

Michigan Mental Health and Wellness Commission

Thursday, September 19, 2013

WSU School of Medicine Scott Hall-540 Canfield

Detroit, MI 48201

Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority

Tom Watkins, President & CEO

640 Temple

Detroit, MI 48201

(313) 833-2500



Detroit-Wayne County Community Mental Health Agency

640 Temple, 8th floor • Detroit, MI 48201-2558

Phone: (313) 833-2500

FAX: (313) 833-2156

TDD: (800) 630-1044

RR TDD: (888) 339-5588



August 22, 2013

Dear Detroit-Wayne County Community Mental Health Agency/Authority staff;

It is with great pride, excitement and anticipation that I join you as part of the newly established Detroit-Wayne County Community Mental Health Authority. Together, we can accomplish great things. While I have been phasing into my new responsibilities on a part-time basis, I will begin full-time on August, 26, 2013

While there are many "moving parts" in managing and leading a large complex organization our focus is as simple as it is important: To provide the highest possible quality services to people who are mentally ill, developmentally disabled and/or have substance abuse issues in the most efficient and effective ways possible to maximize value to the taxpayers.

We are fortunate to have a capable, competent, dedicated board of directors committed to establishing policy and direction to assure we and our provider agencies strive to reach our stated goal.

You, each of you, are an integral part of the team. We all have individual roles to play-- but we can only reach our goal if we are all working together towards that end.

I want to acknowledge and thank you for your hard work and focus during this transitional period. Change never comes easy. Yet, with the transition to an Authority and the Affordable Care Act (Obama Care) we have the opportunity to lead change and to add value and help make a difference in the lives of the people we serve.

My pledge to you is to be open, accessible and dedicated to assuring the organizations energy, talent and resources are focused like a laser on serving people in need.

All of us need to constantly ask: How does this decision add value and make a difference to people who are mentally ill, developmentally disabled or are abusing substances? If we keep our focus here -- we will soar, individually, professionally and as an organization.

I look forward to working with you towards this end. I am proud to be part of this team.

Sincerely,
Tom Watkins
President and CEO

CC
Board Members

The Detroit-Wayne County Community Mental Health Agency serves over 72,000 consumers. The Agency provides services for people with mental illness, developmental disabilities, serious emotional disturbance and substance use disorders. The D-WCCMHA provides services and offers a culturally diverse network of community mental health programs, clinics, private therapists, psychologists and psychiatrists to adults with mental illness, individuals with developmental disabilities, children with serious emotional disturbances and persons with substance use disorders and their families.

D-WCCMHA "The Authority"

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

COMMUNICATION & INTEGRITY

- We exist to serve and support individuals with mental illness, developmental disabilities and substance use disorders. Everything we do should be towards that end. We must always ask ourselves: "How does this action help people who are mentally ill, developmentally disabled or have substances use disorders?"
- Providers are our partners. There will be open communication, mutual respect and accountability between us.
- Communication amongst our board, staff and providers should always be open, direct, respectful and timely with no surprises.
- Integrity and honesty is key. Don't do it if you would not want your mother to read about it in the newspaper or see your face on the news.

DATA DRIVEN ORGANIZATION

- We are a data driven organization. We must strive to be the "Sgt Friday" of behavioral health organizations providing "just the facts".
- Service is our mission. While we are a data driven organization, the data is always to be used to support the people we serve. We will never lose sight that behind the data is someone's mother, father, sister or brother...real people with real needs.

DECISION-MAKING

- Team work. Together, we are better!
- Our decision-making process must be open, transparent and in accordance with the law. We will strive to appropriately engage internal and external stakeholders in all we do. There is a time for participation, input, feedback, discussion and debate – but not as a delay tactic for making decisions.
- Fiscal Integrity. If it was your money (it is our tax dollars after all) would you spend it this way?

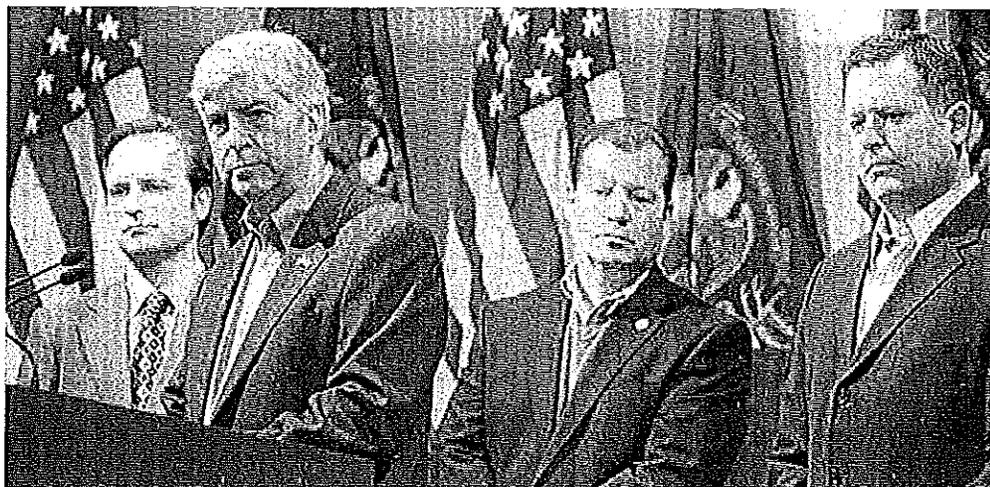
QUALITY & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- We will strive to be the best in all we do. We need to constantly ask ourselves: "Are we providing the level of care and support we would want for our own families?"
- We must hold ourselves and others accountable and responsible for our actions. We are individuals, but one "Authority," striving to do our best to serve and support the consumers residing in Detroit/Wayne County, Michigan.
- Process is important as an efficient and effective pathway to results. We must constantly seek to be better for the sake of our consumers.

Expand Medicaid coverage - now

10:41 am

detroitnews.com



Purchase Image

Gov. Rick Snyder's plan to expand Medicaid coverage has divided the usually tight-knit Republican leadership in Lansing. (David Coates / The Detroit News)

Gov. Rick Snyder's plan to expand Medicaid coverage has divided the usually tight-knit Republican leadership in Lansing.

Gov. Rick Snyder

made the morally and fiscally correct decision to ask the Michigan Legislature to expand Medicaid. It is expected the state Senate will vote on the governor's request this week.

There are many reasons the Michigan Legislature should follow Snyder's lead. Here are 10 of them:

- 1) It is sensible public policy to tap federal funds already set aside to expand preventive and lifesaving health care under Medicaid.
- 2) Medicaid expansion represents the best single opportunity to improve access to behavioral healthcare services for Michigan citizens most in need. Cuts to general fund support for mental health and substance use disorder services over the past decade have resulted in a lack of access and reduction of services. The best way to remove barriers to care and expand mental health services is to expand Medicaid.
- 3) Medicaid expansion would provide coverage options for small businesses and create a healthier work force that will improve the state's economic competitiveness. Workers at many small Michigan companies do not get insurance from their employers. Medicaid expansion will cover low-wage working adults with no health insurance and too little income to afford coverage.
- 4) Currently, Michigan hospitals end up providing more than \$880 million a year in uncompensated care to patients who are unable to pay. It is estimated that up to \$1,000 of the annual cost of a health insurance premium for a family of four is to cover this uncompensated care.
- 5) Expanding Medicaid as Snyder recommended will reduce this hidden "health care tax" paid by insured individuals, families and businesses.

6) Snyder's recommendation would also help local community hospitals. Because the federal government wishes to expand Medicaid via health insurance exchanges, local hospitals stand to lose reimbursements for uncompensated care. If Michigan lawmakers do not support Medicaid expansion, they jeopardize the financial stability of local hospitals across the state.

7) If the Legislature fails to expand Medicaid coverage, an opportunity to provide health insurance for thousands of hard working, low-income residents across the state will be lost, but their needs — and costs — will remain.

8) The federal government, which is asking states to expand Medicaid coverage, has pledged to cover the full cost of expansion through 2016 before gradually reducing funding to 90 percent by 2020.

8) Snyder has been extremely clear in his belief that the expansion will help protect over 400,000 of Michigan's most vulnerable citizens in the next year alone, decrease the rate of emergency room visits that drive up health care costs for everyone, and save millions a year in state spending—half of which he wants to put into a savings account to offset any future costs.

9) It is estimated that Medicaid expansion will create 18,000 new health care jobs and generate \$2.1 billion in new economic activity in Michigan.

10) Expanding Medicaid is morally right and fiscally sound for Michigan taxpayers.

When Snyder called for expanding Medicaid under the federal Affordable Care Act, he said, "This makes sense for the physical and fiscal health of Michigan." He continued, "Expansion will create more access to primary care providers, reduce the burden on hospitals and small businesses, and save precious tax dollars. It also puts Michigan, rather than Washington, in the driver's seat in terms of implementation, which allows us to better address Michigan's specific needs."

The time is now to call on the Michigan Legislature to support Snyder's proposals to expand Medicaid coverage for Michigan families making less than 133 percent of the federal poverty level.

Supporting Medicaid expansion is about helping real people with real needs by tapping the tax dollars we send to Washington. It is a wise investment.

Jeff Brown is executive director of the Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority. John L. Kinch is executive director of Macomb County Community Mental Health. Tom Watkins is president and CEO of the Detroit-Wayne County Community Mental Health Authority.
class=cpf-publisher-displayNone>

•

Get to bottom of Wayne jail mess

The project began at \$300 million and quickly ballooned to nearly \$400 million because of cost overruns that apparently occurred without oversight by county officials.

-

Another debt ceiling debate?

THE TENNESSEAN

September 6, 2013

Tom Watkins: Rejoining the effort to improve mental health care

Tom Watkins

Another chapter of my life is unfolding with my recent acceptance of the challenge to lead Michigan's largest community behavioral health and substance abuse organization, The Detroit-Wayne Mental Health Authority.

Every area in our state has a similar organization (i.e., www.macmhb.org) that offers quality services to fellow citizens in need. Locally, Erv Brinker the executive director of Summit Pointe and his colleagues provide top quality care to people with mental illness and developmental disability.

We need a constant reminder that when we discuss these issues that we are not talking abstract statistics. What these organizations do impacts someone's mother, father, sister, brother, grandma or grandpa — it touches us all.

This is a return trip for me — I worked in mental health agencies in Detroit earlier in my career, first as a therapist, then agency director and community board member and finally, serving as Deputy Director of Administration, Chief Deputy Director and the Director to the forerunner of the now Michigan Department of Community Health, the mental health department during the Blanchard administration.

As the Chinese say, "this is an auspicious year" so I am rejoining the community mental health movement — the Michigan Association Community Mental Health Board Association and our own organization is now celebrating 50 years of "people progress and purpose."

The revised and newly constituted Detroit-Wayne "Authority" has a distinguished 12-member community board — half nominated by the mayor of Detroit and half by the Wayne County Executive, appointed by the Wayne County Commission. The board sets policy direction for this vital community service to some of Michigan's most vulnerable citizens.

We partner with the Michigan State Department of Community Health under the leadership of James Haveman. Our goal is to assure that quality services are delivered in the most cost effective and efficient means possible.

One in five Americans has a diagnosable mental illness. Many go untreated. With the passage of the Affordable Care Act — aka ObamaCare — and the recent vote to expand Medicaid coverage in Michigan, the opportunity now exists to make vast improvements in this area.

People with mental illness who are employed but without healthcare coverage have significantly reduced health outcomes impacted by an inability to access mental health care. Many are also at risk of incarceration and homelessness. Sadly, far too many of our fellow citizens with mental illness are in jail and prisons providing institutional care.

Collectively, we can, must and WILL do better.

Studies have shown that early intervention, prevention, and treatment of mental health issues can make a huge difference to individuals and families, thereby reducing long-term social costs to everyone.

The services we and other behavioral health organizations provide across Michigan touch us all. It does

not matter what zip code you live in — mental illness, developmental disabilities and substance abuse impact all families directly or indirectly.

The services we offer affect the quality of life for the entire community, not just a small minority of people we serve.

As an organization we are seeking ways to collaborate, partner and, where appropriate, share services in ways that maximize our limited resources to enhance the value to both taxpayers and the people we serve and support.

We also know many armed service members suffer from PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), mental illness, and substance abuse. We will make greater efforts to collaborate with the Veterans Administration to better coordinate care to the returning service people who have given part of their lives to serving all Americans.

Those of us in the community behavioral health system must ask ourselves constantly, "How does this decision add value and make a difference to people who are mentally ill, developmentally disabled, or are abusing substances?" When our focus is here — good things will happen.

Here are the ways we can all help:

- » Avoid thinking of seeking or receiving mental health treatment as a stigma.
- » Encourage people in need to seek help from appropriate providers.
- » Hire a person with a disability. Ask other employers who have — you will hear it is both a great investment in human potential as well as a solid business decision.
- » Call on our elected officials to continue funding the services we provide. Support from all levels of government is necessary, as well as from foundations, civic, religious and community organizations.
- » Volunteer at a mental health agency in your community.

Count yourself lucky if you have never had to use the services we provide. Be thankful and supportive because we are here helping others to strengthen lives and communities through the provision of quality services to our family members, neighbors, and friends in need.

Wayne County, Detroit await mental health agency shakeup beginning Oct. 1

Wed, Sep 18

detroitnews.com



On his first day in his new job as CEO at the Detroit-Wayne County Mental Health Agency, Tom Watkins heard a telephone ringing. The office was empty, because it was a Wayne County furlough day.

"The good news is that you've reached the top guy," he told her. "The bad news is that this is my first day on the job and I don't know the answer."

He got her help, but new questions continue to arise at the agency, which officially begins its formal economic and structural separation from the county as the Detroit-Wayne County Mental Health Authority on Oct. 1. The idea is to improve services to the 72,000 Detroit and Wayne County residents, from children to veterans to senior citizens, who use county mental health services for an array of needs.

For a decade, legislators tried to pry the agency from the county. The move, ultimately bipartisan, was opposed by Gov. Jennifer Granholm, who vetoed the Legislature's bill.

Mental health services account for \$600 million in Medicaid and state general fund reimbursements — a river of cash that has flowed through the Wayne County bureaucracy, cushioning the county's financial crisis. That was good for the county, but not directly beneficial to thousands of developmentally disabled children and troubled adults using services.

"This is state money and federal money that needs to go to those who need it, the clients," says state Rep. Philip Cavanagh, D-Redford, a former Wayne County commissioner and former county treasurer who backed the reform. "It's a half-billion dollars a year — more now."

The new authority is leasing an antiquated, 90-year-old building from the county for about \$1 million a year — a huge expense for an aged facility that hasn't been updated in years. It is also leasing costly IT services.

Watkins, an indefatigable fixture — and critic — of state government who headed the department of mental health for Gov. Jim Blanchard and later the department of education for Granholm, insists his priority will be to "assure that every dollar is focused on the people we serve." Watkins, who has a master's degree in social work, puts passion and experience behind those words. "My brother committed suicide. I've seen firsthand how good quality care can make a difference."

Employees of the agency will become authority employees. But the new authority has adopted a 401(k) plan, ending the pension era that's caused financial distress in the city and county. Beginning next week, the mental health authority will hold four town halls to allay angst and educate the public about the new mental health brand.

"It would be problematic if on Oct. 1, everything switched over," says Stacie Durant, Wayne County deputy chief financial officer. Instead, the switch will be phased in over three years, with the biggest reduction — 50 percent — kicking in a year from October.

Now, the focus should be on the authority's new board and Watkins' joint promise to improve the quality of mental health care for residents who so desperately need it.

•

Woman found shot, stabbed, assaulted on Detroit's east side

Detroit — A young woman is in serious condition after she was viciously attacked on the city's east side early Thursday morning.

•

Laura Berman: Wayne County, Detroit await mental health agency shakeup beginning Oct. 1