

Madame Chairman and Members of the Health and Human Services Joint Subcommittee,

I am unable to be at your subcommittee hearing on the budget of AMDD this Wednesday, January 19, 2005. My name is Joan-Nell Macfadden, I live in Great Falls and have been a mental health advocate for several year. Presently I serve on the Central Service Area Authority Leadership Team and am a cochair of the Great Falls Local Mental Health Advisory Council.

The last seven years have been extremely tumultuous for the mental health system, with the long and painful decision to have a managed care company; then, not to have a managed care company; then, major cuts, loss of services and the threat of reduced prescription drug accessibility. However, during this last interim great strides were made in stabilizing the system.

The first step in this process was separating the adult and children's mental health system; the second, strengthening both of these entities. Next was developing a strategic plan with very identifiable and doable short and long term goals for the adult system, thereby prioritizing needed services. The third was looking at waivers, t if we could do some re-funding of the Mental Health Service Plan (MHSP) we could save the state money by keeping people out of jail and out of emergency rooms.

For at least the last ten years, the dream of everyone has been to keep people as close to home as possible. Moving people away from their support system doesn't work and it's expensive. One of our critical needs in Montana is psychiatrists. Community psychiatrists are not going to come here if we don't pay them the going rate. We need crisis stabilization facilities close to home. Sometimes people can be stabilized and go home, that doesn't always happen when their stabilized 150 miles away.

I encourage you to fund the highly successful Program of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT), 5 new FTE field staff, MHSP and increase the psychiatrist rate. The waivers are important as are the crisis stabilization facilities. It's taken a long time to get where we are today.

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