

# DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

## State of Mississippi

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Wendy D. Bailey - Executive Director

April 5, 2023

Dear Chancery Clerk:

On behalf of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH), I would like to thank you for your service to our state and express appreciation for the role you play in assisting people in your county who reach out in need of mental health and substance use treatment. As you may know, a priority for the State is to decrease the number of Mississippians who are court committed for acute psychiatric care by providing intensive services in the community and utilizing strategies to help people remain in their communities. Over the last two years, services and supports have been increasing, and you will see additional expansion in 2023.

A partnership with your county-operated Community Mental Health Center (CMHC) is vital. Your CMHC provides Intensive Community Supports that are community-based services for adults with severe and persistent mental illness that focus on the preventing the need for a higher level of services. Each county in Mississippi now has access to at least one of three types of intensive community support through Programs of Assertive Community Treatment, Intensive Community Outreach and Recovery Teams, or Intensive Community Support Services. These services are designed to be a key part of the continuum of mental health services and supports for people with mental illness. There are now Intensive Community Support Specialists in every CMHC.

We have also worked with several CMHCs to pilot court liaison programs to connect people with community-based services to decrease the number of commitments to inpatient acute psychiatric services. These specialist services aim to intervene early in the commitment process by working with the person and/or loved ones who are seeking a commitment or at risk for institutionalization and linking with treatment. The liaisons will work directly with the individuals to ensure people receive appropriate evaluations and needed mental health services. The liaison is responsible for facilitating communication and collaboration between judicial, law enforcement and behavioral health systems. There are plans in 2023 to add approximately 25 – 30 additional court liaisons around the State through the CMHCs. You will receive more information soon if a court liaison will be working with your county.

As you may know, in the 2023 legislation session House Bill 1222 was signed by the Governor. In Section 9 of this legislation, there are new specific reporting requirements for Chancery Clerks, including number of commitments, hearings, affidavits filed, and Crisis Stabilization Unit bed denials. Next month, you will receive notification from Cyndi Eubank, DMH General Counsel, with more details on how to report this information quarterly to DMH as required by the legislation.

While we have all experienced great challenges over the last several years, DMH is dedicated to partnering to improve our State. If you have not developed a partnership with your CMHC, I encourage you to reach out. If you have any questions or need help connecting with your local CMHC, please feel free to contact me at 601-359-1288 or [wendy.bailey@dmh.ms.gov](mailto:wendy.bailey@dmh.ms.gov) or Katie Storr, DMH Chief of Staff, at 601-359-6395 or [katie.storr@dmh.ms.gov](mailto:katie.storr@dmh.ms.gov).

I have enclosed additional information including availability of Intensive Community Supports by county, a map of the Community Mental Health Centers with contact information, a map of the Crisis Stabilization Units with contact information, and details about 988, the behavioral health crisis line. Again, I appreciate your dedication and service to our state. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can provide assistance.

Sincerely,

Wendy D. Bailey  
Executive Director