



Message from
The Office of the Commissioner
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Chief Operating Officer

PREVENTION... A BUILDING BLOCK OF RECOVERY

Last year the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health presented to President George W. Bush a report entitled "Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America." The report's core themes and recommendations challenge states across the nation to facilitate recovery, build resilience and promote a life in the community for all people living with mental illness and other behavioral problems such as addiction.

You may ask, what does health promotion and prevention have to do with treatment and recovery? I asked Dianne Harnad, DMHAS Director of Prevention, to discuss how health promotion and prevention fit within the DMHAS recovery continuum and the steps her division has taken to meet the President's and SAMHSA's challenge. Ms. Harnad tells us:

Prevention has been defined as a proactive process of helping individuals, families and communities to develop resources and capabilities needed to maintain healthy lifestyles. Prevention and health promotion are closely linked to the treatment and recovery continuum since prevention efforts may occur at any point along the service paradigm. Prevention is a science: prevention activities are planned interventions rooted in theory or research. Health promotion and prevention interventions are comprised of education, competency building, systems and community development and mobilizing natural support.

The DMHAS Prevention Division uses a "public health and risk and protective factor" approach to develop and implement comprehensive statewide programs that reach the citizens of Connecticut across the lifespan. These preventive interventions are designed to eliminate or reduce risk factors and promote strengths and competencies within individuals, families, schools, and communities. Through a myriad of prevention programs and collaborative initiatives between local, state and federal partners, these interventions have addressed:

- ♦ mental health problems
- ♦ alcohol and other drug use
- ♦ parenting
- ♦ support groups for children
- ♦ mentoring
- ♦ family strengthening
- ♦ disaster preparedness
- ♦ bullying and violence prevention

In recent years, DMHAS has leveraged over \$17 million federal dollars for health promotion and prevention services. At the individual level, we have applied evidence-based interventions to prevent or reduce substance use and violence. At the community level, we have Local Prevention Councils covering every town in the state, community providers and Regional Action Councils. At the state and systems level, we have interagency policy plans and workgroups, statewide training and technical assistance, and a statewide network more formally known as the Connecticut Coalition for the Advancement of Prevention.

This year, the DMHAS Prevention Division in collaboration with the CT Communities for Addiction Recovery (CCAR) and the CT Assets Network (CAN) will pilot an innovative approach to promote recovery. This approach will build the capacity of local recovering communities to sustain wellness using strength-based practices and community development. This method of "building recovery capital" will touch individuals in early, mid-stage and long-term recovery through recovery community centers and peer recovery support services where hope, family support and nurturing will be available.

To learn more about DMHAS' Prevention System of Services, please visit our website @ www.DMHAS.state.ct.org. Your comments are welcome at Paul.Dileo@po.state.ct.us