

PEMHS' PULSE

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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK – Family Emergency Treatment Center



FETC is again threatened this year. Make a New Year's Resolution to forward this to your Legislator:

Dear Legislator:

The Florida Council for Community Mental Health is asking for your support for maintaining the funding for community mental health and substance abuse special programs currently funded with \$15,193,018 of nonrecurring general revenue. The Florida community mental health and substance abuse system is a system of care for persons with a mental illness or a substance abuse disorder. It is a place where people in their communities turn when they or a family member is in crisis. It is the place law enforcement turns to when they are dealing with someone who is dangerous and may have a mental illness or abusing substances.

This system of care provided by community providers serve individuals who cannot afford to pay for treatment or who are Medicaid eligible. They are individuals who generally are the most severely mentally ill or with the most severe substance abuse impairments. Through the years the legislature has funded developed this system of care through funding crisis stabilization and short term residential beds, adult mental health and substance abuse residential beds, detox and addiction receiving facilities, outpatient programs for pregnant women, children, and individuals with HIV/Aids. These services create the safety net in our communities.

Community mental health and substance abuse agencies provided treatment last year to 178,980 adults with serious mental illness, 83,515 children with severe emotional problems, 137,768 children with substance use problems, and 111,471 adults with substance abuse disorders. The continuum of mental health and substance abuse services and programs are the result of years of legislative investment in these services needed for their constituents, their families and their children. For many years legislators responded to the need by funding special programs at the request of their communities. These programs were supported by the Governor and the Department of Children and Families. Several of these programs are now in jeopardy.

In 2007, as a cost reduction exercise, the Department of Children and Families offered up over \$15 million in mental health and substance abuse programs that had been funded by general revenue. All of these programs had been part of their base for at least 3 years, the majority funded for more than 5 years, and several funded for 10 to 12 years. These programs account for more than 70 crisis stabilization and short term residential beds, 148 mental health and substance abuse residential beds, and over \$6 million in outpatient services to women, children, persons with HIV, and other individuals with severe mental illness and substance abuse.

In 2008 and again in 2009 the Legislature chose to fund these programs with non-recurring general revenue. These programs, due to their non-recurring nature, are once again up for review for 2010-11 funding. These programs serve individuals in almost every area of the state: 11 programs in South Florida, 12 programs in Central Florida, 11 programs in Southwest Florida, 5 programs in North Florida, and one statewide program.

If these programs are not funded 38,547 individuals with mental illness and/or substance abuse will be denied care. Essential public health and safety net services will be lost and over 500 individuals will lose employment. Details of each program are attached. Everyone agrees the treatment works and is a wiser and more humane investment than prisons, jails, juvenile justice, emergency rooms, or the child welfare system.

PLEASE FUND \$15.2 MILLION FOR THESE COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAMS AND IF POSSIBLE CONSIDER RETURNING THEM TO GENERAL REVENUE FUNDING. YOUR COMMUNITIES AND CONSTITUENTS NEED YOUR HELP AND SUPPORT.

Sincerely,
Bob Sharpe President and CEO
