

**Message from
Commissioner Barbara Leadholm, M.S., M.B.A
April 10, 2009**

As we continue to strengthen and forward our mission of a consumer-driven mental health system, I am pleased to announce the DMH Person-Centered Initiative.

This is an exciting new development that will provide recovery-oriented training and learning opportunities for DMH staff and the entire mental health community. Based on the value that consumers come first, the Person-Centered Initiative will

- empower people with mental illness to live with dignity and independence in the community;
- provide access to a full range of quality services and supports to meet the mental health needs of individuals of all ages;
- enable individuals to live, work and participate in their communities; and
- implement a consumer-centered, recovery-oriented system of care.

How would we define the Person-Centered Initiative? It is a term that refers to a body of principles and practices in the design and delivery of DMH services that places the person front and center of all activities. We are using this term to refer to the significant changes that are taking place within our agency that are designed to promote recovery and resiliency, and that are driven by consumers themselves.

A training consortium will be established under the Person-Centered Initiative and will bring together all stakeholders in this vision of recovery including DMH staff, private vendor staff, consumers, family members and advocates. This group will develop a comprehensive program that covers the types of training, training topics, delivery of training and other learning opportunities that are the most effective in terms of bringing about a transformation of services to that of a person-centered system.

Developing new approaches to training built around a strong consumer voice and self-determination is the main objective of this initiative. And we will build on already existing activities around person-centered planning taking place throughout the Department, specifically in the Northeast Area, in our Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services and in the new Community Based Flexible Support services that will be implemented in July. I want to acknowledge the good work being done across our agency and the valuable lessons we can learn from these independent pilots as we move forward with Person-Centered planning Department wide.

Under the leadership of Jean Comporetti and Joy Connell, the Person-Centered Initiative will be a priority of DMH Staff Development and Training. The Person-Centered Training Consortium will design and deliver trainings that promote skills such as person-centered care, trauma informed care, cultural competence and diversity. Our intent is to reach beyond DMH staff to include vendor staff, consumers, family members, researchers, community members, and advocates. Over the next several months, the Training Consortium will meet to develop the first training curriculum scheduled for launch in June.

You will hear more about the DMH Person-Centered Initiative in the coming months.

The FY2010 budget process continues to evolve as we work on our plans to meet our fiscal realities. We expect the House to release its budget recommendations for FY2010 some time around April 15 and I will keep you apprised as information is released.

I thank you for your unwavering commitment to the clients and families we serve and creating the hope of recovery.