



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **Mental illness did not cause Florida shooting**

*Stigma damages communities and prevents people from seeking help*

HILLSIDE, Ill. – The Proviso Township Mental Health Commission (PTMHC) is urging individuals to continue seeking treatment for behavioral and substance abuse issues as many people seek to explain the actions of a gunman who opened fire at the Ft. Lauderdale airport in Florida last week as a direct result of his mental health.

“The vast majority of individuals with mental illness do not commit violent acts of this magnitude.” said PTMHC Executive Director Jesse Rosas. “The public needs to understand this so that people in our communities who need mental health services are not afraid to come forward for help.”

A person struggling with mental health is no different than someone struggling with physical health. Both people need treatment options to be available and they need to be able to receive treatment without fear of being stigmatized or ostracized in their communities.

“There is a real stigma attached to people with mental illness, that they have a propensity toward violence,” said Rosas. “Not only is this incorrect, but it can have a negative impact on communities by discouraging individuals from seeking treatment.”

Left untreated, mental illness can lead to substance abuse, homelessness, physical health problems and a host of other issues that communities have to confront. According to the National Institutes for Mental Health, while more people are seeking treatment for mental illness, over 40 percent of people with mental illness still do not seek treatment.

If you or someone you know needs mental health support, please contact the Proviso Township Mental Health Commission at (708) 449-5508 to speak with a service navigator who will help you through the process.

*The Proviso Township Mental Health Commission is invested in supporting programs and services aimed at keeping residents safe and healthy.*

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