



## Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee

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### 60th Montana Legislature

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October 22, 2008

Mike Ferriter, Director  
Department of Corrections  
1539 11th Ave.  
Helena, MT 59620-1301

Dear Director Ferriter,

On behalf of the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee, I want to thank you and your staff for attending our October 14 meeting and responding to the recommendations in the DMA Health Strategies study of Montana's mental health system. We understand that the comprehensive nature of both the report and the recommendations made it difficult to respond fully in the short time period you all had to review the report.

We know that with additional time, the Department of Corrections will be able to better identify which recommendations the agency can put into effect on its own and which would be appropriate to pursue, but would need direction from the Governor's Office or the Legislature.

Because we feel this study contains valuable information and recommendations, we would specifically ask that the Department report to the 2009 Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Corrections and Public Safety and the Subcommittee on Health and Human Services about the recommendations the Department plans to pursue on its own and which of the items the Department believes would be worth pursuing but would need legislative action.

As discussed on October 14, we believe the list of Criminal Justice Recommendations on page 8 of the report's Summary of Recommendations provides a good starting point for your report to the subcommittees. Your report would be most helpful if it not only covered the steps the Department can and will take, but also the support you might need from the Legislature to carry out the recommendations.

Committee members also expressed particular interest in following up on the recommendations to suspend Medicaid enrollment for prison inmates to allow them to obtain Medicaid-covered services as soon as they are released and to continue the programs that currently provide funding for medication and community mental health services to people released from the state's correctional facilities.

The committee strongly believes that this report provides a road map that the Department, the Governor's Office, and the Legislature can use for several years to help develop a comprehensive and better coordinated mental health system to better serve the needs of Montanans in all regions of our vast state. We hope the October 14 meeting was just the beginning of a wide-ranging and long-lasting discussion of how to put the report's

recommendations into effect.

Thanks again to you and your staff for all the time you devoted to helping DMA with the study over the past several months, as well as the time you took to review the report and attend our meeting. We look forward to hearing in the coming months about the Department's efforts to make the most of this study.

Sincerely,

Rep. Edith Clark  
Presiding Officer

c: Deb Matteucci, Behavioral Health Coordinator

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