



September 23, 2003

Dear Mental Health Community Member:

Minnesota's mental health consumers, case managers and providers struggle today in an uncoordinated sea of details to the detriment of good care. Our mental health system has evolved around dozens of funding streams, a pharmacological revolution and constant changes in best medical practices and health care payment arrangements. Countless reports in the last five years repeatedly document perverse fiscal incentives, poor coordination, ineffective early intervention and under-utilized evidence-based treatments, among other things, as fundamental problems to solve.

It is evident that everyone attuned to the mental health system—consumers, families, providers, tribes, counties, the state, health plans and care facilities—seems to agree on the system's problems. Many groups have shown initiative in tackling some of them. The fact is that each of our independent solutions is insufficient to overcome the systemic and inter-dependent changes that need to take place.

We believe now is an opportunity to make some of these inter-dependent realignments. We are seeking your help and that of your colleagues to transform Minnesota's mental health system into a more consumer-friendly, rational and evidence-based system.

In August, the Citizen's League, the Department of Human Services and a group of knowledgeable, motivated consumer groups, providers, payers and leaders gathered to thoughtfully—but quickly—digest the stacks of quality reports already done and to identify the most urgent problems in need of resolution across systems. The group identified six areas: develop a public private model for mental health services; create a rational fiscal framework; better coordinate care; standardize assessments, performance measurement and outcomes; improve early intervention services; and implement workforce solutions.

For each area, an action team has been formed and a corresponding leader assigned. The announcement of these action teams will formally take place at the Community Mental Health Center's Annual Conference in Brainerd on Thursday, September 25. Each of the action teams is charged with defining and implementing tangible action steps that can be employed in the near-term to improve the mental health system. The teams will undertake this work over the next two to three months. Background documents and meetings times will be tracked on a common website: <http://www.citizensleague.net/mentalhealth/>. Each team will shape its meeting style, frequency and direction as makes sense for the team to achieve its work.

As an important actor in the mental health field, we invite you or someone you designate from your organization to engage in one or more of these action teams to bring your ideas, as well as your resources and motivation, to the table. Our expectation for everyone involved in this effort is that we each stretch beyond our individual interests for the sake of achievable and meaningful systemic improvement. To get involved, please email your areas of interest to mentalhealth@citizensleague.net and we will notify you about action team activities.

We hope that you will step up to engage in this problem-solving endeavor. This is an opportunity for us to do the heavy lifting that ultimately delivers better mental health care to the people of Minnesota. We know that you share this goal and we invite your participation. We both feel the time is right for a successful joint effort that moves us all forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin P. Goodno". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent "K" and "G".

Kevin Goodno
Commissioner, DHS

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Cunningham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent "G" and "C".

Gary Cunningham
Chair, Citizen's League