



Pause, Reflect, then Move Forward

Connecticut is facing unprecedented challenges due to the general economic downturn confronting our nation. The DMHAS and its sister state agencies are preparing to live within new budgetary realities – we're tightening our belts just as you are doing at home. The Governor's Budget released on February 4 provides a framework for meeting these fiscal challenges. It includes many details regarding the DMHAS service system.

Doreen DelBianco, our outstanding Legislative Liaison, has released three Legislative Updates within the last week, including Update No. 6 that is a brief summary of the Budget as it pertains to DMHAS. It is on the DMHAS website www.dmhas.state.ct.us. These highly informative updates occur with frequency during the legislative session. Updates No. 7 and 8 will be on the website this coming Monday.

The State Budget is very detailed; it's a lot to digest. First hearing about different parts of it can be anxiety-producing; misinformation and false rumors occur far too often. Good communication is essential, especially since all the details of the budget process occur over months. With that in mind, the afternoon of the release of the Governor's Budget, briefing conference calls were conducted by my staff with a wide variety of stakeholder groups.

Due to the probable impact on Cedarcrest Hospital (CRH) staff, I and two members of my Executive Group met with CRH Hospital CEO Brenda Thorington and her leadership team and then with a very large group of CRH staff. Our intent was to provide good information as we know it now, ease and hear the concerns of the staff and learn about how the patients were doing. Unfortunately, though the Governor never mentioned CRH in her talk, some patients and staff saw a note that ran along the top of the television screen that said CRH would be closing. Concern? Close next week, next month, where will a patient receive care? Our meeting I hope served to provide information and begin to ease concerns. The leadership and staff of CRH are highly dedicated and skilled. I am confident they will continue to provide good care and support one another in all the days and months ahead.

While all the budget process continues to occur, we must take time to pause, reflect, and prepare to move forward. As we pause to review the budget, it is important to **reflect upon our mission and core values. These values will guide our decisions and the manner in which we move forward.** As Connecticut grapples with its budgetary problems, **the Department remains committed to promoting wellness, preventing illness, and pursuing implementation of a quality-driven, recovery-oriented system of care for people with serious psychiatric and substance use conditions. We will continue to focus on quality, safety, and achieving the greatest value—best outcomes for each dollar spent.**

The people we serve and the staff who work with them are **the center of our universe.** We will move forward mindful that our decisions have real consequences for real people. Everything we do will build upon the foundation we have already established and will be guided by the core values that have brought us all to this place.

While we may not always agree, now, more than ever, we must work together. We have the skill, the expertise, and the will to meet the challenges we face.

I'd like to hear from you. Please send me your thoughts, your concerns, and your ideas at Thomas.kirk@po.state.ct.us.