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November 14, 2007

TO: Regional Office Staff

Recently there have been questions circulating about the direction of the Division, specifically around the provision of service coordination and the regional office restructure. I would like to take a moment to address both of these important topics with you as we work together to ensure that evidence based best practices are implemented consistently throughout the state to enhance the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

First, I would like to provide context for how we got to where we are. As you may recall in the spring of 2006, there was a comprehensive regional office system review conducted by 41 reviewers which included self-advocates, parents/family members, community provider agency staff, state quality assurance staff and other DMH staff who made onsite visits to each regional office. Their final report identified weaknesses in the regional office structure affecting the provision of supports and services and subsequently made recommendations to address caseload sizes, review and revise the quality assurance process, and communication at the local level.

Additionally, in the fall of 2006 the Missouri Mental Health Task Force after six public hearings issued a report directing the Division of MRDD to convene a committee of stakeholders to evaluate the feasibility of public-community partnerships to deliver case management services, determine eligibility, manage local wait lists, and provide and/or contract for a system of programs and services in their local areas. The committee of stakeholders, consistent with recommendation number 24, was comprised of self-advocates, parents, community providers, a Missouri Protection and Advocacy representative, a Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities representative, and regional office staff.

This fiscal year, the following actions have already been taken to address the issues identified. The Division received appropriations from the Missouri General Assembly to increase the number of service coordinators available to meet the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families in the regions where caseload ratios are as high as 1:70. This appropriation funded an additional 40 FTE service coordinators, however through our partnership with local SB40s we were able to increase the number of new service coordinators to 53. Finally, consistent with both reports, we have strengthened the leadership and communication infrastructure at the local level through the hiring of a regional office director at each regional office.

The next step is the regional office restructure being implemented, consistent with state statute, to enhance the local level infrastructure to address recommendations of both reports to ensure the health, safety, and high quality supports and services for individuals with developmental disabilities. The five components of the regional office under the leadership of the regional office director which will strengthen the Division's current infrastructure are quality assurance, consumer relations, provider relations, business administration, and clinical. The quality assurance enhancements will provide the Division with a strengthened

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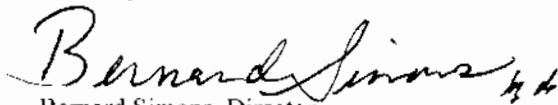
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ability to monitor, track and trend the quality of supports and services at the local, regional and state levels; as well as provide the data and information to the community provider and provider relations staff at the regional office to develop plans and strategies needed for quality improvement and enhancement at each level of the service delivery system. Additionally, the provider relations section will be responsible to develop, execute, and provide oversight of implementation of all community provider contracts. All staff are encouraged to review the components and functions of the restructured regional office, which can be found on the Division of MRDD's website at <http://www.dmh.mo.gov/mrdd/nrddindex.htm>.

As we move forward with community partnerships with SB40s or Affiliated Community Service Providers (ACSP) to reduce the caseload ratios throughout the state to a standard of 1:40 and the rollout of the restructure of the regional offices, current division employees will have the opportunity to transition into new regional office positions for which they are qualified or to continue to provide service coordination to individuals through the local SB40 or ACSP.

The regional office restructure, quality assurance enhancements, decreasing the caseload ratios and the implementation of other contemporary evidence-based best practices will provide a consistency of excellence in service delivery throughout the state which will enhance the quality of outcomes and lives of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bernard Simons". The signature is written in black ink and includes a small flourish at the end.

Bernard Simons, Director  
Division of Mental Retardation and  
Developmental Disabilities

cc: Keith Schafer, Ed.D.  
Bob Bax  
Monica Hoy  
Regional Office Directors  
District Administrators