New Jersey Department of Human Services **Quarterly Newsletter**
Division of Mental Health Services **January 2007**

From the Assistant Commissioner

Dear Mental Health Community,

Entering 2007, the Mental Health Community can reflect on a number of new initiatives and enhanced services resulting from the recommendations of the Governor's Mental Health Task Force (GMHTF). In an extremely difficult budget time, the "transformation" to a "Wellness and Recovery" oriented system of care is gaining a foothold with demonstrated positive outcomes. Over 500 new affordable housing opportunities were created as part of the "Home to Recovery" Housing Initiative. Self-Help Center funding was enhanced, three new centers are on the drawing board, community psychiatric services capacity was increased, and the operational incentive policy is strengthening provider capacity, all efforts that will move New Jersey forward and build local community systems of care…and this is the short list!

Governor Corzine, Treasurer Abelow and the Legislature are struggling with a very difficult State Budget at this time. We recognize fiscal challenges to do more with less, and to do better with what we have. Embracing "Evidence Based Practice" models for future policies and contracting will result in services that are data-driven and outcome-based. We will continually fund programs that consumers identify and support as "Best Practices" for them and that promote "Illness Management and Recovery" themes.

While much attention is focused on community development, the State Psychiatric Hospitals need to be recognized as a priority for their challenges and efforts to stabilize consumers while managing almost 3,500 admissions and discharges per year. Our ability to strengthen the community continuum of care and at the same time adequately train hospital staff, maintain "Environment of Care" benchmarks and adopt "Wellness and Recovery" into all treatment and care are tremendous endeavors. Struggles with high census issues complicate treatment such that, we all have a great sense of urgency to bring resources on line to divert admissions and increase discharges for those who are ready.

In closing, I want to thank you all for participating positively in a time of change, reorganization, and progress. Feedback that I receive suggests that we need to communicate even more formally and consistently with consumers, staff and the provider community on the status and progress of all of these initiatives. I have agreed to make that happen, and through stakeholder group meetings, newsletters, the DMHS web-site and engaging staff in dialogue, I hope to do better over the next several months. I'll ask you to let me know how we are doing.

Sincerely,

Kevin Martone
Assistant Commissioner

Partial Hospitalization

On February 5th, our Department will adopt program and fiscal regulations pertaining to Partial Hospitalization (PH). This is in response to Mental Health Task Force recommendations and the feedback received from many consumers, family members, and providers. The PH program milieu has real value in our community mental health system and the new regulations will codify PH's continuing role in providing an acute care alternative to hospitalization as well as ongoing support to consumers in the community. The new regulations are responsive to the needs and expressed desires of consumers, they embrace important recovery principles and they will shape previously unregulated PH program operations in areas of staffing, reimbursement, and length of stay.

We have been challenged to spend our public mental health dollars wisely and efficiently and to expand the range of program options available to support consumers in their recovery. Establishing these new regulations and introducing a rate reimbursement structure will enable us to redirect disproportionate PH payments toward additional evidence based practices, resulting in more consumers being served with better outcomes. While PH programs adapt their business and operational practices to the new regulations, the Division will be working closely with providers to ensure that every consumer has continued access to needed support services.

The Governor's Council on Mental Health Stigma

The "Council" has been established within the Division and we are very pleased to announce that Celina Gray has assumed the responsibilities as the Executive Director. Initial priorities will be to create a website that will serve as a communications vehicle to help combat stigma and create a better mental health system in New Jersey.

Educating the public, including many professionals and elected officials about the positive potential that exists for a mental health consumer is a heavy lift. Too often, it is not until families and friends experience the negative perceptions others have toward someone with a mental illness that they know that real *stigma* comes out. We are all looking forward to working with Celina and the Mental Health Council on Stigma to change that.

Learning About Healthy Living

New and innovative treatments for tobacco smokers in the mental health settings are needed to address the health risks associated with the high rate of smoking among mental heath consumers. Because treating tobacco dependence supports the current focus on wellness and recovery within the mental health field, DMHS has partnered with UMDNJ to sponsor a group treatment intervention entitled Learning About Healthy Living (LAHL) which is designed to address smoking and enhance healthy living. Members of the UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School Division of Addiction Psychiatry, UMDNJ-UBHC Center for Excellence in Psychiatry, and the UMDNJ-Tobacco Dependence Program contributed to the manual's development. LAHL is a structured 20-session group treatment approach combined with a Facilitator's Guide that is simple and easy to use, and designed for all types of smokers with different mental health problems. The LAHL manual was pilot tested in outpatient day-treatment mental health programs and revised with input both from mental health consumers and treatment staff, whose feedback supported that this was an effective method for helping individuals with low motivation to address tobacco and begin a healthier lifestyle. DMHS will soon distribute the manual and an explanatory CD about smoking cessation treatment to mental health agencies and psychiatric facilities, and these will also be available on the UMDNJ and the DMHS websites. Because of the interest shown by other states, the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors will be endorsing the manual and recommending the manual in a position paper and report dealing with tobacco use.

Psychiatric Advanced Practice Nurse Initiative

Psychiatric Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs) are registered nurses with graduate degrees; they are independently certified providers and are permitted to prescribe medications and devices in collaboration with a psychiatrist. In New Jersey, the title APN, by law, includes nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists.

In 1998, New Jersey began a unique Psychiatric Advanced Practice Nurse initiative with the goal of enhancing community services for individuals with serious mental illness. Since that time, the program has expanded and there are presently 63 positions funded by the Division of Mental Health Services.

The nurses working in this project are employed in various community agencies throughout New Jersey. Among the many services they perform are medication management services, comprehensive assessments, diagnosis of acute and chronic health problems, provision of psychotherapeutic interventions, staff and patient education and outreach services. They have been credited with improving the quality of life for the individuals they serve, and have been very instrumental in reducing the wait for service as well as drop out/no show rates, improving medication adherence, and reducing the need for hospitalization.

While these positions offer competitive salaries and benefits and job satisfaction is very high, there has historically been a shortage of Psychiatric APN's. Recruiting qualified nurses can be difficult, however, the two New Jersey Universities that offer a psychiatric APN specialty, Rutgers and UMDNJ, recently reported dramatic increases in their

enrollment. *We can expect to see about 45 new Psychiatric APN's ready for work in the spring of 2008!!!*

Ancora Psychiatric Hospital

Given a series of very serious incidents and a continually high census at the hospital, DMHS is launching a series of efforts to regain stability and confidence in Ancora's mission. First efforts include installing a "Management Support Team" to work with the current administration. Led by Assistant Director Greg Roberts, a number of hospital administrators and consultants will mentor and assist Ancora staff in the coming weeks in areas such as admissions, human resources, staffing allocations, nursing leadership, social services discharge activities and interventions to reduce incidents and violence.

Communication with families and interested parties will be enhanced, including establishing "Advisory Committees" comprised of consumers, advocates, family members and other stakeholders. We need to be transparent in identifying issues and crafting remedies with outcomes that are clear and effective.

Critical to all of this is census reduction. Simply put, there are too many consumers (at all of the facilities) who need discharge options and remain in the hospital longer than they need to. To this end, all DMHS resources and responsibilities will be considered to address admission diversion and discharge to significantly reduce the census.

Given the seriousness of this hospital issue, Governor Corzine and State Treasurer Abelow conducted an unannounced tour of Ancora on the morning of January 23rd along with Acting Commissioner Clarke Bruno and Kevin Martone. The Governor saw the crowded Ancora living units first hand and the staffing and environmental challenges to providing quality care. The Governor later toured Ann Klein Forensic Center and finally Greater Trenton Behavioral Healthcare, speaking with consumers, many who were formerly hospitalized. We deeply appreciate the devotion of a significant amount of time and interest from the Governor and Treasurer, engaging consumers to listen and learn about the many challenges that they face and to understand the many issues confronting New Jersey's mental health system.

New Hospital Update

Construction of the "new" Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital is on schedule for a Fall 2007 opening. The transformation of the campus, from a multitude of disconnected dorms and service buildings constructed over the past 130 years to a single, self contained, state-of-the-art hospital is an incredible task, but will create a physical environment much more conducive for recovery.