



Wisconsin Council on Mental Health

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The Wisconsin Council on Mental Health is the statutory mental health planning council for the State of Wisconsin. In order to meet the Council's obligation to review and provide comment on the proposed plan, it formed two committees to review the Adult and Children's Mental Health Plans. The committees met separately. Input from those Committees was incorporated into the draft Plan submitted to the full Council at its meeting on July 18, 2007.

The Council met on July 18, 2007 to review and make final recommendations for the FFY 2008 Community Mental Health Block Grant application in compliance with section 1915(a)(2) of Public law 102-231. Members of the public were also invited to comment. The Council considered those comments in our decision to support submission of the Plan.

The Bureau of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (BMHSAS) recently hired new staff in positions related to Council functions. These hires promise to alleviate the concerns of some Council members about the ability of staff to meet their needs with respect to review of the state plan. There was less time than we would have liked to review the Plans, largely due to staff turnover. The hires came towards the end of our review and provided improved BMHSAS responsiveness for that part of the process. The improved responsiveness was much appreciated, and we encourage this to continue next year.

Council members were concerned about the bluntness and ineffectiveness of SAMHSA State Plan indicators as measures of state progress toward meeting important mental health goals and objectives. Council members were also concerned about the quality and sources of data collected by the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS). These concerns are particularly acute with respect to report of services by counties to which are delegated much of the plan implementation. Both the SAMHSA indicators and DHFS data are critical for the State and Council to identify and support appropriate funding recommendations and decisions. Our recommendations are unfortunately undercut by inadequacies in both. We are pleased that the Department is committed to continue work to improve its data systems and quality.

Other areas of Council concern include, among others: more attention to the mental health needs of elders, children and homeless families. Comments by members of the public included a request for more funding to support the SOAR program and programs serving homeless

individuals; more attention by case managers to detailed documentation and follow-up; and more emphasis on employment for persons with mental illness.

In Summary, the Council is pleased to endorse the State Plan application for 2008, and appreciates the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Michael Bachhuber, Chair
Wisconsin Council on Mental Health

cc: Wisconsin Council on Mental Health Members
Kevin Hayden, Secretary, Department of Health and Family Services
John Easterday, Administrator, Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
Joyce Allen, Director, Bureau of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
Melanie Foxcroft, Council Staff