



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES
A Healthcare Service Agency

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**Testimony by Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, PhD, Commissioner
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Before the Appropriations, Human Services and
Public Health Committees
September 28, 2015**

CMHS Block Grant Hearing

Good morning Senator Bye, Senator Moore, Senator Gerratana, Representative Walker, Representative Abercrombie, Representative Ritter and distinguished members of the Appropriations, Human Services and Public Health Committees. I am Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. I am here before you today to present the Allocation Plan for the for the Community Mental Health Services (CMHS) Block Grant for federal fiscal year (FFY) 2016.

The document before you describes the Block Grant contribution to the overall funding of mental health services for adults and children. The Allocation Plan contains proposed expenditures and services for FFY 2016. I would like to highlight the following items for the adults with psychiatric disabilities that are served by these dollars:

- A. **Emergency/Crisis Services** are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- B. **Outpatient Clinical Services** improve or maintain the psychological or social functioning of adults with the most serious mental illnesses.
- C. **Residential Services** offer a variety of housing opportunities, including supported and supervised apartments.
- D. **Employment Opportunities** consist of specialized, work-related services and supports which enable persons with psychiatric disabilities to participate in a competitive labor market.
- E. **Case Management** ensure persons we serve are actively linked with appropriate services in order to remain in the community. Enhanced emphasis is placed on addressing the homeless population through these services.
- F. **Social Rehabilitation Programs** assist with daily living skills, improving people's interpersonal skills, and maintaining their lives.

A total of 24 programs are currently offered through 17 agencies to adults who are indigent and challenged with chronic mental illness. These services are essential and need to be continued, as

they support persons who have been discharged into the community and are consistent with our emphasis on providing a recovery oriented system of care.

DMHAS continues to support project initiatives with FFY 2016 CMHS Block Grant funds including:

- 1) Programs within community-based general hospitals which support the rights of persons who are mentally ill;
- 2) Parental support and parental rights for families of those with mental illness;
- 3) Residential and/or case management services; and
- 4) Enhanced consumer vocational/employment support services.

I would also like to draw your attention to the fact that this Allocation Plan includes a one-time expenditure for raising community awareness and educating the public about behavioral health concerns through the Mental Health First Aid program. This effort is in response to findings from the most recent priority setting process, facilitated by the Regional Mental Health Boards and the Regional Action Councils, which identified a lack of information, or misinformation, about common behavioral health conditions and resources available to address them. Discrimination toward those with behavioral health conditions is one consequence of this lack of information which this one-time allocation seeks to address.

The Allocation Plan before you is based on estimated federal funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of \$ 4,745,284 and is subject to change when the final federal appropriation is authorized. This estimated amount represents a 1.4% decrease from last year's amount. Of the estimated FFY 2016 CMHS Block Grant appropriation, \$3,321,699 is allocated to adult mental health services and thirty (30) percent or \$1,423,585 is allocated to the Department of Children and Families (DCF). DCF will address their portion of the Block Grant separately.

While this funding represents less than one percent of the total DMHAS budget, considerable attention was given to the Allocation Plan in order that it be supportive of the direction given to us by the State Behavioral Health Planning Council and other advisory bodies.

The state funding component for mental health services is not reflected in the plan before you today. It should be noted, however, that the CMHS Block Grant requires states to maintain expenditures for community mental health services at a level not less than the average level for the two year period preceding the fiscal year for which the state is applying for the grant. Due to a legislative action which reallocated funding from DMHAS to the Department of Social Services (DSS) as part of the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid Expansion, solely evaluating the DMHAS budget does not accurately depict the state's commitment to community mental health services. Consequently, DMHAS has requested a determination of material compliance from SAMHSA based on other relevant factors such as the state's expenditure history, number of persons served, and the state's future funding commitment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to take any questions you may have at this time or I could do so following the Department of Children and Families' presentation, if that would be preferable.