



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
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JON S. CORZINE
Governor

KIMBERLY S. RICKETTS
Commissioner

March 23, 2009

Dear Colleague,

The Division of Child Behavioral Health Services (DCBHS) is proud of its progress and leadership in developing a system of care that respects and values the role of family and youth. In order to strengthen and further integrate the roles of family support and youth voice, beginning July 1st, 2009 the DCBHS is taking a significant step in enhancing service delivery. At this time, I would like to provide you the essential information and principles behind this change. Please know however that this is a time of transition – you won't find all the answers to all the questions you may have. We will be working very closely with the Family Support Organization (FSO) leadership to decide many details.

Beginning, July 1, DCBHS will no longer contract with the FSO organizations. The incorporated 501c3s will be free to determine the future of their body without DCBHS mediation. This is not an initiative driven by the tight fiscal climate nor is cost savings the goal.

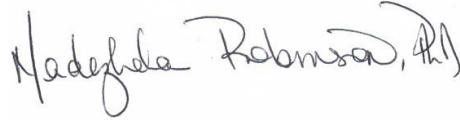
DCBHS holds in the highest regard the FSOs and their leadership. They have developed strong and collaborative partnerships with community organizations of every kind, supported countless families with compassion and expertise, developed a statewide youth leadership team, and continuously maintained their focus on the core mission of their work. This initiative demonstrates the central value of the FSOs to the system of care and the responsibility of DCBHS to ensure that their family support and youth development work continues. This initiative allows that work to continue – expand even – without the burdens of maintaining a business office.

Each Care Management Organization (CMO) will be assuming the staff of the FSO as a part of their organization. It is essential to us that the core functions of the FSO: peer support, community engagement, and youth development, remain intact and grow even stronger with this move. The full value of the FSO agencies for the family and youth work will be transferred, via DCBHS oversight, to the CMO organization to be retained exclusively for youth and family work. CMOs will also add resources to the youth work in order to support DCBHS's long hoped-for expansion of youth development and support.

We will be implementing various structures to ensure that the youth and family voice has direct access to the leadership of each CMO: the Board of Directors and a stand-alone Youth and Family Advisory Committee. We will also work to be sure that true integration and collaboration of staff occurs. DCBHS has chosen to make this change in order to preserve and hopefully strengthen the youth and family voice within the system of care – it is after all fundamental and essential.

Initial reactions and feedback about this have been thoughtful, many positive, and all heartfelt. I hope DCBHS can continue to rely on you to support your colleagues and remain focused on the work with youth and families as we negotiate this transition. We would be glad to hear any thoughts, ideas, or concerns you may have about this change. Please direct them to: Matilda.Howell@dcf.state.nj.us or of course feel free to call me directly: 609 292 4741.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nadezhda Robinson, Ph.D." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'N'.

Nadezhda Robinson, Ph. D.
Director, DCBHS