

MH/MR Coalition

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BUDGET REQUEST For Fiscal Year 2002 - 2003

2% COLA NEEDED FOR MH/MR COMMUNITY SERVICES

WHY?

- * RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CRISIS CONTINUES *
- * ESSENTIAL SERVICES TO PEOPLE JEOPARDIZED *
- * HEALTH AND SAFETY OF INDIVIDUALS AT RISK *
- * UNFUNDED MANDATES EXPAND *

REINSTATE: A 2% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for the following line-item appropriations in the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) budget:

- * Community Mental Retardation Services
- * Pennhurst Dispersal

- * Mental Health Services
- * MR Residential Services - Lansdowne

The Mental Health/Mental Retardation Coalition (Coalition) continues its ongoing efforts to assure that the Commonwealth meets its obligations regarding the health, safety and wellbeing of individuals and their families who are receiving and requesting community MH/MR services. Attached is the Coalition's FY 2002-2003 Funding Needs Statement summarizing this advocacy effort.

Essential MH/MR services, as established by laws, regulations and court decisions rely almost exclusively upon state and federal funding. The Coalition recognizes that the General Assembly and the Executive Office face a difficult task due to the economic situation in Pennsylvania. Therefore, the Coalition request is for a nominal COLA percentage increase.

Inadequate or absent COLAs during the past fifteen years created the current recruitment and retention crisis despite the best efforts of individuals, families, counties, providers and advocates. This year, the Governor's Budget does not include a COLA for any of the above services.

With the rapidly escalating costs of health insurance and property casualty insurance, along with increasing unfunded mandates related to new state and federal requirements (e.g. HIPAA), we believe that the impact of no COLA will reduce the number of people that can be served. The Olmstead decision obligates the Commonwealth to fully serve all persons entered into the waiver. To fully serve all persons in the waiver without receiving a COLA means that people who need services will lose any hope of getting them. We earnestly request your advocacy for a COLA for Community MH/MR services.

The MH/MR Coalition includes all of the major associations that represent mental health and/or mental retardation provider agencies and counties in Pennsylvania: Mental Health Association in PA (717.236.8110), MH/MR Program Administrators of PA (717.232.7554), PA Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (717.657.7608), PA Association of Resources for People with Mental Retardation (717.236.2374), PA Community Providers Association (717.657.7078), The Arc-PA (717.234.2621), and United Cerebral Palsy of PA (717.761.6129). For additional information, contact any of the organizations listed.