



PRESS RELEASE

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Bureau of TennCare Staff Receive Statewide Recognition

Tennessee Association of Mental Health Organizations' 2009 President's Award

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Nashville, January 15, 2010: The Tennessee Association of Mental Health Organizations honored the State of Tennessee, Bureau of

TennCare staff with the President's Award, which is given at the discretion of the TAMHO President, during the TAMHO 2009 Annual Awards and Recognition Ceremony at the Hutton Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee.

The Bureau of TennCare had been an important player in TAMHO's world for a long time, but last year with the implementation of the new integrated health plans, the Bureau became even more important. While the Bureau had always been the single state agency responsible for the Medicaid program, it previously shared behavioral health with the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (TDMHDD). With the integration of behavioral health into the managed care structure, the Bureau was now the entity within State government that would solely contract with the health plans for all services for the 1.2 million TennCare enrollees, including behavioral health services. Mary Shelton, who had previously worked for TDMHDD, joined Andrea Thaler (MSSW) and Keith Gaither (Chief of Networks) at the Bureau to form a TennCare behavioral health team. New State contracting authority and new managed care companies with expanded roles, unfamiliarity with services, and a complex delivery system...a recipe for disaster? It certainly could have been without the commitment of these Bureau of TennCare staff members.

These three individuals, who assumed major responsibilities for the behavioral health component of TennCare, dedicated themselves to travel throughout the state to visit the key programs through which TennCare enrollees with serious and persistent mental illnesses received essential services, programs such as supportive residential, crisis response, crisis stabilization units, etc. They visited

TAMHO member organizations from Johnson City to Memphis with many stops in between. These on-site experiences were extremely valuable in terms of increasing understanding of and appreciation for the continuum of services being made available to SPMI consumers throughout the state. These staff members from the Bureau on numerous occasions agreed to meet with various TAMHO committees and work groups, most of the time with the health plans' Managed Care Companies also present, to focus on problem-solving that would mean better services for the TennCare population. As a result of the work of the three individuals, there have been many positive changes in administrative procedures that have ultimately benefitted TennCare enrollees served by TAMHO member organizations. This award expresses appreciation on behalf of the TAMHO membership, for the extraordinary effort made, especially over the past year, to work with providers to improve the system of care for the TennCare population, which has led to better access to behavioral health services for all Tennesseans.

Celebrating over 50 years of service, the Tennessee Association of Mental Health Organizations (TAMHO) is a statewide trade association representing Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) and other not-for-profit corporations that provide behavioral health services. These organizations continue to meet the needs of Tennesseans, from all age groups and socioeconomic levels, with a mental illness or substance abuse diagnosis. The TAMHO member organizations have been the virtual cornerstone of the community-based behavioral health system throughout the state since the 1950s and today serve as the primary provider network for the TennCare Program.

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