



GOVERNOR'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES PLANNING COUNCIL

SHERMAN "WES" COLE,
CHAIRPERSON

SCOTT JACKSON,
VICE-CHAIR

February 16, 2010

The Honorable Mark Parkinson
Governor of the State of Kansas
Statehouse, Room 212-S
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Governor Parkinson,

The Governor's Mental Health Services Planning Council (GMHSPC) advises SRS and the Governor regarding Kansas' mental health needs and services. Its membership includes consumers and families who provide observations and recommendations both on what works well in mental health service delivery and where special needs continue to exist. We work in collaboration with Community Mental Health Centers and other providers, as well as State agencies and advocates. Recent focus has been on Transformation and how we can help children with a severe emotional disturbance and adults who have a serious mental illness achieve recovery, including living independently and working productively.

With the current economic downturn and subsequent cuts in mental health funding, we are seeing increases in the gaps in services that contribute to homelessness and/or incarceration. Some persons with mental illness are experiencing more frequent hospitalization and have unmet needs for services necessary for them to live successfully in their communities. Despite those conditions, we also see providers, advocates, families, and consumers doing the best they can to address related problems.

We recognize that you as our Governor are making every effort to address the issues resulting from the worst economic recession in Kansas since the Great Depression. Because of this we understand why the legislature made the following cuts to Kansas public mental health system in the approved FY 2010 budget:

- \$7 million cut to Community Mental Health Center (CMHC) grants used to serve people without the means to pay for needed mental health services;
- Reduction in MediKan eligibility from 24 to 18 months, eliminating mental health services funding for those needing them;
- \$500,000 cut to the community mental health medication program; and
- Elimination of state general fund support for university training and research.

As state revenue further deteriorated, we understand why you made the following additional cuts in your November allotment:

- \$4 million reduction to CMHC grants, used to fund services for persons unable to pay;

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- Further reductions in MediKan eligibility from 18 to 12 months;
- A 10% cut in Medicaid reimbursement rates, resulting in:
 - \$4.8 million reduction in funds to community mental health services;
 - \$1 million reduction in funds for psychiatric residential treatment facilities;
 - \$400,000 reduction in funds for Nursing Facilities for Mental Health (NFMHs); and
 - Reductions in funding for community inpatient psychiatric care.
- Reductions in state mental health hospital psychiatric services budgets.

These reductions impact some of our most vulnerable citizens whose illness limits both their ability to cope and the resources they need to recover. The cuts have not only resulted in a reduction in services, but also layoffs of clinical staff and dismantling of services critical to recovery and mental health rehabilitation. Those losses have resulted in establishing waiting lists for services contrary to established public policy. The very foundations of the Kansas public mental health system are in jeopardy. We agree with your recommendation that there is nowhere else to cut.

We are sensitive to the challenges you and our Legislators face. Our Council members support your recommendations to increase tobacco and sales tax income so that the 10% cuts in Medicaid reimbursement can be rescinded. We are hopeful that, as Kansas revenues improve, the other public mental health budget cuts can also be restored. The citizens of Kansas are among the greatest anywhere in their commitment to provide care for persons with special needs. We have every confidence in your leadership and wish you well as you deal with current challenges. We pledge to do our best in helping achieve a positive future for adult consumers, children, and their families. Thank you for all you do for the Kansans who need our support.

Respectfully,



Sherman "Wes" Cole
Chairman, Governor's Mental Health Services Planning Council

cc: The Honorable Senator Stephen Morris, President of the Senate
The Honorable Representative Mike O'Neal, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Senator Jay Scott Emler, Chairman of Ways and Means Committee
The Honorable Representative Kevin Yoder, Chairman of Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Senator Les Donovan, Chairman of Assessment and Taxation Committee
The Honorable Representative Richard Carlson, Chairman of House Taxation Committee

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