



August 9, 2008

Ms. Barbara Orlando  
Grants Management Office  
Division of Grants Management, OPS  
SAMHSA  
1 Choke Cherry Road, Room 7-1091  
Rockville, Maryland 20850 (overnight zip)

Dear Ms. Orlando,

The past year was filled with transitions initiated by Governor Strickland and new Ohio Department of Mental Health (ODMH) leadership. Ohio continues to achieve numerous accomplishments in spite of challenging budget constraints, the continuing transition of state leadership, and the dissolution of Ohio's primary statewide consumer organization. ODMH cut \$31 million from their budget without reducing funding to community mental health services. Two state hospital campuses were merged with seven other campuses with no loss of beds. The communities most impacted by the mergers will monitor the impact on local services including transportation and the per diem rate for hospital beds.

The design of our state mental health system constraints are changing, as indicated in the *Block Grant Monitoring Report of May 2008*. An opportunity needs to be developed allowing the system to be designed in a way that meets consumer needs. Language needs to better reflect recovery/resilience and inclusion as integral parts, woven through all systems of care for adults, children and older adults.

ODMH continues to make progress in transforming systems of care with greater inclusion of consumers and families in policy and decision-making activities. Consumers, family members and state agency directors participate in the Transformation Work Group funded by TSIG. They recently heard presentations on trauma-informed care, older adult services, cultural diversity and the sustainability of transformation activities. The Consumer and Family Partnership Team (CFPT) supports meaningful participation in mental health initiatives by linking consumers to steering groups and committees. ODMH provides travel reimbursement and stipend to eligible consumers and family members. CFPT is diverse in its representation of culture, gender, age and geographical considerations. It is also noteworthy that Ohio's toll-free resource number, staffed by consumers, continues to play a vital role in linking consumers and families with mental health services. Statewide consumer recovery leaders are in the process of developing committees to restructure Ohio's statewide consumer organization.

Additionally, Ohio is a national leader in self-help programs. Ohio consumers lead the nation in developing specialized WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plans) training for teens and veterans

using Block Grant funds. WRAP is being investigated as an evidence-based practice (EBP) by a study led by Judith Cook, Ph.D, University of Illinois at Chicago. Walter Hudson, a Planning Council member, and Carol Bailey Floyd, a consumer-facilitator, are master trainers. Walter and Carol trained the trainers for these WRAP groups, and recruited the study participants.

Planning Council members were pleased with the review of Ohio's children's mental health services in the *Block Grant Monitoring Report of May 2008*. Ohio Family and Children First (OFCF) is a major strength in coordinating children's care across multiple systems. Increasing funding and strengthening the structure would improve OFCF efforts. One weakness is that schools have only one member representing multiple school districts. Also, members want to ensure that community partners receive information about Intensive Home Based Treatment and the Network for School Success. They also suggested the use of Medicaid waivers for services.

Ohio's child-serving agencies remain actively involved and committed to addressing the behavioral needs of youth and family via braided funding strategies across systems, which includes three million dollars of child welfare funding. Often children receive varying psychiatric diagnoses which omit describing the trauma which may explain the behavior or symptoms better than the diagnosis. The behavioral health system needs to become trauma-informed to better address the impact of trauma and avoid possibly re-traumatizing children during treatment.

Ohio has a disproportionate number of people of color of all ages in Ohio residential treatment facilities for youth, hospitals, corrections and juvenile justice facilities. Ohio, however, has conducted a statewide cultural competence needs assessment, completed quarterly regional trainings, established a cultural resource library, and facilitated dialogue with key stakeholders on cultural competence issues to better serve diverse populations. Ohio needs to continue using cultural competence data in our systems and develop goals that can assist in decreasing these disparities within racial, cultural and ethnic communities.

The needs of older adults are being addressed through work of the Older Ohioan Behavioral Health Network. This Network and a new initiative to integrate physical and behavioral health care will improve services, especially for persons with co-occurring physical disabilities. We are encouraged in our work with ODMH leadership and their commitment towards transformation in the delivery of services to families and consumers of Ohio, and applaud the inclusion of families and consumers in the design and implementation of this work.

Sincerely yours,



Gloria Walker, Chairperson,  
Planning Council Block Grant Committee

Cc Sandra Stephenson, MSW, MA, Director  
William P. Harper, MA, ACSW, LISW, Assistant Director  
Deborah Nixon-Hughes, MSW, LISW, Deputy Director