



For Immediate Release

State Consolidates Mental Health, Addiction Services

Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services to launch July 1, 2013

(COLUMBUS, OH – July 1, 2013) Gov. John R. Kasich’s “Jobs 2.0 Budget” includes a number of common sense reforms that promote smarter, more efficient state government. Among the many transformations is the establishment of the Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) -- a consolidated cabinet-level agency born from the marriage of the former departments of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services and Mental Health.

“One of the charges of creating the Governor’s Office of Health Transformation was to recommend an improved permanent structure for Ohio’s health and human services agencies. This agency consolidation is an outcome of that work,” said Tracy Plouck, who will serve as inaugural director of the new department.

Beginning July 1, OhioMHAS will oversee a statewide service network that includes more than 460 alcohol, drug and gambling addiction prevention and treatment providers, 400 community mental health agencies and six regional psychiatric hospitals. The blended department will have a staff of approximately 2,400 (including 300 central office employees) and a budget of approximately \$698 million in FY 14 and \$687 million in FY 15. The department’s mission is “To provide statewide leadership in support of a high quality mental and addiction prevention, treatment and recovery system that is effective and valued by all Ohioans.”

“Because both addiction and mental illness are diseases of the brain that can be treated successfully, it makes sense that treatment services for people with these illnesses are coordinated,” said Dr. Mark Hurst, medical director for the new agency. “We anticipate being able to provide better services through integrated care.”

Under the new structure Ohioans needing help for mental illness or an addiction will benefit from shared expertise and resources. Not everyone with mental illness has a substance abuse issue, but the percentage of those who do live with both issues is high. According to the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) 2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 20 to 25 percent of individuals with a mental illness also will have a substance use disorder. In the state’s regional psychiatric hospitals, rates in excess of 50 percent are consistently found. Likewise, according to SAMHSA, it is common for people with substance abuse disorders to also experience symptoms of mental illness.

The consolidation will save around \$3 million in central office administrative costs over the biennium and directs these savings to a new Community Innovations fund. The first round of Community Innovations will focus on partnerships with county sheriffs and local jails. Ensuring proper supports for individuals with addiction or mental illness when leaving jail will prevent recidivism leading to better outcomes for the individual and saving costs down the line.

“The new structure will facilitate the Administration’s support of local priorities and allow us to make targeted investments in services which have the potential for savings in other parts of government,” said Plouck.

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Consolidation, page 2

Initiatives and programs of the former ODMH and ODADAS will be maintained. No layoffs will occur; however, additional administrative savings may be achieved by not backfilling vacant positions. Former ODADAS administrator Orman Hall will continue to orchestrate Ohio's efforts to combat opiate abuse and addiction -- one of Gov. Kasich's major initiatives -- as director of the Governor's Cabinet Opiate Action Team.

The consolidation will not impact the 50 county Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health (ADAMH) boards, 47 of which already administer both mental health and addiction services at the local level. Community planning for both departments, undertaken by the county ADAMH boards, will be aligned.

State-level administrative consolidation will help to support local government partners, providers and clients by improving access to more timely, effective services, reducing unnecessary regulatory burdens and supporting better client outcomes. Cross training Ohio's mental health and addiction services workforce will allow for greater expertise for the benefit of Ohioans and the community service system. Barriers in billing and treatment can be overcome and the opportunity to work as a team will allow staff members to be more effective in responding to the needs of Ohio residents.

"Our number one priority is meeting the needs of the Ohioans we serve. We are committed to making the transition as seamless as possible," said Plouck. "My goal is to be able to ask our stakeholders a year from now if it is easier to function and do business in the new state environment and have them respond, 'Yes'."

Heading into next week's launch, significant work has occurred already to integrate the two departments. Most back office functions were combined (fiscal, legislation, communications, information technology, legal, and Medicaid policy) shortly after the Governor announced plans to combine operations in May 2012. The Department also convened a number of stakeholder groups to solicit feedback and input on the structure and operation of the consolidated department.

"We wanted to be as transparent and inclusive as possible," Plouck said. "We have had robust involvement from county boards, service providers, advocates and consumer groups. Our goal is to provide a system for prevention and treatment of mental illness and addiction with no wrong doors, shared resources, and combined expertise."

The Department's new website – mha.ohio.gov – will go-live July 1. Ohioans seeking help for a mental illness or addiction may call the Department's toll-free help and information line – 1-877-275-6364 – to be connected to services at the local level.

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Contact: Eric Wandersleben, Director of Media Affairs & Outreach
614.728.5090 or Eric.Wandersleben@mha.ohio.gov

30 East Broad Street, 36th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215