



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Maryland Wins \$8.5 Million Federal Grant to Improve Mental Health Services for Foster Care Youth

BALTIMORE, MD (October 20, 2008) – Governor Martin O'Malley announced today that Maryland will receive a total of \$8.5 million over the next six years from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to expand a program designed to address the mental health needs of children in the state's foster care system.

“This is a highly competitive grant that becomes even more meaningful in these extremely difficult economic times,” said Governor O'Malley. “Its receipt is a testament to the hard work and leadership put forth by the departments of Health and Mental Hygiene and Human Resources, and their partners toward expansion of national best practices in mental health services for children in our foster care system.”

Grant funds will be used to expand and support “wraparound” services to foster children in their communities. Wraparound services provide a comprehensive array of home and community based services to maximize the strengths of families, natural support systems and community resources. These services are different from traditional “one size fits all” programs and expensive residential care.

The funds will enable the state to build upon the strengths of Maryland's Public Mental Health System and DHR's successful signature child welfare initiative, **Place Matters**. Both promote safety, family strengthening, permanency and community-based services for children and families in the child welfare system in the least restrictive settings.

“DHMH and DHR are working together to create a continuum of mental health services that meets the needs of children in foster care,” said John M. Colmers, Secretary of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. “This will be a statewide initiative which will focus on communities with significantly high numbers of foster care children.”

“Countless children will directly benefit from these expanded mental health services,” said DHR Secretary Brenda Donald. “When our vulnerable children are mentally stronger and healthier, so is the rest of our community.”

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There are approximately 9,300 children in foster care in Maryland and 5,500 of them come from Baltimore City. Service dollars awarded under this grant will be targeted to the neighborhoods in Baltimore City, where the majority of the youth and families in foster care reside. Through a solid infrastructure and carefully planned statewide strategies, this grant opportunity will also support adapting the model developed in Baltimore City for statewide application.

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is a public health department whose goal is to improve the health status of every Maryland resident and to ensure access to quality health care. The department is responsible for helping each person live a life free from the threat of communicable diseases, tainted foods, and dangerous products. To assist in this mission, DHMH regulates health care providers, facilities, and organizations, and manages direct services to patients where appropriate.

The Maryland Department of Human Resources serves 500,000 people in need each year. The agency provides foster care, adoption and protective services to children and temporary cash, food stamps and medical assistance to families in need. In addition, the agency administers programs for homeless persons, refugees, migrant workers, victims of crime and women who are displaced, battered or assaulted. It is Maryland's fourth largest agency.

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