

## Media Relations

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### UNH Releases Fifth Year of Data on State Community Mental Health System

DURHAM, N.H. – A five-year summary of consumer perspectives on the mental health care offered by New Hampshire's community mental health centers (CMHCs) documents that, although ratings for satisfaction and quality remain high for many, there are multiple challenges that still need to be addressed if residents are going to achieve and maintain good health. The study, by the Institute of Disability (IOD) at the University of New Hampshire, documents five years of historical data on consumer perspectives on New Hampshire's community mental health services system.

Results of the study, commissioned by the New Hampshire Bureau of Behavioral Health (BBH), suggest many strengths of the CMHCs' services, including the effectiveness of services and individual staff as well as high ratings of satisfaction and quality over time. Parallel to this, multiple challenges within the CMHC service system have been identified, including a need for:

- sustained quality staffing support;
- access to alcohol and drug treatment services;
- transition planning supports for youth;
- improved communication about medications;
- better awareness and use of peer supports and peer crisis respite;
- improved access to services;
- better coordination of care with community services;
- and additional services such as support personnel, programs for teens, and housing support.

"Of course, it's not only about what the community mental health centers can do," said Peter Antal, IOD researcher and author of the report. "There is a joint responsibility among New Hampshire's communities and the service providers to ensure an effective and cohesive level of care."

Five years of research indicate a range of challenges that suggest the need of both state- and community- based solutions. Among the challenges are the need for improved integration of adults with mental illness into community life, addressing the high rate of youth suspensions/expulsion from schools, limited employment among adults, and the poor physical health among half of those living with mental illness.

"As in previous years, the consumer survey is providing invaluable information for the development and evolution of New Hampshire's community mental health system," said Erik Riera, administrator of the NH Bureau of Behavioral Health. "Based on survey results, we have supported many exciting changes in New Hampshire's community mental health services system. Implementing Medicaid Managed Care and a whole-person approach to health and wellness are anticipated to significantly improve care coordination and outcomes for individuals. We are also expanding peer crisis services in New Hampshire, as a result of the priority given to the service through this survey and other

surveys showing the positive effects of this New Hampshire-developed program. Additionally, New Hampshire is the first state to receive Balance Incentive Program funds, which are being used to continue developing skills for our community providers in a number of areas identified by the survey. This survey is one of many tools that BBH uses to work with community stakeholders to support additional funding for key programs within the Peer Support and Community Mental Health system as reflected in Governor Hassan's budget.”

The full report, “New Hampshire Public Mental Health Consumer Survey Project, Summary of Findings 2013,” from the University of New Hampshire’s Institute on Disability (IOD), was funded by a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Its creation reflects a joint initiative among the Institute on Disability, the UNH Survey Center, the Bureau of Behavioral Health, and New Hampshire’s 10 CMHCs. For more information and to download a copy of the report, visit [www.iod.unh.edu/pmhs](http://www.iod.unh.edu/pmhs).

The Bureau of Behavioral Health is the state mental health authority, responsible for overseeing the community mental health system in New Hampshire. BBH seeks to promote respect, recovery, and full community inclusion for adults who experience a mental illness and children with an emotional disturbance. BBH works to ensure the provision of efficient and effective services to those citizens who are most severely and persistently disabled by mental, emotional, and behavioral dysfunction.

The Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire was established in 1987 to provide a coherent university-based focus for the improvement of knowledge, policies, and practices related to the lives of persons with disabilities and their families. Its mission is to strengthen communities to ensure full access, equal opportunities, and participation for all persons.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

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