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Regions Become Operational Under MHDS Redesign Counties Work Together to Offer Services

(Des Moines, Iowa) – The Iowa Department of Human Services is pleased to announce all 15 regions under the state’s Mental Health and Disability Services Redesign plan will be operating as of July 1.

“This is a remarkable accomplishment where legislators, stakeholders and citizens worked together to offer locally-delivered and regionally-administered services which meet statewide standards of care,” said DHS Director Charles M. Palmer. “The state continues assisting counties in this transition, and we believe these efforts will result in a robust system which will make a positive difference in the lives of Iowans.”

Under Mental Health Redesign legislation (SF2315), the regions are required to provide core services. These include:

- Treatment designed to ameliorate a person's condition such as outpatient therapy or inpatient treatment, and medication management
- Basic crisis response provisions including 24-hour access to crisis services
- Support for community living, such as home health aides and home and vehicle modifications, as well as respite services
- Support for employment including prevocational services, job development and day habilitation
- Recovery services including peer and family support
- Service coordination including coordinating physical health and primary care

The regions’ plans for service delivery were reviewed and returned for revisions in June. Under those plans, regions will show they’re able to give Iowans appropriate access to providers of core services, demonstrate they can serve persons with co-occurring conditions, and provide evidence-based services and trauma-informed care.

“The regions are meeting the important standards set forth in redesign legislation, and Iowans with mental health and disability needs, and their families and communities, stand to benefit from this well-coordinated approach,” said Rick Shults, DHS’s administrator of Mental Health and Disability Services.

Instead of having services in only one county to choose from, Iowans now have a regional base of services which meet statewide standards to address their needs. Counties get to pool their resources and offer a core set of services to help improve the health of Iowans.

Supporting mental health service delivery efforts is new funding available under the Affordable Care Act. Federal Medicaid dollars were historically used to cover only certain

eligibility groups such as children, pregnant women, the elderly and those with disabilities. Counties have historically covered non-Medicaid mental health treatment services and many offered services through county homes. Under the new ACA-compliant Iowa Health and Wellness Plan, adults ages 19 to 64 who meet income requirements are eligible for Medicaid-funded mental health treatment services they may not have been eligible for before.

Services under Mental Health and Disability Redesign are offered in the least restrictive setting possible. This aligns with the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark Olmstead decision in 1999 which said people of any age with disabilities should receive supports in the most integrated setting consistent with their needs.

"We are moving forward with MHDS Redesign with a focus on integrated community settings. We believe supports and services can be provided in these settings that allow choice and self-determination for persons with disabilities," said Shults. "This approach is consistent with the Olmstead decision and the direction set by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services for federal funding."

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