

**PROGRESS REPORT ON  
FLORIDA COMMISSION ON MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE  
March 1, 2000**

**BACKGROUND**

The Florida Commission on Mental Health and Substance Abuse was created in 1999 by House Bill 2003 for the purpose of conducting a systematic review of the overall management of the state's public mental health and substance abuse system. A final report to the Governor and State Legislature will contain recommendations for change and improvement in areas including planning, service strategies, funding, accountability, emergency behavioral health services, and the unique needs of older persons. (See Appendix A: Legislation)

In accordance with the statute, eighteen Commissioners were appointed by Governor Bush; one by the Speaker of the House; one by the President of the Senate; and one each by the Secretary of the Department of Children and Families, the Director of the Agency for Health Care Administration, and the Secretary of the Department of Health. Commissioners include statewide representatives from various categories including mental health and substance abuse providers, hospitals, employers, insurance carriers, and family members and consumers of public services. (See Appendix B: List of Commissioners)

At the Commission's first meeting, Dr. David Shern, interim chair, was unanimously elected chair, and Laura Schuck was elected vice chair.

Dr. Nancy Bell was hired as Executive Director by the Commission in January 2000 under a contract with the Department of Children and Families. She is responsible for coordinating and documenting the Commission's activities, developing meeting agendas, overseeing meeting planning, coordinating research projects, and writing reports.

The Commission has also created an Advisory Committee. As the Commission proceeds through its data gathering, deliberation, reporting, and recommendation phases, the Advisory Committee's role will be to attend meetings when possible, monitor proceedings, provide the Commission with any relevant or helpful material from participating organizations, and comment and advise as appropriate. Advisory members may also be asked to testify on specific areas of expertise and/or work with Commission subcommittees or work groups on specific projects. (See related documents in Appendices N and O.)

**PROCESS OF COMMISSION**

The Commission has met monthly in different locations around the state of Florida, with the goal of providing an opportunity for citizens throughout the state to testify before the Commission.

Following the first meeting when the focus was orientation and introductions, each meeting thus far has had a theme relating to the Commission's charge. A meeting format was adopted that includes a business meeting; a facilitated group discussion of Commission goals and objectives;

focused testimony on the day's theme from invited speakers (most from the geographic area where that meeting was held); and open public testimony from members of the community at large.

In advance of the meeting, Commissioners are provided with background materials that are relevant to the theme of the meeting. These are referenced on the Commission's Website (<http://cmhsa.fmhi.usf.edu>) and in Appendix T.

Some speakers distribute handouts, copies of overheads or slides, or other material. These are also available to the public on the Commission's Website (<http://cmhsa.fmhi.usf.edu>).

Meetings have been well publicized and well attended, with extensive public participation. The December 13 meeting in Tampa had approximately 100 participants, and the January 31 meeting in Pembroke Pines had approximately 125 participants. Through the January meeting, invited testimony had been received from 25 people, and approximately 45 individuals have provided public testimony. In addition, public testimony was presented to several Commissioners at the February 17, 2000 Florida Partners In Crisis Town Hall Meeting (Hillsborough County (see Appendix S).

The Commission has met three times to date, as follows:

#### **November 16, 1999 in Tallahassee**

This initial meeting was held to orient Commission members to the charge of the Commission and to the public mental health and substance abuse system. (See Appendix E: Agenda 11/16/99; Appendix F: Minutes 11/16/99).

#### **December 13, 1999 in Tampa**

The second meeting's theme was Mental Health, Substance Abuse and the Legal System (See Appendix G: Agenda 12/13/99; Appendix H: Business Meeting Minutes 12/13/99; and Appendix I: Content Notes 12/13/99).

#### **January 31, 2000 in Pembroke Pines**

The third meeting's theme was Children's Mental Health (see Appendix J: Agenda 1/31/00; Appendix K: Business Meeting Minutes 1/31/00; and Appendix L: Content Notes 1/31/00).

### **EMERGING THEMES AND MAJOR ISSUES**

As Commissioners shared their individual perspectives on the current public mental health and substance abuse system and heard public testimony, dominant themes and major issues began to emerge. Facilitated discussion helped to define the following major areas for continued discussion based on perceived needs in the current system. (These are emerging themes for future deliberation and not recommendations at this time):

- Universal assessment – including the availability and application of validated screening procedures to identify persons with mental and addictive disorders that will be routinely used in health assessment.
- Improved access – including the assurance that individuals with mental and addictive disorders will be able to obtain culturally relevant services at a time and in a place that promotes their use of effective services.
- Integrated, caring, high quality care – including evidence-based treatments that promote recovery from mental or addictive disorders.
- Appropriate tracking technology – including information systems that facilitate coordinated and informed care and that permit assessment of the effectiveness of a system of care
- Reduced stigma – including public education campaigns that emphasize the pervasiveness of mental and addictive disorders, their course and consequences, and the availability of effective treatments for these disorders that can prevent their occurrence and lessen their consequences.
- Full, focused funding – including a resource base that is adequate to assure the achievement of the Commission’s goals.
- Outcomes tracking and feedback – including the implementation of data collection and analytic procedures to assure that expenditures for mental and addictive disorders are achieving their goals and that can be used to continually improve the effectiveness of these services.

## **SUMMARY OF COMMISSION GOALS AND VISION**

Beginning with the first meeting, Commissioners began to formulate a shared vision for the Commission’s work. Facilitated discussion helped to shape the articulation of the Commission’s vision based on these major themes. The following vision statement is being considered for Florida’s citizens:

“All Floridians shall have access to high quality, affordable, integrated, client-sensitive, outcomes-focused mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment services throughout an unimpeded continuum of care.”

”A system that works.”

Further discussion will continue to refine the vision statement, and Commission activities will be based on identified themes and this vision statement.

## **FUTURE PLANS: MEETING DATES AND TOPICS**

Meeting dates have been set through August 2000 as follows:

March 31	July 21
April 28	August 28
May 31	
June 23	

Commissioners are planning future meeting venues, themes, agendas, content, and potential speakers. Themes will address specifics of the Commission charge (e.g., mental health and substance abuse needs of older adults, systems architecture and organization, etc.). A draft partial outline of plans appears in Appendix M.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Because Commission deliberations and activities are still in a fairly early stage, there are no recommendations at this time.

## **APPENDICES**

- A. Legislation (HB 2003)
- B. List of Commissioners
- C. Commissioners' mailing addresses
- D. Commissioners' e-mail addresses
- E. November 16, 1999 meeting agenda
- F. November 16, 1999 minutes
- G. December 13, 1999 meeting agenda
- H. December 13, 1999 business meeting minutes
- I. December 13, 1999 content notes
- J. January 31, 2000 meeting agenda
- K. January 31, 2000 business meeting minutes
- L. January 31, 2000 content notes
- M. Draft Partial Outline of Plans
- N. Letter to Advisory Committee invitees
- O. List of Advisory Committee members
- P. Sample letter of invitation to public
- Q. Monthly task timeline
- R. February 28, 2000 meeting agenda
- S. Florida Partners in Crisis 2/17/00 Public Testimony
- T. Background reading material