



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** March 14, 2017

Contact: Betsy Bates Freed, Psy.D., Community and Media Relations chair

Phone: (805) 979-3440

Email: [betsy@drbatesfreed.com](mailto:betsy@drbatesfreed.com)

#### SBCPA Supports **Santa Barbara Response Network** Outreach to Friends, Families of Local Teens

SANTA BARBARA – The Santa Barbara County Psychological Association commends and supports the efforts of the Santa Barbara Response Network (SBRN) to assist the community following the tragic loss of two teenagers in separate incidents this week.

The SBRN is a community grassroots organization which includes psychologists and other mental health professionals, chaplains, law enforcement personnel and others trained to provide psychological first aid to survivors and loved ones in the aftermath of disasters, suicides, or traumatic deaths/injuries.

This has been a difficult week for the community.

On Saturday, an 18-year-old Santa Barbara High School student, Connor O’Keefe, was killed by a passenger train in Montecito. Then, Monday morning, the body of Filberto Scott Hernandez, 18, of Carpinteria, was found at the base of cliffs at the Carpinteria Bluffs Nature Preserve.

“While the circumstances of these tragedies are not fully known at this time, the deaths of these young people represent a profound loss for our community,” said SBCPA president Dr. Laura Ciel.

Psychologists in the community are available to help with longer term grief counseling following suicides and other traumatic deaths – often pro bono or at sharply reduced fees for those who cannot afford to pay. Licensed clinical psychologists who specialize in grief and trauma can be located at the non-profit professional society’s website, [www.SBCPA.org](http://www.SBCPA.org) under the “Find a Psychologist” tab.

The SBRN gathered at Santa Barbara High School to assist school counselors in staffing compassion centers to assist students, faculty, and community members as they remember Connor and process their grief. Additionally, SBRN responded to the scene in Carpinteria on Monday to assist family members and rescue personnel, said Anthony Rodriguez of the SBRN.