



Division of Behavioral Health Services
Office of the Deputy Director

150 North 18th Avenue, Suite 200
Phoenix, Arizona 85007
(602) 364-4558
(602) 364-4570 FAX
Internet: www.azdhs.gov

JANICE K. BREWER, GOVERNOR
WILL HUMBLE, DIRECTOR

July 1, 2010

Dear Arizona behavioral health members, family members, advocates, providers, and other valued and interested stakeholders:

The last several months have been extremely difficult for the Arizona Department of Health Services/Division of Behavioral Health Services (ADHS/DBHS), Tribal and Regional Behavioral Health Authorities, (T/RBHAs), behavioral health providers, advocates, system stakeholders and most of all, members and families who use our publicly funded behavioral health system. From March, when the fiscal year 2011 budget was established, until today, July 1, when this new budget begins, we have been planning to implement the most severe budget reductions in the behavioral health system in Arizona's history.

Because of Arizona's budget crisis, we have had to downsize coverage, eliminate services for certain members and shrink our behavioral health system to levels that were unimaginable a few years ago. For me personally and professionally, cutting services has been the most difficult and painful challenge I have ever faced. None of this has been easy or desirable.

Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that ADHS/DBHS was not alone in meeting this challenge. Despite the almost daily stream of "bad news," I remain optimistic having witnessed the many remarkable achievements within our behavioral health community.

To members and families, I say thank you for participating in community forums, ADHS/DBHS' workgroups and committees and coming together to help others who will be losing benefits. Your resiliency, expressions of hope, and willingness to step forward when we need it the most reinforces my belief that our behavioral health system will not only survive, but will be stronger after this crisis passes.

To advocates and community partners, I say thank you for coming together and supporting us during this critical time. Not once did I hear any criticism or blame from the community. It would have been easy to find fault or point fingers and demand new leadership or another system overhaul. Instead, we consistently heard, "What can I do to help?"

To T/RBHAs and providers, I say thank you for working collaboratively with ADHS/DBHS and community partners to develop a thorough, well thought out planning process to transition members to the reduced benefit. It is a testament to your dedication and professionalism, that you could put emotions aside and work tirelessly to make sure each affected member was seen or contacted and offered services to minimize the risk of harm during the transition.

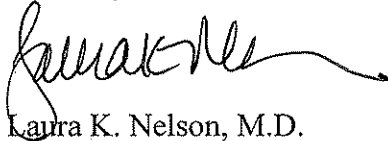
To all ADHS/DBHS staff, I say thank you for your commitment, work ethic, and willingness to do whatever was needed to get the job done. Throughout this time when faced with salary reductions, furloughs, and an ongoing hiring freeze, you continued to stay focused and worked hard always keeping the welfare of the members we serve as the number one priority. You are a great team, and I am so proud of you.

Finally, even though this letter is an expression of gratitude, it is important to remember that our work is far from complete. The planning phase may be winding down, but the impact in service reduction to our members will become more evident in the weeks and months ahead as the service reductions become a reality.

We will continue to communicate regularly with you through forums, via our web site (<http://www.azdhs.gov/bhs/updates>), and in other ways as together we face the new challenge that lies ahead.

Again, thank you all for your efforts, and keep up the good work that has been started. As long as we work together with a common purpose—helping those most in need to—we can achieve the best possible outcomes for members, families, advocates and community stakeholders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laura K. Nelson', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Laura K. Nelson, M.D.

Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health Services
Deputy Director, Division of Behavioral Health Services