



OhioMHAS: What Ohio's Behavioral Health Leaders and Advocates are Saying

“Governor Kasich has spoken about his common sense approach to what needs to be done in Ohio. The consolidation of the ODMH and ODADAS is just one of many examples. As a nurse that has spent the better part of four decades working with and advocating for individuals with mental health and substance abuse needs, bringing the silos together has been a step I always believed would reduce barriers to treatment, regulatory burden, cost and minimize gaps in care. This is a big step forward that just makes sense.”

■ **Esther Pla, RN, BC, president & CEO, Connections: Health *Wellness* Advocacy**

“We are excited to continue our partnership with the new Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Throughout this consolidation effort, we've seen tremendous progress working towards the further integration of Ohio's state-level mental health and addiction resources, policies, and programs. As statutory partners in providing community behavioral health services, OACBHA and our member Boards are proud to work alongside the new Department to better serve all Ohioans in need of behavioral health services and supports.”

■ **Cheri L. Walter, CEO, Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities**

“There is no denying the fact that many individuals with mental illness also struggle with a corresponding substance use disorder. Integrating the state departments that oversee these treatment systems will lead to better coordination of care and ultimately better outcomes. We, at NAMI Ohio, are confident that the new Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services will remain fully committed to improving the lives of those with mental illness and that this consolidation will be a win-win for individuals with mental illness, substance use disorder or both.”

■ **Terry Russell, executive director, National Alliance on Mental Illness of Ohio**

“Prevention is a proven approach to maintaining healthy lives and saving public dollars. By aligning these two systems, more Ohioans will benefit and prosper from the available resources.”

■ **Marcie Seidel, executive director, Drug-Free Action Alliance**

“The Ohio Council of Behavioral Health & Family Services Providers, which represents over 160 addiction treatment, mental health and family service provider organizations statewide, looks forward to working with the new, consolidated Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. The Ohio Council has long supported the integration of physical and behavioral health that included the integration of addiction treatment and mental health services to better meet the needs of patients throughout Ohio. We are excited about this consolidation since it provides an opportunity for a patient-centered behavioral health care system built around access to a full continuum of care; streamlining regulations and operational procedures; and enabling specialty behavioral health providers to operate more efficiently in a rapidly changing health care environment.”

■ **Hubert Wirtz, CEO, The Ohio Council of Behavioral Health & Family Services Providers**

“The consolidation responds to the reality that in Ohio more than 3.6 million Ohioans experience a mental illness or addiction disorder and many experience both. More than 25 percent of individuals with a mental illness have a co-occurring substance use disorder. Limited funding has been one significant barrier to access for both populations. The consolidation will allow for these two departments to share resources and staff and save on some back office costs, which will allow for some administrative funding to be redirected to treatment and support services. We are encouraged by the efforts made to make the consolidation transparent, and, most importantly, improve access to treatment and support services for those living with a mental illness or addiction disorder.”

■ **Joan Englund, executive director, Mental Health & Addiction Advocacy Coalition**

“COHHIO is extremely supportive of the administration's plans to coordinate the delivery of behavioral health services under one roof under the visionary leadership of Director Plouck. This long overdue reform puts Ohio on top of best practice nationally, facilitates better coordination of services, and promises to address gaps in the current antiquated delivery system, such as the lack of supportive housing options for Ohio's most vulnerable citizens.”

■ **Bill Faith, executive director, Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio**

“We are excited about the creation of the new Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. We have a great deal of confidence in the leadership of Director Tracy Plouck and her team. We embrace her vision of an integrated system of services that bonds addiction, mental health, and primary care treatment, and look forward to the continued effort to place addiction and mental health services firmly within the continuum of all health care services.”

■ **Ed Hughes, president, Ohio Alliance of Recovery Providers**

“I have found that the consolidation and integration of mental health and alcohol and other drug offers the greatest quality services for our consumers and this reduces overall government costs.”

■ **William Denihan, executive director, Cuyahoga County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board**

“Consolidation of mental health and addiction services provides a new platform to advance understanding and support for mental health and substance use disorders. Ohio Citizen Advocates for Chemical Dependency Prevention & Treatment looks forward to the opportunity to collaborate with the new Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services on mutual goals to improve and expand services that lead to recovery and an enhanced quality of life for thousands of Ohioans.”

■ **Donna Conley, CEO, Ohio Citizen Advocates for Chemical Dependency Prevention and Treatment**

“I am eagerly looking forward to the many opportunities the merger of our two departments will create. More comprehensive service over a larger continuum will ensure those in need will have more access and a better chance at recovery. We are ready for great things!”

■ **Virginia O’Keefe, CEO, Amethyst, Inc.**

“Women in recovery face a unique set of challenges and struggles. These issues are only amplified by separate and sometimes difficult to navigate service systems. Through a consolidated system of care, Ohio has an unprecedented opportunity to address both illnesses together, achieve operational efficiencies and ultimately promote better care and improved outcomes for Ohioans impacted by mental illness and addiction.”

■ **Eloise Traina, executive director, Family Recovery Center on behalf of the Ohio Women’s Network (OWN)**