

To: MH/MR Administrators
From: Michael D. Chambers
Date: July 16, 2009
Subject: Bullets

"Two wrongs don't make a right, but they make a good excuse." - Thomas Szasz

State Budget: The annual budget drama continues and we have heard no good news. To date, we have seen six or seven versions of bills and amendments and more amendments may be coming. The House budget will be considered today, with amendments, on the floor of the house.

Therefore, CCAP and I are asking that you talk with your Commissioners and your legislators to make a few succinct points.

- The Governor's original proposed budget, from February, is the floor for continuing services. Subsequent bills and amendments are below the levels in that proposal.
- Stress the changes they you have made to keep things running and the changes that you are prepared to make given the budget cuts. For example, have you shortened the length of provider contracts; have you reduced the dollar figure in your contracts; have you delayed signing contracts; have you met with your providers and consumer advocates?
- Do you have a hiring freeze?
- Have you furloughed staff, or do you plan to do so? How many?
- In light of the delay in the state budget, how have your adjustments affected consumers and service provision to date?
- Add anything else that you can think of.

Some legislators have been quoted on the record as saying that the counties are exaggerating the problems of funding levels as well as the legislative delay in adopting the budget and that there is money to continue services without much of a problem. They say they aren't hearing from the counties in their districts. Please help put that idea to rest. Even assuming that the House could pass a version of the budget today (I assume nothing), there is still a long way to go before Pennsylvania has a budget for 2009-2010. The bill would be sent to the Senate where it is likely to be voted down. That is the normal process that results in assignment of a conference committee to hammer out a final compromise. So far, we have no indication that serious talks are underway.

After the Budget: It is reasonable to believe that, eventually, we will have a budget. At that point, we will compare actual FY 2008-2009 figures with the final budget and provide you with that information. We will also be asking you for information about how you are adjusting your program and its impact on services and consumers. We will need this for the next budget season.

Next week: The NACBHD Board of Directors meeting is next week and I will be in Nashville Wednesday through Friday. Don't feel sorry for me. I can take it but will take no pleasure in it.