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Commissioner

June 12, 2009

So Many Years...So Much Experience...So Many Lives

It is called the **Retirement Incentive Plan**, one strategy in the continuing saga of trying to meet fiscal challenges of economic tsunami proportion sweeping over Connecticut state government. It involves a package of benefits for state employees who meet years of service and other retirement eligibility conditions.

As I write this Message, I am looking at the list of approximately 370 DMHAS employees who have expressed interest in possibly taking advantage of the offer and retiring from public service no later than this July 1. A good number of them have signed on the bottom line and others must make their decision soon.

Who are these 370 people among the 4,000 or so who staff the healthcare agency known as DMHAS, who provide administrative support or deliver treatment and recovery support services to 90,000 adults each year with serious mental health and/or substance use conditions? Who help to meet the needs of their families? Who provide prevention, health promotion and wellness services to many more thousands of youngsters and adults?

Collectively, they represent a group of people who have contributed over 5,000 years of their lives to working in support of the DMHAS mission...5,000 years of experience, of institutional knowledge, of public service. More time with their work family than their home family.

They are a striking mosaic of people with a variety of titles. Building Superintendent, Clinical Social Worker, Cook, Custodian, Dining Room Supervisor, Engineer, Forensic Treatment Specialist, General Trades Worker, Human Resource Specialist, Information Technology Analyst, Medical Records Clerk, Mental Health Assistant, Nurse, Occupational Therapist, Pharmacist, Police Sergeant, Psychiatrist, Psychologist, Secretary, Skilled Maintainer, Staff Development Director, Substance Abuse Counselor, Voc Rehab Counselor...and so on.

The skill, dedication, and experience of every one of the folks behind these fancy and not so fancy titles is *essential* to an effective, safe, and well managed health care delivery system. What makes DMHAS great is *not* on an organizational chart with many boxes and titles. It is people working together, teaching and encouraging one another...who realize behind each budget number, each prevention service, in each outpatient service or inpatient bed is a person who has entrusted their care to us...in hopes of getting better, of having a life again. So many lives have been helped by those leaving state service at this time.

To all who are weighing your decision, whether you take it or not, I want to tell you this:

MANY, MANY THANKS FOR ALL YOUR YEARS OF WORK, FOR THE CONTRIBUTION OF YOURSELF TO THE WORK AND FOR YOUR RESOLVE TO ENHANCE THE LIVES OF THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE YOU HAVE HELPED ALONG THE WAY. BRAVO...WELL DONE...YOU'RE SIMPLY THE BEST!

We all stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. You have lifted all of us up. Your teaching, dedication, coaching of how to work together, the memories you leave behind for the rest of us. They are your collective legacy. They will be felt for many years in the future by staff and the thousands of people who entrust their care to the healthcare system known as DMHAS. You may be walking out the door, but your legacy will help us to not just survive, but to grow in the face of this tsunami.

To those of you moving on, I wish you all the best in your future endeavors. I hope to meet many of you over the next few weeks as we celebrate your career with us.

Best regards,

Tom Kirk (Comments are welcome at Thomas.Kirk@po.state.ct.us)