



STATE OF NEVADA  
COMMISSION ON  
MENTAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES  
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**BRIAN SANDOVAL**  
*Governor*

**KEVIN QUINT**  
*Chair*

March 2, 2011

Governor Brian Sandoval  
Office of the Governor  
101 North Carson Street, Suite 1  
Carson City, Nevada 89701

Dear Governor Sandoval:

I am writing to you as the Chair of the Governor's Commission on Mental Health and Developmental Services, which is a "10-member, legislatively created body designed to provide policy guidance and oversight of Nevada's public system of integrated care and treatment of adults and children with mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disabilities/related conditions."

The Commission is required to "establish policies to ensure adequate development and administration of services for persons with mental illnesses" <sup>1</sup> and to "report to the Governor and Legislature on the quality of care and treatment provided for persons with mental illness, mental retardation or co-occurring disorders and persons with related conditions in this State and on any progress made toward improving the quality of that care and treatment."<sup>2</sup>

Overall, Nevada's system of care for persons with mental health (MH) and/or developmental disabilities is key to the ongoing welfare of the various communities and to the state as a whole. Untreated and undertreated mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance use disorders result in a diminished quality of life and creates greater hardships on our citizens with those problems as well as those who love and care for them.

In addition, not properly treating these disorders results in costing the state and local communities more in terms of medical, vocational, criminal justice, and other social spending. This is not to mention the human suffering involved.

The Nevada Commission on Mental Health and Developmental Services knows these are extraordinarily difficult times financially, but we also see the opportunity for creativity in providing much needed services. This is certainly the time to exercise creativity in taking this opportunity to find ways to utilize all of our resources in concert and in collaboration in order to provide our citizens the mental health, developmental, and substance abuse services that so many need.

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<sup>1</sup> Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) Chapter 433.314 Sec. 1.

<sup>2</sup> NRS 433.314 Sec. 5.

The MHDS Commission is compelled to thoughtfully provide oversight over a modern system of care for Nevada citizens with serious emotional disturbances, substance use disorders, and/or developmental disabilities. Our immediate efforts, although adjusted for the serious economic times we are in, serve to ultimately put in place a comprehensive public health approach to providing mental health services for all Nevada citizens.

Given the overwhelming number of program reductions and public needs we are facing right now, the MHDS Commission has struggled as to how we can assist in making such difficult decisions. This letter outlines four specific programs, which the Commission feels must be maintained to set the foundation on which to rebuild for the future.

❶ As our top priority, the MHDS Commission needs your help to accomplish the objectives in the Nevada State Plan for Children’s Mental Health. Our Commission is required<sup>3</sup> to develop a Subcommittee for Statewide Children’s Mental Health Planning, which was approved by the Commission in June 2010 and submitted it to the Department of Health and Human Resources. **Specifically, the Commission now requests your support of the budget and proposed legislative changes as submitted by the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS), which puts in place critical administrative changes for future system improvements.**

Approval of the DCFS budgets as submitted is a critical initial step for Nevada’s 10-year plan to transform Nevada’s system of children’s mental health. This plan is also actively supported by most statewide mental health organizations, such as Nevada’s Mental Health Planning and Advisory Council, which is a key consumer advisory organization to our Commission, and is required by the federal Community Mental Health Block Grant. The Commission stands together with our consumer groups in asking for your support on this.

❷ The Commission also **supports preserving a core of services in the mental health system, which includes services for co-occurring disorders.** The Commission does not support keeping only hospital beds for the severely mentally ill without adequate community support; this results in frequent hospital readmissions and negatively affects our communities.

In order to support preservation of core services, the Commission supports looking at creative **privatized options** that could include combining systems such as state, county, and non-profit under the same roof. For example, models of regional collaboration could be developed in which state employees, private practitioners, and non-profit providers provide a “one stop shop” for mental health, co-occurring substance use disorders, and developmental disabilities.

❸ In line with the previous point, the Commission advocates for the Legislature to **reinstate funding to the mental health courts and the Triage Centers**, which have been severely curtailed beginning this July 1. Under design since the 1990, these MH Court programs are well known to be effective and provide safe alternatives for people with serious mental illnesses. These MH courts provide a basic MH public safety net and their existence is probably the single biggest factor in

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<sup>3</sup> NRS 433.317

helping keep hospital beds available. Similar comments can be made about the importance of the Triage Centers in Washoe and Clark Counties.

④ As Nevada continues to struggle economically, **Developmental Services (DS)** is challenged to assure health and safety to vulnerable individuals supported in our services system. The MHDS Commission has identified two critical DS program needs:

- *Fragile state of community service providers* – Community service providers are on the edge of collapse without an increase in the hourly rate for the services they provide.
- *Elimination of programs for autistic children and families* – Developmental Services now plans to reduced or eliminate programs focused on assisting children and families. Children with autism are especially impacted by a lack of early intervention.

In this time of economic downturn, more than ever, we need to spend every dollar carefully. If we can meet success in only the four areas outlined in this letter, the MHDS Commission will have fulfilled its key responsibility to your office and the Legislature, as well as to future generations of Nevadans.

In closing, I would like to take the liberty of following up on this letter in order to begin what we hope will be an ongoing dialogue with you as to how the MHDS Commission can best fulfill its responsibilities to your office and assist in accounting for progress on Nevada State Plan for Children’s Mental Health. Please let me know if you have a designated staff whom I should contact.

Sincerely,



Kevin Quint, Chair  
Nevada Commission on Mental Health and Developmental Services

Pc: Nevada State Senate  
Nevada State Assembly  
Nevada Commission on Mental Health & Developmental Services  
Mike Willden, Director, NV Dept. of Health & Human Services  
Harold Cook, Ph.D., Administrator, MHDS  
Diane Comeaux, Administrator, DCFS  
NV Children’s Mental Health Consortia  
Governor’s Committee on Co-occurring Disorders  
NV Mental Health Planning and Advisory Council