



1 Pillsbury Street, Suite 200 Concord, NH 03301-3570 603-225-6633 FAX 603-225-4739

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**CONTACTS:**

Jay Couture  
Seacoast Mental Health Center  
(603) 431-6703  
[jcouture@smhc-nh.org](mailto:jcouture@smhc-nh.org)

Jim Monahan  
White Birch Communications  
(603) 228-3322  
[jmonahan@dupontgroup.com](mailto:jmonahan@dupontgroup.com)

**MENTAL HEALTH CENTERS EXPRESS SERIOUS CONCERNS  
OVER BED CLOSURES**

**Impacts Will Harm System and Drive Costs Up**

**Concord, NH:** The NH Community Behavioral Health Association, which represents the state's ten community mental health centers, today expressed serious concerns over the closure of behavioral health beds at Southern NH Hospital, and warned that the result will be increased costs to the community mental health system and the state.

"The impact of this bed closure will be felt throughout the mental health system and raises a serious public health concern," said Jay Couture, Association President and CEO of Seacoast Mental Health. "Hundreds of people who need this level of care will be harmed because they will have to wait for service or might not receive the care they need, and their conditions will deteriorate," Couture added. "Initially we will see backups in emergency rooms. Individuals may also end up in county correctional facilities or in more expensive settings including the New Hampshire Hospital."

Roland Lamy, Executive Director of the CBHA, said, "The community mental health system is just that: a network of health care settings that provides different levels of care. If beds for more acute conditions are lost, those people will back up the system in other places, will cost more to care for, and their illnesses will worsen. This bed closure will clearly cost the system and the state much more in the end."

"The announcement by Southern NH Medical Center that they are closing their 30-bed inpatient psychiatric unit is yet another blow to the statewide community-based mental health services system," Couture said. "In 1982, Gov. Gallen's Committee on Mental and Developmental Disabilities issued a report that said, 'the heart of any statewide mental health system is the community.' That report made significant recommendations for the design and implementation

of an improved system of care, including the creation of regional inpatient units for psychiatric admissions, and the construction or purchase of 19 group homes. ö

öFor a number of years following the 1982 report our state made significant advances in the development and improvement of mental health services,ö Couture added. öMany may remember the access to inpatient beds in hospitals throughout the state that no longer exist today. As noted in the Ten Year Plan ó A Strategy for Restoration of Mental Health services (August 2008) <http://www.nhcbha.org/downloads/REPORT2008-09-TenYearPlan.pdf> we had 236 voluntary inpatient beds in 1990; and then 186 in 2008. With what has transpired since 2008, and with the news released this week, that number has continued to decline, although the need has not.ö

öWe will continue to see people in need of services that no longer exist in our state or have been so drastically reduced as to require untenable waits,ö Couture warned. öWhen consumers get the least restrictive care in the least restrictive environment, the results are better clinically and financially. Reducing options to those in need of mental health services will harm individuals and families and will ultimately cost the state and its taxpayers more. As residents of New Hampshire and friends, family members, co-workers and neighbors of those who may be in need of services, we have to ask: is this really what we want?ö

### **About the NH Community Behavioral Health Association**

The NH Community Behavioral Health Association is an organization comprised of the ten community mental health centers throughout New Hampshire. These centers serve individuals in our state who are living withô and recovering fromô mental illness and emotional disorders. In fiscal year 2009, this network of mental health centers provided ongoing and emergency behavioral health services to over 48,000 New Hampshire residents, a number that includes over 12,000 children.

The goal of the Association is to raise awareness about the crucial role played by community-based mental health centers to ensure public safety and overall public health for all New Hampshire residents. In addition, the Association serves as an advocate for a strong mental health system across New Hampshire.