

**Office of Mental Health
Report to the Developmental Disability Council**

**Robert Levy, LCSW
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Introduction

The Office of Mental Health, under the direction of the Assistant Secretary, has continued to develop strategies that will result in successfully achieving its goals. Herein is found a review of ongoing programs in OMH.

New OMH Chief named

Secretary Alan Levine announced on March 6, 2008, the appointment Jennifer Kopke as the new Assistant Secretary for the Office of Mental Health. Ms Kopke is replacing William Payne, who's been a steady, compassionate presence in OMH. Mr. Payne did a fantastic job as acting assistant secretary, and I don't think anyone cares as much as he does about Louisiana's mental health system, said Mr Levine.

Mr. Levine goes on to say that Jennifer definitely has the qualifications to succeed as head of OMH. She's spent the last 10 years with the Jefferson Parish Human Services Authority, the last four of which she was the executive director. The human services authority helps citizens with not only mental health issues, but also addictive disorders and developmental disabilities. This means that she has the experience to understand and work closely with her fellow assistant secretaries.

Because she was so successful running the Jefferson Parish Human Services Authority, she's the ideal person to take over OMH as we prepare to tackle the mental health crisis in New Orleans and move the whole state toward a human services delivery model similar to the one in Jefferson Parish. The Florida Parish Human Services District and the Capital Area Human Services District also deliver services effectively and consistently. We'll be using the best practices from each when we take the model statewide.

On a personal note, she was an educator for many years, working with developmentally disabled students and students with behavioral health issues. She's also worked extensively with adolescents with drug problems. Her strong compassionate streak will serve her well in her new position.

Program updates

Courtesy of a federal grant, Office of Mental Health is holding “Partners in Recovery” Community Conferences statewide throughout the month of April. OMH is sponsoring this training in three areas of the state using grant funds; however, two other regions are using their own funding to hold these sessions. The trainings are being provided in tandem and will inform community members about recovery concepts. The sessions will highlight how Wellness and Recovery Action Plans (WRAP) can help individuals through this process. The featured speaker is Stephen Pocklington, who is the executive director of the Copeland Center for Wellness and Recovery and a nationally recognized leader in his field.

This event is just one educational event in a larger initiative provided through the Person Centered Planning Implementation grant that was awarded to Louisiana Office of Mental Health in September 2007, entitled “WRAP Louisiana.” Wellness and Recovery Action Plans are therapies in which individuals are able to develop their own plans for wellness and self care. WRAP has been described as a self-management and recovery system developed by a group of people who had mental health difficulties and who were struggling to incorporate wellness tools and strategies into their lives. WRAP is designed to increase personal empowerment and help people achieve their own life goals and dreams.

“Currently, a lot of treatment planning is done by mental health professionals. With WRAP, the people with mental health issues are given control over their treatment. They identify internal and external resources to help with recovery, and make their own individual plans for successful living,” said William Payne, Jr., Acting Assistant Secretary, Office of Mental Health.

This free event is open to anyone who is interested in recovery, including clergy, law enforcement, business leaders, educators, family members and concerned citizens. All of the events are being held from 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.; the list of the dates and locations follows:

April 15, 2008 – Louisiana Technical College Auditorium, 3250 N. Acadian Blvd., Baton Rouge, La.

April 16, 2008 – The Castine Center, 63350 Pelican Blvd., Mandeville, La.

April 18, 2008 – Clifton Chenier Center, 220 West Willow, Lafayette, La.

April 24, 2008 – Houma Municipal Auditorium, 880 Verret St., Houma, La.

April 25, 2008 – Southern University Campus Gymnasium, 3050 Martin Luther King Jr., Shreveport, La.

To register, go to www.mhrsla.org or contact Willicia Royal at 225-342-2540

Essential Learning

Essential Learning, an online learning management system has come to the Office of Mental Health, the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities and the Office for Addictive Disorders. Through the Co-Occurring State Incentive Grant (COSIG) OMH have contracted with Essential Learning to develop a customized

training center for Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) employees. The Essential Learning center provides an individualized training plan (Learner Profile) that identifies specific training requirements needed to help DHH/OMH meet staff development goals. The main function of the Essential Learning center is to present and track staff completion of training requirements in an accessible and user friendly format. A secondary function which is an attractive continuing education feature is to provide staff with access to professional and job related topics required by their accrediting agents at no cost. The list of courses and accreditation information can be found in the Essential Learning Course Library. Staff will be able to take both required and elective courses using the convenience of the Internet at their own pace and preferred time, with supervisory approval.

The system is allowing supervisors and managers to track learning and maintain a profile of required training.