

# MH/MR COALITION

## *Working Together Campaign Update*

March 2004

### **FY 2004-2005 BUDGET: NO NEW MONEY FOR MH/MR COMMUNITY SERVICES**

Although DPW Secretary Estelle Richman and Budget Secretary Michael Masch have both made public statements indicating that community MH/MR programs are a priority for the Rendell Administration, more than words are needed to assure action on the additional funding relief required for this human services crisis during FY 04-05.

### **CONSUMERS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS AND MENTAL RETARDATION AND THEIR FAMILIES DESERVE BETTER.**

The Coalition and its predecessors have since 1989 brought this crisis to the attention of the PA General Assembly and Governors. We are beyond blaming anyone for the chronic absence of COLAs for these programs that are uniquely dependent upon state and federal funding but the Governor and the General Assembly must recognize their responsibility to provide these essential services.

### **WE CALL UPON GOVERNOR RENDELL AND THE PA GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO ADDRESS THE UNFUNDED COSTS FOR THESE ESSENTIAL SERVICES AS WHAT THEY ARE – PART OF THE COMMONWEALTH'S STRUCTURAL BUDGET DEFICIT.**

The Governor's Proposal includes an initiative to reduce the waiting list for services for individuals with mental retardation. This initiative, however, is minimal and requires two steps: separate legislation and approval by the federal authorities.

**FOR THE THIRD YEAR IN A ROW**, there is no new funding to provide for a COLA nor to address the need for "system stabilization" which would include the ongoing crisis in the recruitment and retention of qualified staff.

### **WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT:**

The MH/MR Coalition will be contacting you frequently through June 30<sup>th</sup> when the state budget is to be completed. We ask you to join with us in a renewed statewide advocacy campaign to secure essential funding for essential services. For this campaign to be successful it is vital that every provider, county, consumer, family member and advocate be engaged in the political process. We ask that you meet with your legislators on an ongoing basis, and we will provide you with guidance on other activities as well such as voter registration drives.

Look soon for the next Update edition. In the meantime, please focus your message and advocacy around the attached PowerPoint presentation – "5 Good Reasons for a COLA". This document is being circulated among policymakers with success, and the Coalition believes it is an effective advocacy tool. It clearly describes the scope of the community-based system, its cost-effective advantages and the economic stimulus that it provides for 100,000 employees and hundreds of community agencies and businesses throughout the Commonwealth.

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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 ASSOCIATIONS IN PA, MH/MR PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION OF PA, PA ASSOCIATION OF REHABILITATION FACILITIES, PA ASSOCIATION OF RESOURCES FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL RETARDATION, PA COMMUNITY PROVIDERS ASSOCIATION, THE ARC OF PA AND UNITED CEREBRAL PALSY OF PA.