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Ohio Interagency Task Force on Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Releases Recommendations

(Columbus)- The Ohio Interagency Task Force on Mental Health and Juvenile Justice was established in statute to make recommendations on how to most effectively respond to delinquent youth who have serious mental illness or emotional and behavioral disorders and who end up in the juvenile justice system. The Task Force met over the last ten months and delivered their recommendations to the Governor, General Assembly and Supreme Court yesterday.

The overall conclusion of the Task Force is that there is a significant percentage of Ohio youth who need behavioral health services, but whose problems and service needs are not being met. As a result, one of the unintended consequences of not addressing these needs at the community level is creating a disproportionate number of youth with serious emotional disturbances in the juvenile justice, child welfare, and education systems.

“Half of the youth in the custody of DYS are on the mental health caseload,” said Harvey Reed, task force chairman and Director of the Ohio Department of Youth Services. “This is a serious issue and I appreciate the time and expertise the taskforce members invested in helping these young people”

The report and the recommendations call for an effective and integrative system of care where the systems that may impact a youth and their family, work collaboratively to develop and improve the earlier identification of mental health needs and the service delivery and financing of systems and services responsive to the needs of youth.

The Task Force worked closely and collaboratively with families and many stakeholder groups to develop these recommendations that address the challenges that many systems of care and communities face in working with children, youth and young adults involved or at risk of involvement with the juvenile justice system. The recommendations demonstrate the importance of true collaboration in financing, improving and monitoring a comprehensive array of services and supports and fostering positive outcomes for this population.

The first five recommendations are highlighted below. A copy of the full report is available at <http://www.dys.ohio.gov/dnn/>

1. Develop a “PRTF” (Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility) or similar model, designed to offer intense, focused mental health treatment to youth committed to DYS to promote a successful return of youth to their community.
2. In collaboration with the Health and Human Services Cabinet Agencies develop a step down/transition program for the SED (serious emotional disturbance) youth involved in the above intensive inpatient treatment program and who remain on the mental health caseload that may include IHBT (intensive home based treatment) PH (partial hospitalization) and/or day treatment.

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3. On or before July 1, 2013 Intensive Home Based Treatment (IHBT) shall be a Medicaid reimbursed service; upon CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) approval training and technical assistance needed for the expansion of IHBT shall be provided.
4. ODMH will modify and replicate its successful Community Linkages program linking youth involved in the juvenile justice system who have SED and/or severe mental illnesses and their families to facilitate the timely provision of community mental health services and supports upon release from DYS. In counties where established, youth on the DYS mental health caseload and/or youth with SED shall be linked to CBHCs (Community Behavioral Health Centers) Health Homes. *(Work on this recommendation is already underway)*
5. DYS in collaboration with ODMH will select and implement a statewide, culturally appropriate standardized screening instrument specific to mental health and trauma to be used at the earliest contact points youth enter the juvenile justice system.

DYS is the juvenile corrections system for the state of Ohio and is statutorily mandated to confine felony offenders, ages 10 to 21, who have been adjudicated and committed by one of Ohio's 88 county juvenile courts. DYS operates four juvenile correctional facilities, provides parole services from five regional sites and funds and supports over 610 direct service programs throughout the state.

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