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 Commissioner

NAMI RATES STATES' PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEMS

A Message from the Office of the Commissioner

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) just released its report, *Grading the States 2009*. I am pleased that Connecticut earned the top rank among all states with an overall grade of "B." Five other states— Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York and Oklahoma, also earned "B's." NAMI's last report card for states was issued in 2006 when Connecticut shared the nation's top mark, a "B," with Ohio.

NAMI is a tough grader, giving an overall "D" to states across the nation in 2006, and again in 2009. Their goal in grading states is to achieve a high quality, welcoming mental health system that provides the best care possible for adults with serious mental health conditions and their families. We share that goal.

Each state was scored on 65 criteria resulting in an overall grade. Grades were given in four sub-categories. I am proud that we were the only state to earn an "A" in any sub-category, especially since our "A" is in the "Consumer and Family Empowerment" category. The other three sub-categories are Health Promotion and Measurement; Financing and Core Treatment/Recovery Services; and Community Integration and Social Inclusion.

Where did we do well?

The "Consumer and Family Test Drive," where a NAMI representative measured our responses to calls from consumers and family members earned a perfect score. Thanks to consumers and advocate groups, we also did well in almost all of the consumer/family empowerment measurements. We received the highest possible scores in workforce development and our collaboration with the Judicial Branch and the Dept. of Correction to implement jail diversion and community reintegration services for offenders. Framing our mission of recovery and developing strategies for treating persons with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders were also top ranked. Our Military Support Program and emerging electronic medical records system were cited as innovative. We were credited for enhancing the quality of care and improving the physical plant at Connecticut Valley Hospital in response to a Department of Justice review and for our efforts to move people with serious mental illness from nursing homes to the community.

How did we do it? We didn't do it alone!

- ✓ Strong leadership and support given by the Governor and Legislature are critical factors in our success.
- ✓ We could not have succeeded without our collaborative partnerships with consumers, family members, advocacy organizations, care providers, sister state agencies and our academic partners.
- ✓ Our well trained, culturally competent workforce in both the public and private non-profit sectors must be credited for their excellence.
- ✓ Winning competitive grants from federal agencies in collaboration with key state agencies, the Judicial Branch and care providers allow us to move forward on innovative approaches to recovery.

What areas were identified as improvement needed? NAMI believes:

- ✓ We can do better in getting Medicaid reimbursement for specific services—supported employment and education, family psycho-education, supported housing, telemedicine, and peer specialists.
- ✓ We must continue to reduce the number of individuals with serious mental illness who are in nursing homes.
- ✓ We can improve access to care by increasing system capacity for community services and supported housing so that people are able to move to the least restrictive level of care to best meet their needs in a timelier manner.

Report cards can be a source of great anxiety, joy, grief or relief. Thanks to all of you, this is one report card Connecticut can bring home with a sense of accomplishment. However, we are far from where we want our system to be. I am committed to stay the course; building on our cornerstones as we face the challenges NAMI put before us. In my next *Message* I will share with you what has been done to meet those challenges and where we intend to go from here.

To view the NAMI report go to www.nami.org/grades2009
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