HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The MH/MR Coalition wishes you and your loved ones a Happy New Year.

2003 brings new challenges, new opportunities and a new governor and administration to Pennsylvania! The MH/MR Coalition is looking forward to building new relationships based on the solid foundations of the Working Together Campaign.

The Coalition thanks all of you who signed on to Working Together Campaign Principles, invited legislators and their staff to your agencies, told your stories through phone calls and letters, came to Harrisburg for the annual Working Together Campaign Day on the Hill and annual Summits and most importantly, continue to work together in local coalitions in search of local solutions to address the recruitment and retention crisis in community MH/MR services and supports.

But our work is far from done.

The Coalition is eagerly awaiting approval for its Direct Support Specialist Statewide Apprenticeship Program application which has been submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry. Throughout 2002, the Coalition worked with a consortium of provider organizations and county administrators to identify and develop standards including curriculum while exploring potential administrative structures that could maximize the use of an approved apprenticeship in Pennsylvania. The MH/MR Coalition will share details of the DSS apprenticeship as soon as they are available.

Upcoming Working Together Campaign Updates will share future goals and strategies of the MH/MR Coalition, including a statement on economic development and the critical
role community MH and community MR services and supports play in positioning PA as a leader among the states.

The MH/MR Coalition’s mission has not changed. The Working Together Campaign Principles, now more than ever, keep the Coalition united. The following pages of this Working Together Campaign Update highlight some of the achievements of the Working Together Campaign to date. We invite you to celebrate these accomplishments and use them as building blocks for the New Year. We encourage you to share this update with your legislators, local media and all interested parties. Our issues must remain visible amid many other public policy challenges that exist today.

**Recruitment and Retention Crisis in Community Mental Retardation and Community Mental Health Services and Supports: Working Together to Remove Barriers to Community Living**

Mental retardation and mental health stakeholders’ response to the recruitment and retention crisis consists of numerous responses at the federal, state and local levels. The MH/MR Coalition was organized in 1999 to promote the viability of the community mental health and mental retardation workforces by meeting the following objectives:

I. Unify stakeholders based on common principles and objectives.

II. Increase awareness of the workforce crisis in community mental retardation and community mental health services and supports among policymakers and the public.

III. Promote adequate state funding to recruit and retain qualified direct support specialists.

IV. Recognize the connection between direct support specialists and quality of services and supports.

V. Collect and analyze data relative to the cost of providing quality services and supports.

VI. Establish an apprenticeship program for direct support specialists working in community mental health and mental retardation programs.

The MH/MR Coalition and other stakeholders have worked together over the past 3 years to eliminate the barriers and promote quality community services and supports for individuals with mental retardation and individuals with mental illness. Coalition efforts

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continue throughout the Commonwealth in conjunction with local partnerships to promote the following principles:

- WE FIRMLY BELIEVE that ensuring high quality community-based services requires the involvement and commitment of all stakeholders: consumers, clients, families, providers, advocates, government entities and communities.

- WE FIRMLY BELIEVE that high quality community-based services can only be assured if providers, consumers and families can recruit and retain qualified staff.

- WE FIRMLY BELIEVE that the recruitment and retention of qualified staff is jeopardized without adequate state and federal funding, applied to local solutions.

- THEREFORE, we, the members of the MH/MR Coalition, commit our energy and resources to working collaboratively toward solutions that will ensure the recruitment and retention of Qualified Staff – The Link to Quality!

PENNSYLVANIA MH/MR COALITION OBJECTIVES

I. Unify stakeholders based on common principles and objectives.

Coalition Response:

- Formed the MH/MR Coalition dedicated to advocating for adequate funding to provide for quality community mental retardation and community mental health services and supports. The Coalition is comprised of all major statewide advocacy, provider and county associations.

- Developed and hosted the first MH/MR Coalition Summit in November 2000. This Summit was the first significant gathering of providers and counties from across Pennsylvania to discuss the recruitment and retention crisis. The Summit was an important sign of solidarity on the issues, and helped to coordinate a number of current and new local initiatives.

- Hosted the 2nd annual MH/MR Coalition Summit in October 2001. Over 200 industry leaders attended, representing all association members of the Coalition, 16 MH/MR county joiners and 92 community providers. This summit brought national researchers to Pennsylvania to share promising practices with the Summit participants. Dr. Sheryl Larson of the University of Minnesota and Marianne Taylor of the Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) made a joint Best Practices presentation titled, Building Workforce Development Strategies: A Bird’s-Eye View, in addition to conducting a day-long interactive workshop on recruitment and retention for representatives of the MH/MR Coalition prior to the Summit. Jeff Keilson, the former Director of the Massachusetts Department of...
Mental Retardation for the Metro Region, shared information about the Massachusetts’ recruitment and public relations campaign with Summit participants.

- Promoted collaborative efforts with providers, consumers and families, with encouragement to include local Workforce Investment Boards, in the state’s 46 county MH/MR programs to prepare proposals for the use of an additional $17.5 million state dollars allocated in the FY 2001-2002 state budget. These additional state dollars were a direct result of the MH/MR Coalition’s advocacy initiative on recruitment and retention. Coalition members participated actively in the workgroup that developed the initiative plan guidelines, stressing the need for local solutions, partnerships and flexibility.

- Continues to work closely with the Waiting List Coalition and other advocacy groups dedicated to addressing the needs of individuals with mental retardation and individuals with mental illness through the recruitment and retention of quality direct support staff.

Outcomes:

- An ongoing open exchange of ideas and collaboration between counties and providers working towards one common goal – securing a stable and qualified workforce, recognizing this as the key to quality services, and a boost to local economies. This is one of the greatest achievements of the Working Together Campaign.

- Increased access to knowledge and resources available to community services and supports to promote a quality workforce.

- A common focus for local community efforts to support building a stable and qualified workforce as the key to improving the quality of MH and MR services and supports.

II. Increase awareness of the workforce crisis in community mental retardation and community mental health services and supports among policymakers and the public.

Coalition Response:

- Publishes regular Working Together Campaign Updates distributed by email and print to the memberships of all Coalition associations and interested stakeholders. A special legislative version of the Campaign Update was developed in 2001.

- Hosted two annual MH/MR Coalition Press Conferences and Days on the Hill, the most recent being March 25, 2002. Legislators, family members, and consumers all
confirmed the need for essential funding of community mental health and mental retardation services. Legislators addressing the group included: Representative Kathy Manderino, Senator Allen Kukovich, Representative Raymond Bunt, Jr. and Senator Jane Earll. Consumers and family members sharing their stories included Shelly Bishop, Lehigh Bradley and Nancy Murray.

- Hosted **caucus meetings** with the legislative champions on MH/MR services from both parties and houses. Despite overwhelming concerns with the current economic environment, legislators agreed that the MH/MR Coalition’s position was reasonable and needed to be addressed.

- Presented **exhibits at the Capitol** to help educate the administration, legislators, staff and the public about services and supports for persons with mental illness and persons with mental retardation. Coalition exhibits took place on April 15th, May 8th and June 3rd, 4th, and 5th of 2002. The exhibits featured videos, displays and representatives from community MR and community MH provider agencies from across the Commonwealth.


**Outcomes:**

- Community providers of MH and/or MR services and supports remain unified in the Coalition’s statewide Working Together Campaign and its focus to raise awareness of and to educate state legislators about the needs of individuals receiving community MR and individuals receiving community MH services.

- Consumers, parents, family members, direct support staff, providers and other concerned citizens continue to contact their legislators to remind them that quality direct support specialists are the key to quality in community services and supports.

- Bipartisan support occurred in both the House and Senate, represented by 208 legislators who signed on to a letter to Governor Ridge in FY2001/2002 asking for an additional $50M to address the crisis. This bipartisan support continued in the FY2002/2003 budget cycle as demonstrated by a letter to Governor Schweiker signed by 114 Representatives strongly urging, at a minimum, a cost of living increase for community MH and MR providers.

- Recruitment and retention funds that were gained in FY2001/2002 ($17.5M in state funds) remained in the base line items for community MH and community MR for FY2002/2003 despite the difficult economic environment, largely due to strong legislative and grassroots support.
III. Promote adequate state funding to recruit and retain qualified direct support specialists.

Coalition Response:

- Developed a funding request each fiscal year. Through the Coalition’s public awareness activities, members promote a specific funding request, and advocate for the Working Together Campaign Principles.

Outcomes:

- The General Assembly directed the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) to issue reports in 1999 and 2000 regarding direct care in community mental retardation and community mental health. These reports highlighted the inadequacy of resources dedicated to the recruitment and retention of direct support specialists in community MH/MR programs in Pennsylvania.

- **Direct Care Worker Initiative for FY2001/2002** - On February 19th, the Departments of Public Welfare and Aging jointly announced “more than 300 organizations statewide will receive $33 million in state and federal funds to continue Pennsylvania’s efforts to improve recruitment and retention of direct-care workers.”

- The Coalition, its associations and members successfully advocated for $17.5 M of the $33 Million available in the initiative, for MH/MR. Counties began receiving allocations in March 2002.

- Local initiatives include: partnerships with community colleges and workforce investment boards, wage increases, career ladder incentives and public relations campaigns, to name a few. 233 local plans have been developed across the state to access funding through the 2001 Direct Care Worker Initiative.

- The Coalition has been told that all approved plans will be accessible online through the Department of Public Welfare’s website at [http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/general/program.asp](http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/general/program.asp).

IV. **Recognize the connection between direct support specialists and quality of services.**

Coalition Response:
• Created the **Working Together Campaign Principles** recognizing Direct Support Specialists as the key to quality.

• Distributed the principles in a petition format to all Coalition members. Urged all advocates, providers, counties, consumers, family members and interested members of the public who agreed with the petition to sign on.

**Outcome:**

• To date, **19,247** Pennsylvanians have endorsed their support for the MH/MR Coalition’s Working Together Campaign Principles that highlight the Direct Support Specialist as the key to quality in services and supports.

### V. Costs associated with providing quality community services and supports

**Coalition Response:**

• Conducted a **Cost Impact Survey** of new government policies. All statewide community MH/MR provider associations surveyed their members regarding the cost impact of the Incident Management Bulletin issued by the Office of Mental Retardation. No additional dollars were provided to implement new requirements stated in the Bulletin while the cost impact of the bulletin, as written, was estimated to exceed a 2% COLA statewide.

• The MH/MR Coalition presented a **Business Case** to legislative and administrative officials.

**Outcome:**

• An enhanced understanding of costs associated with providing community services and supports for individuals with mental retardation and individuals with mental illness among the Administration, the General Assembly and the stakeholder community continues to develop.

### V. Secure funding to establish an apprenticeship program for direct support specialists

**Coalition Response:**

• Worked with the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (DOL) - through national associations such as The American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR) - to have Direct Support Specialists (DSS) recognized as an apprentice-able position.

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• The Coalition discussed DOL’s approval of DSS’ as an apprentice-able profession with Pennsylvania’s Department of Labor and Industry and Department of Public Welfare.

• Formed a working relationship with the PA Department of Labor and Industry.

• Convened a taskforce of community MH and MR providers to develop a statewide apprenticeship program.

• Identified and developed standards, curriculum and administrative structures that can maximize the use of an approved apprenticeship in Pennsylvania.

Outcome:

• In November 2001, the U.S. DOL Office of Apprenticeship Training approved the Direct Support Specialist as a new apprentice-able occupation. The DSS occupation provides support to individuals with disabilities and others who need assistance with basic services and information to lead self-directed lives, contribute to their society, and support behaviors that enhance inclusion in their communities.

• The MH/MR Coalition submitted its DSS Apprenticeship to the Pennsylvania State Apprenticeship and Training Council (SAC) of the Department of Labor and Industry in September 2002.

Anticipated Outcomes:

• Community MH/MR providers can receive TANF funds for eligible employees that complete an apprenticeship.

• Viable data regarding direct support specialists and workforce development initiative(s) will be available