

Glenda Wiles

From: Varichak, Vicky [VVarichak@mt.gov]
Sent: Thursday, October 10, 2013 3:24 PM
To: Ravalli County Commissioners
Subject: Mental Health Local Advisory Council
Attachments: MHOAC Letter To Counties.pdf

Commissioners,

I just wanted to make sure that you had received a copy of this letter and that you knew that the Bitterroot Valley Local Advisory Council meets the 4th Tuesday of every month at the Center For Spiritual Living; 1720 No. 1st St., Hamilton, Mt at 11:30 AM.

I hope to see you at the next meeting.

Vicky Varichak
Community Program Officer
AMDD - State of Montana
241-7369 (cell)



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Andy Hunthausen

Michael A. Murray

Susan Good Geise

City County Building 316 North Park Helena, Montana 59623 406.447.8304 Fax: 406.447.8370

September 10, 2013

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing to you as your representative of the Montana Mental Health Oversight Advisory Council (MHOAC). The Council is made up of consumers, providers, advocates and community leaders from a variety of sectors. A main focus of the Council's mission is to provide the Department of Health and Human Services recommendations for setting priorities for mental health funding and programming. In addition, MHOAC makes every effort to listen to the needs of local communities and then assist them in solving local issues around providing quality mental health services.

Through the MHOAC discussions with local communities it has become evident that many are struggling to develop and maintain functional and effective *Mental Health Local Advisory Councils* (LAC). The LAC's are essential for a community to come together to discuss and plan for comprehensive mental health care in your community. Those LAC's that are seeing some success in community planning and implementation of mental health care have done so with the help of their county government.

Two examples of high functioning LAC's are in Gallatin and Lewis and Clark counties. These LAC's have thrived due to the involvement and partnership with the host county commission. I am writing you today to ask for your assistance and active participation with your LAC to improve consistency and effective advocacy for mental health consumers. The presence of local elected officials at LAC meetings makes a difference in our communities, and transmits the urgency of mental health issues that are often ignored until a tragedy occurs.

Attached you will find the method and template (please feel free to use) that both Gallatin and Lewis and Clark counties used to establish functional LAC's. These counties made the LAC a working council of the county with the members being appointed by the county commission. In addition, the county provided direction by establishing bylaws and criteria for the membership. We are asking you to consider studying the information attached and using it to establish a county-sponsored LAC in your county. This action will not necessarily cost the county anything and will provide you with an engaged council that can plan and develop a local mental health system (some counties are able to provide some staff time for meetings). A functioning council

can be your **on-the-ground-expert** for mental health issues and will provide you and the State with recommendations for direction and improvements to the local system.

Please consider attending your local LAC meetings for the benefit of local consumers, advocates, partners, and providers in establishing a great LAC. I, along with the MHOAC, will be ready to assist you if you would desire.

Thank you for your interest and engagement in your local mental health delivery system.
Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andy Hunthausen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Andy Hunthausen, Commissioner
Lewis and Clark County