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Date: Nov. 25, 2008

### **Southwest Key Receives Grant from Hogg Foundation to Improve Mental Health of Texas Youths of Color**

AUSTIN – [Southwest Key Programs](#), a nonprofit organization that provides services to positively impact youths and their families, was awarded a \$76,570 grant from the [Hogg Foundation for Mental Health](#) to identify and address behavioral health issues and disparities affecting youths of color involved in juvenile justice systems in Texas.

Southwest Key is one of six Texas-based organizations that received a total of \$456,565 in grants from the Hogg Foundation in November. The foundation awarded the grants to support timely, meaningful projects that address key issues related to mental health and are likely to improve mental health policies affecting Texas residents.

“The foundation is continuing our longstanding practice of funding projects to address important and relevant mental health issues that directly affect the people of Texas,” said Dr. Octavio N. Martinez Jr., executive director of the foundation. “The grants also will help build interest in and capacity for mental health policy research and development work among nonprofit agencies, academic institutions and government agencies in Texas.”

Research shows that the juvenile justice system increasingly is being used as a system of last resort for treating youths with mental health disorders by many low-income, uninsured families who cannot afford mental health care. The U.S. Government Accountability Office reported in 2003 that the children of about 9,000 families in the U.S. were relinquished and went into the juvenile justice system to access mental health services. Up to 70 percent of youths in juvenile justice systems have a mental health disorder, according to Southwest Key.

“Children from communities of color are far less likely to receive public or private mental health services, largely due to poverty, lack of insurance coverage and less access to

quality services in high-poverty areas. The foundation's grant will enable us to identify key mental health issues facing youths of color in Texas and how to approach and solve them," said Dr. Juan Sánchez, chief executive officer of Southwest Key.

Southwest Key will join with the [Inter-American Institute for Youth Justice](#) in the School of Social Work at The University of Texas at Austin to host a two-day symposium of experts in juvenile justice and mental health. They also will conduct focus groups throughout Texas with juveniles and their caretakers to better understand their mental health needs.

The information collected will be used to develop a report identifying key mental issues for youths of color and policy recommendations to effectively address those issues. The recommendations will be presented to the Texas Legislature, the Texas Youth Commission and other influential entities in the juvenile justice system, Sánchez said.

"The mental health needs of youths we have involved in the juvenile justice system are tremendous. A great majority of them are youths of color, and this grant will help bring attention to their needs," Martinez said.

The Hogg Foundation was founded in 1940 by Miss Ima Hogg, daughter of former Texas Governor James Stephen Hogg, to promote improved mental health for the people of Texas. The foundation's grants and programs support mental health consumer services, research, policy analysis and public education projects in Texas. The foundation is part of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin.

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