

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Connecticut's Transformation to Recovery-Oriented Care: Mental Health, Partnerships, and a Quality Life in the Community for All**

In response to the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health and recently released federal action agenda, Connecticut Governor M. Jodi Rell has charged 14 key state agencies and the Judicial Branch to transform all mental health services and associated systems to offer the state's citizens an array of accessible services and supports that are culturally responsive, person and family-centered, and have as their primary aim the promotion of resilience, recovery, and inclusion in community life. Governor Rell has committed to "transformation for the long run" to improve the quality and effectiveness of Connecticut's mental health care, and is joined in this effort by the Chairs of the Appropriations Committee of the General Assembly, who also have committed to sustain effective infrastructure and services delivery enhancements required by, and introduced as part of, the process of transformation.

Connecticut intends the outcome of a successful transformation to be a recovery-oriented system of mental health care that will offer the State's citizens meaningful choices from among an array of effective services and supports responsive to diverse cultural backgrounds and across the lifespan. These services and supports will build on personal, family, and community assets, and will be offered in an integrated and coordinated fashion within the context of locally-based and managed systems of care, thereby ensuring continuity of care both over time and across agency boundaries. As envisioned by the President's New Freedom Commission, the results of such a transformed system will be enhanced mental and physical health and well being of the state's citizens, increased productivity of the workforce, and "a life in the community for everyone."

There are six major components to the proposed transformation efforts, consistent with the six goals recommended by the New Freedom Commission. These are: 1) **Connecticut's citizens will understand that mental health is essential to overall health and will treat it with the same urgency as physical health**, 2) **mental health care will be person and family-driven and oriented to promoting resilience and recovery**, 3) **disparities in mental health care that are based on culture, ethnicity, race, or gender will be eliminated so that all citizens will be able to participate equally in the promise of recovery**, 4) **early mental health screening, assessment, and referral to services will become common practice**, 5) **excellent mental health care, supported by research, will be provided**, and 6) **technology will be used to increase access to care and information**. As mental illness does not discriminate based on age, gender, social class, culture, or other life circumstance, these efforts will necessarily cross the life span and focus on a range of community and institutional settings, beginning with schools, work settings, and civic and faith communities, extending to primary care and specialty mental health care settings, and following people into and out of hospitals, jails, prisons, and a variety of supported residential settings. Regardless of setting, life stage, or severity of illness, the mental health and other services and supports offered to citizens in need will emphasize tapping into and building on the person's own resilience and other strengths and interests and providing him or her with the opportunities and supports he or she can use in pursuing and sustaining recovery.

As a first, important step in the process of transformation, these 14 state agencies, the Judicial Branch, and all of the state's key stakeholders will come together over the next 9 months to formulate a comprehensive state mental health plan.