



Patricia Rehmer, MSN  
Acting Commissioner

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## “Moving Forward”

I consider it an honor and a privilege to be named Acting Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services as Governor Rell conducts her search to appoint a successor to Dr. Kirk. I cannot say enough about how Dr. Kirk’s service has helped to move our behavioral health system in a direction that is more recovery-oriented, person-centered, and focused on helping individuals to achieve a meaningful life in the community. Under his leadership, our Connecticut system of care gained national recognition and working beside him as Deputy Commissioner in these efforts has provided me with some of the most rewarding and illuminating experiences of my career. We will miss his guidance, presence and resolve here at DMHAS, and perhaps envy just a little bit his newfound freedom to write the next chapter of his life.

I believe that much of Dr. Kirk’s success emanated not from pursuing a singular vision of his own for the department, but rather from listening to the voices and perspectives of our many stakeholders and shaping the system to honor the aspirations of the people we serve, the people we work in partnership with, and experts around the country whose research has informed our progress. He understood that there is no single thread that creates healthy communities; rather, it is how we weave many threads into a fabric that values recovery, inclusion and respect. I remain fully committed to this approach and intend to carry forward the direction and policies that we have established together—guided by our shared values, not the momentary crises of the day. I have witnessed a growing momentum in the transformation of our system that circumstances may hinder, but will not defeat. Too many people are counting on us.

As a country we are experiencing some of the most difficult economic conditions in generations. All of us are feeling the strain on our way of life. As an agency, we face daunting challenges in maintaining a high quality, recovery-oriented system of care. It will take all of our creativity, ingenuity, and collaboration to weather the storm and continue to build upon the progress we have made. It will necessitate an ongoing reinvention of how we deliver services in order to preserve the safety and promote the well being and recovery of individuals who need these services. It will require creating new partnerships and learning how to better tap into the hidden assets within our communities. It will demand a greater level of cooperation and shared purpose to maximize our resources to the best effect. However, I firmly believe that if we work together, we can overcome these challenges and come out the stronger for it.

I invite you to share your ideas as to how we can make our system perform better and more efficiently utilize our resources. I am particularly interested in the successes you have achieved in your communities that might be expanded to other areas of our system of care and how people have forged unique community partnerships for the benefit of all. I also want to hear about your most critical challenges and gravest concerns. As I visit programs and speak with our many stakeholders, you will hear me emphasize that we will not retreat from our progress to date; we won’t abandon our values; and we will never give up on the hope of recovery.

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