



Transitions-Mental Health Association
Inspiring hope, growth, recovery and wellness in our communities

LEAD (Lived Experience Advocacy Development)

Through a grant from the McCune Foundation, LEAD was launched in 2016. The purpose of the program is to outreach to the greater communities of Santa Maria and Lompoc, recruiting and training individuals with lived experience of mental illness to develop an advocacy platform and presentations related to the issues they prioritize. In this manner, a new generation of community leaders has emerged: a group that is deeply invested in the cause of mental health advocacy and can accurately and empathically represent its peers in the process. LEAD is headquartered at the Recovery Learning Community of Santa Maria.

In 2019, LEAD initiated a collaborative partnership with Allan Hancock College that led to the first annual community-wide Alliance for Mental Wellness Forum. Over 160 students and community members attended to hear inspirational presentations on depression and suicide prevention and were able to participate in a robust resource fair. For the third year in a row, LEAD coordinated and held a Longest Night Vigil in the City of Santa Maria. The event demonstrated our growing capacity to collaborate with other local nonprofits and agencies, including Fight Back Santa Maria, Central Coast Rescue Mission, Midcoast Veterans Alliance, Home for Good, and United Way.

Who Is Eligible for the Program?

Adults and transitional age youth who identify as living with a mental illness and are interested in public speaking and community advocacy can apply for the program. There is an application and panel interview involved. Recruitment happens once a year, so for more information contact Denise Manriquez, LEAD Coordinator, at dmanriquez@t-mha.org or (805) 928-0139.

