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Gov. Nixon signs bill strengthening ability of community mental health liaisons to help Missourians

Governor also signs six other bills, including one to help reduce drunk driving

JEFFERSON CITY – Mental health professionals who are helping Missouri communities identify and care for those with severe mental illness will have an increased ability to help those individuals, thanks to a bill signed into law today by **Gov. Jay Nixon**. The Governor signed **Senate Bill 426**, which allows community mental health liaisons (CMHLs) to access information on Missourians who have been civilly committed so that the CMHLs can provide appropriate follow-up and coordination of care in the community.

“In less than two years, this initiative has already produced meaningful results -- improving access to mental health services and strengthening public safety in communities across the state,” **Gov. Nixon** said. “I appreciate the General Assembly for not only appropriating the funding for this vital program, but also taking action this year to strengthen the ability of the community mental health professionals to help those with severe mental illness in our state.”

The community mental health liaison positions were created in 2013 under Gov. Nixon’s **Strengthening Mental Health Initiative**, with 31 CMHLs located at community health centers statewide. From November 2013 through May 2015, there have been more than 20,000 contacts between CMHLs, law enforcement and the courts, with more than 11,000 referrals to mental health services. CMHLs also have provided training for more than 2,700 law enforcement officers through some 250 training sessions from October 2014 through May 2015. The initiative also included an expansion of crisis intervention and mental health first-aid training and resources for emergency room intervention teams to work with patients needing coordinated care.