



**Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Mental Health and Substance Abuse System-level Advocacy Update
April 1, 2009**

This is the first update for the stakeholders of the mental health and substance abuse services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals in Colorado. You were put on our distribution list for that reason. Please don't hesitate to let us know if we need to remove you from our list or if you can refer other stakeholders to us.

This correspondence is part of a plan where increased involvement by the stakeholders, especially deaf and hard of hearing consumers, family members and community leaders, is critical. We believe that by keeping our stakeholders posted regarding the work the Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CCDHH) Mental Health and Substance Abuse (MHSA) Implementation Team has performed, will help generate interest among stakeholders of the deaf and hard of hearing MHSA services and expand our network base.

The CCDHH MHSA Implementation Team was formed after the original Task Force was disbanded in October 2008. The steering team of the MHSA Task Force had identified 11 key state agency representatives, MHSA providers and deaf and hard of hearing leaders for the Implementation Team. This Team has been in charge of overseeing and supporting the implementation of the Commission MHSA Action Plan as well as representing their stakeholder groups or organizations. Those individuals that were identified for the Implementation Team and were confirmed are as follows:

- Cliff Moers of the Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (staff)
- Ric Durity of the Mental Health Center of Denver
- Ami Garry of DOVE: Advocacy Services for Abused Deaf Women and Children
- Rebecca Herr of the Colorado Hearing Loss Association of America
- Candice Tate of Purple Monarch, a private practice
- Pat Doyle of the Legal Center for People with Disabilities and Older People
- Laura Douglas of the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind
- Carmelita Muniz of the Colorado Association of Alcohol and Drug Services Providers
- Jagruti Shah of the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing
- Angelia Lawson of the Division of Behavioral Health (Department of Human Services)
- Jennifer Peterson of the Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Commissioner)

The Implementation Team will include another person who will represent parents, but that person has not yet been identified.

The Team will work with commitment to the Action Plan from now until year 2012 depending on how it evolves. The Team has been and will continue to meet on a monthly basis if possible.

The Action Plan consists of the goals, strategies, and actions that center around a statewide system built on three essential legs of statewide capacity building which is goal #2 of the plan:

A Technical Assistance and Education Center to provide technical assistance and training, including working with providers to increase their access to and competency with technology that can assist in communicating with deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

A Statewide Service Delivery Network, to provide direct mental health and substance abuse services statewide to deaf and hard of hearing consumers and their families, using telemedicine and other technology to connect providers and consumers.

Early Outreach and Identification, using existing capacity in Colorado's communities to identify mental health needs among children and seniors who are deaf and hard of hearing and connect them to early intervention resources.

and;

support for three legs of the system that are essential components (goals #1, #3, and #4):

A Governance Structure (goal #1) ensure the successful implementation of the plan and long-term implementation, and oversight of systemic reform in the mental health and substance abuse systems to meet the needs of deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Standards (goal #3) that assist providers in understanding how to best provide services to deaf and hard of hearing consumers, as well as allow the state to monitor the success of service delivery.

Consumer and Family Leadership (goal #4) from the deaf and hard of hearing communities, with participation from consumers and family leaders in the policymaking structures of the mental health and substance abuse systems.

The immediate priorities for the Implementation Team are to:

- 1) explore the capacity needs (availability of services, etc.) for implementing the plan,
- 2) obtain funding to support the plan activities,
- 3) educate the stakeholders regarding the plan, and
- 4) develop Standards for Services and Guidelines for Care.

Soliciting funding for the Coordinator position has begun. This job will be to focus on the implementation of the Action Plan, especially development of the standards, developed by the CCDHH MHSa Task Force. The Team is prepared to submit its first grant proposal next month. Additional proposals will follow.

Two work groups were formed by the Team. These are the Standards Work Group and Advocacy Work Group.

The Standards Work Group will convene with representatives from the deaf and hard of hearing communities and state child welfare, juvenile and criminal justice, education and other systems. It will create and adopt best practice standards to ensure deaf and hard of hearing individuals and their families are appropriately assessed for mental health and substance abuse needs and, if needed, connected to culturally and linguistically competent services. See goal #3 for more information on this part.

The Advocacy Work Group will partner with deaf and hard of hearing advocacy organizations already trusted by the communities, as well as health and mental health consumer and family organizations. It will implement advocacy trainings specifically for deaf and hard of hearing individuals and their families. See goal #4 for more information on this part.

The final CCDHH MHSAs Action Plan and its Executive Summary are attached. They can also be downloaded from the CCDHH website:
<http://www.coloradodeafcommission.com/advocacy/mhsa.aspx>. This website also includes a list of links to conferences and workshops on MHSAs services for deaf and hard of hearing people, powerpoint about the CCDHH MHSAs work and other resources.