

Florida Health and Human Services Board, Inc.

A Not-for-Profit Organization founded in 2001 for putting "Community" into Community-Based Care

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August 8, 2007

Robert A. Butterworth
Secretary, Department of Children and Families
1317 Winewood Blvd. Building 1, Room 202
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700

SUBJECT: DCF Reorganization

Dear Secretary Butterworth:

Speaking for the Florida Health and Human Services Board, I wrote to you in early January, then again in June expressing our concern that the Department is not doing much about the "community" aspect of community-based care. In a nutshell, the statutory requirement that community alliances serve as local watchdogs – planning, needs assessment, setting priorities, determining community outcome goals, etc. – is simply not being lived up to.

At the risk of redundancy, I repeat the wording of the Statute 20.19(6)(b):

The duties of the community Alliance shall include, but not necessarily be limited to:

1. Joint planning for resource utilization in the community, including resources appropriated to the department and any funds that local funding sources choose to provide.
2. Needs assessment and establishment of community priorities for service delivery.
3. Determining community outcome goals to supplement state-required outcomes.
4. Serving as a catalyst for community resource development.
5. Providing for community education and advocacy on issues related to delivery of services.
6. Promoting prevention and early intervention services.

You have denied our allegation, saying "The formation, support and participation of Community Alliances have been critical to the success of the Community-Based Care initiative." (July 6)

Wherever we have visited local communities searching for exactly this kind of community involvement we have not found it on the ground. And we think it is rather telling that your memo of June 28 approving the department reorganization makes absolutely no mention of community alliances. Furthermore, your charge to the newly formed Task Force on Child Protection (August 3) makes no mention of community alliances. If they exist, they should be intimately involved in this.

You cannot with impunity ignore those duties spelled out in the Florida statutes. And, by the way, we suggest that the alliances should report at least annually to the Department and to the Legislature. Incredibly, reporting was completely left out when 20.19(6)(b) was written in 2000.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alvin W. Wolfe, Ph.D.
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Copies to: Senators Storms and Margolis, Senate Committee on Children, Families and Elder Affairs;
and Representatives Galvano, Hooper, and Taylor, House Committee on Healthy Families.