August 4, 2010

The Honorable Bill Richardson
Governor of New Mexico
State Capitol Building, Room 400
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Honorable Governor Richardson:

The Behavioral Health Planning Council (BHPC) was established with the passages of Federal Law 99-660 in 1986, Public Law 101-639 and Public Law 102-321 of the federal Public Health Service Act in 1992 and amended in 2004. The role of the BHPC is to function as the single statewide advisory body for the behavioral health system, to provide guidance and recommendations on mental health issues and its impact on the lives of adults, children and adolescents with serious emotional disturbances or severe emotional neurological and behavioral disorders, including substance abuse and co-occurring disorders. These advisory duties are not only to your office but also to the Interagency Behavioral Health Purchasing Collaborative (Collaborative).

The review and approval of the Community Mental Health Service Block Grant Uniform Application State Plan (CMHS Block Grant) is a federally mandated duty of the Council. A team from the Council has reviewed the SFY-2010 CMHS Block Grant application. While the review team approves the CMHS Block Grant Application for SFY-2011, it offers the following recommendations to consider during 2011 and for follow up in the 2012 CMHS application:

- The Council supports the continuation of collecting and improving relevant behavioral health services data. Beyond this, however, the Council stresses the need to use this data in ongoing program evaluation. Those programs in existence now should begin to develop performance measures and should be evaluated against them. Any programs developed in the future should not be approved without an evaluation component built in. The continuing collection of data is a necessity for this to happen. The State already has an organization in existence that can either do the evaluation or train others in how to do so, this being the Consortium for Behavioral Health...
Training and Research (CBHTR) and its associated group, the Research and Evaluation Network (REN). The Council recommends that data collection and program evaluation be part of all mental health services.

- The Council would add that efforts be strengthened to collect, evaluate and verify Native American-specific data to determine the provision of services to Native Americans across the state, and that the information be shared regularly with the Council and local communities.
- To ensure clear and consistent messaging to our stakeholders, the Council recommends that the Collaborative agencies improve communication efforts between each other in matters regarding behavioral health initiatives, programs and/or services that may have a statewide impact.
- The Council recommends that the performance indicators identified in the block grant application be monitored throughout 2010-2011 to track progress in our desired outcome goals. The review team should include members of the BHPC.

The Council recognizes the leadership from your Office and that the Collaborative improves overall behavioral health services in New Mexico.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the CMHS Block Grant.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Wendel

Chair, Behavioral Health Planning Council