



Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee

PO BOX 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706
(406) 444-3064
FAX (406) 444-3036

60th Montana Legislature

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October 22, 2008

Joan Miles, Director
Department of Public Health and Human Services
111 N. Sanders, Room 301
Helena, MT 59604-4210

Dear Director Miles,

On behalf of the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee, I want to thank you and your staff for attending our October 14 meeting and responding to the recommendations in the DMA Health Strategies study of Montana's mental health system. We understand that the comprehensive nature of the report and recommendations made it difficult to respond fully in the short time period you all had to review the report.

We know that with additional time, the Department of Public Health and Human Services will be able to better identify which recommendations the agency can put into effect on its own and which would be appropriate to pursue, but would need direction from the Governor's Office or the Legislature. Because we feel this study contains valuable information and recommendations, we would specifically ask that the Department take the following steps:

- During the 2009 Legislature, report to the Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services and to the House and Senate standing committees on human services about which items the Department plans to pursue on its own and which of the items the Department believes would be worth pursuing but would need legislative action. Your report would be most helpful if it not only covered the steps the Department can and will take, but also the support you might need from the Legislature to carry out the recommendations.

As discussed with you on October 14, we believe the worksheet entitled *Mental Health Study: Items for Possible DPHHS Action* provides a good starting point for your report to the legislative committees. In addition, committee members also specifically requested that your report address the following items:

- ▶ The recommendations related to continuing efforts to eliminate the barriers to creating Behavioral Health Inpatient Facilities by reviewing financing models used in other states and considering limiting liability for non-Medicaid patients;
- ▶ How co-payments and other cost-sharing requirements for mental health services could be eliminated, including the likely fiscal effect of such an action;
- ▶ How the Department plans to increase sharing of data among its divisions and with the Department of Corrections;
- ▶ The results of any efforts to re-issue the Request for Information for telepsychiatry

- or, if the RFI has not been re-issued, the Department's plans for increasing telepsychiatry opportunities in Montana;
- ▶ Whether a Medicaid procedure code has been developed for the mental health services the Child and Family Services Division has obtained for some foster children through use of general fund dollars only; and
 - ▶ Ways to expand the use of peer services and to fund them through Medicaid.
- Propose to the Community Health Center Advisory Group that any state funds appropriated for Community Health Center support in the next biennium be used to help finance the mental health services that all CHCs must provide to their patients. A collaborative effort to expand mental health services could focus attention on a core need and help better spread limited resources among the CHCs.
 - Share the report and its recommendations with the mental health community across Montana, including consumers, family members, advocates, and providers and develop a plan for using the responses you receive from these constituents.
 - Work with the Indian Health Service and tribal governments in Montana to maximize Medicaid enrollment and reimbursement and to help identify the mental health needs of tribal members.
 - Report to the Children and Families Committee in the 2009-10 interim on which recommendations the Department has undertaken and the status of those activities, as well as discuss with the Committee any additional recommendations the Department believes should be pursued on either an agency or legislative level.

The Committee strongly believes that this report provides a road map that the Department, the Governor's Office, and the Legislature can use for several years to help develop a comprehensive and better coordinated mental health system to better serve the needs of Montanans in all regions of our vast state. We hope the October 14 meeting was just the beginning of a wide-ranging and long-lasting discussion of how to put the report's recommendations into effect.

Thanks again to you and your staff for all the time you devoted to helping DMA with the study over the past several months, as well as the time you took to review the report and attend our meeting. We look forward to hearing in the coming months about the Department's efforts to make the most of this study.

Sincerely,

Rep. Edith Clark
Presiding Officer

c: Lou Thompson, Addictive and Mental Disorders Division
Mary Dalton, Health Resources Division
Shirley Brown, Child and Family Services Division
Bonnie Adee, Children's Mental Health Bureau

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