

# Legislators' Support Needed for Recovery of Residents and the State Fiscally

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“The proposed FY 2013 budget includes several provisions that demonstrate not only understanding and compassion, but also sound fiscal sense,” stated Debra L. Wentz, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer of the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies (NJAMHAA) in testimony presented to the State Assembly Budget Committee earlier today. “By giving the hundreds of thousands of children and adults throughout the state the opportunity to recover from mental illnesses, emotional and behavioral disorders, addictions and co-occurring disorders, as well as cope with developmental disabilities, this budget will greatly contribute to the state’s fiscal recovery, as well.”

Dr. Wentz highlighted several provisions in Governor Chris Christie’s proposed budget that are positive for children and adults who need community-based behavioral health services. These include:

- \$34.6 million in new funding for the Department of Human Services, of which \$24.6 million would be dedicated to expanding community placements for individuals with developmental disabilities
- \$5 million to the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services to annualize the \$5 million of Olmstead funds from last year, which equals a total of \$10 million
- \$5.6 million resulting from the closure of Hagedorn Psychiatric Hospital being reinvested into community-based services
- \$2.5 million in initial funding for court-ordered treatment for nonviolent drug offenders
- \$6.6 million in additional funding for Mobile Response and Stabilization Services, which will allow for immediate response to crises and prompt connections to follow-up services for children and their families
- Protection of enhanced funding for therapeutic visitation services, which are designed to reunite families who were separated due to abuse or neglect
- Realignment of services to ensure that children receive everything they need through the Department of Children and Families, whether they have mental illnesses, behavioral, emotional or substance use disorders, developmental disabilities or any combination of these conditions.

Dr. Wentz urged the legislators to continue supporting these services “because it is the right thing to do and will also foster the state’s fiscal recovery now.”

“Unimpeded access to community-based behavioral health services means the opportunity to recover from disorders. It means a drastically reduced need for emergency room visits and

hospitalizations, and, as a result, dramatic fiscal savings – amounting to billions of dollars each year,” Dr. Wentz explained. “It means adults with these health conditions will be empowered to secure employment and pay taxes. It means a tremendous potential for reduced crime, greatly increased safety and better lives for everyone.”

“Equally important to recovery is housing, which has proven to be a vital first step for individuals to embark on the road to recovery and successes,” Dr. Wentz added. “Therefore, NJAMHAA urges the State Legislature to include replenishment of the Special Needs Housing Trust Fund as part of the FY 2013 state budget.”

“Your support is imperative for recovery now for our state’s children and adults and for the state’s fiscal recovery now,” Dr. Wentz stressed.