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## NEWSLINES

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"I think it's a huge opportunity for people," she said. "Deep down, I wanted to change my life. I was done. I knew I deserved better."

Currier said there are hundreds of people who will have a harder time getting through the application process, because they aren't as stable and have no assistance.

Take, for instance, some of attorney Saul Henson's clients. Providing the treatment resources the court requires for mental health diversion cases to be granted is important for it to be successful: When his clients are experiencing a mental health crisis, he calls Currier, because she is the only person who will answer the phone and check in on them at 3 a.m., he said at the association's meeting.

"I have 50 people who need help yesterday," he said. "And I think that we have an absolute moral, legal and professional and ethical obligation to our community to move this model faster than we have been."

Keithley said buy-in from Behavioral Health is necessary to avoid a diversion system that only serves people with private insurance.

Behavioral Health is looking at realigning existing resources to make this program work, Taylor told the CN&R. Such a program could easily cost millions of dollars to implement, yet it is "not unusual for legislation to be passed that does not have funding that comes with it."

While proposed Senate Bill 389 wouldn't provide more funding, it would allow counties to use Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) grants for diversion programs. These grants are based on personal income taxes—for the 2019-20 fiscal year, Butte County anticipates receiving about \$12 million, according to Holli Drobny, county MHSA coordinator.

In attorney Ron Reed's view, the community is in a "state of desperation" and that law could "make a world of difference," he shared at the association's meeting.

"I think we need ... something where the county actually comes forward, takes the money, raises the funds and follows through," he said. "We're not really winning the battle. What we're doing is not enough."

—ASHIAH SCHARAGA  
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