communities, security personnel, homeless shelter workers and the public.

Typically, the courses are scheduled in response to community need, and the instructors are happy to come to business, service and community locations. The course is flexible and may be structured over two days to accommodate a variety of schedules.

“Frequently, people either make assumptions about the state of someone’s mental health or are unsure of how to even approach the situation—both are deeply detrimental in creating a healthier, more aware citizenry,” said Kraig Kojian, President and CEO of the Downtown Long Beach Associates. “This valiant step taken by Councilmember Lena Gonzalez and her office contributes to the understanding of mental health concerns as well creating a safer, healthier environment for everyone.”

Visit [www.mhala.org/mental-health-first-aid.html](http://www.mhala.org/mental-health-first-aid.html) for more details or contact: Chad Costello E-mail: [ccostello@mhala.org](mailto:ccostello@mhala.org)

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