



**Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
Mental Health and Substance Abuse System-level Advocacy Update  
December 15, 2009**

Daylight Project is now the name of the Statewide Strategic Use Funds grant project! The Mental Health Center of Denver in partnership with the Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing were funded \$520,000 for a 22-month project to implement the training and technical assistance center described in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Mental Health and Substance Abuse Action Plan.

Prior to the November retreat, the Implementation Team felt it needed to identify the project with a name that the community would embrace and for the community to be able to relate it to the Team's important statewide system advocacy. The Team narrowed it down to this most viable name. This project simply brings daylight, if not hope, in regards to advancement of access to mental health and substance abuse services for deaf and hard of hearing Coloradans.

At the November retreat, the Team was able to finalize the project plan and to complete work plans (work details, timelines, internal and external members serving on the work group, etc.) for all of the seven components of the project. These are:

Consumer and Family Leadership: Provide advocacy trainings accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing individuals and their families and support the advocates as they develop a network of support among each other.

Program Evaluation: Provide 1) accountability by documenting the activities and deliverables, 2) a means to ensure continuous improvement and systemic change, and 3) an analysis of lessons learned.

Standards Development: Develop and adopt Guidelines for care in partnership with the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, deaf and hard of hearing consumers, the Office of Behavioral Health, and other providers and service delivery systems.

Statewide Training to Behavioral Health Providers: Develop, deliver, and evaluate regional trainings and incorporation of deaf and hard of hearing cirricula into existing training opportunities.

Sustainability Planning: Plan partnership with providers and the Division of Behavioral Health to ensure long-term availability of training and technology support.

Technology Training and Distribution: Distribute assistive communication technology to participating providers who report gaps in technology access.

Training and Technology Assessment: Assess mental health and substance abuse provider skills, training needs, and technology needs.

Upon completion of the retreat, the Team prioritized three components for immediate action. These are 1) Training and Technology Assessment, 2) Standards, and 3) Consumer and Family Leadership. Work groups for these components have already begun and are moving forward with leadership from consultants for the training and technology assessment, and standards. The other components will be addressed when this immediate action is complete.

In addition to the consultants working with the Daylight Project, Mary Sterritt, MSW, LCSW has recently joined the project as the Project Coordinator. She has been working with the Mental Health Center of Denver as a therapist in the Deaf Counseling Services program for 15 years. Her 30 years of experience in mental health and provision of services to deaf and hard of hearing consumers and their families will make a positive contribution to the project. She has a B.S. in Deaf Education & Psychology and a Masters in Social Work. She has extensive experience providing services to deaf and hard of hearing children, families, and adults in residential, mainstream and Bicultural/Bilingual schools, community mental health centers, in-patient psychiatric, and other settings. She has worked with consumers with additional needs related to special education, developmental disabilities and/or substance abuse. Mary has worked with deaf, hard of hearing and late-deafened consumers with diverse cultural and language backgrounds. Her experience also includes participating in collaborative efforts to build mental health services for the deaf and hard of hearing, leading and managing grant projects, supervising staff, working with state and local agencies, consulting with school staff, providing trainings, serving as a field supervisor for graduate students and advocating for consumers. She is a key contributor to a paper published by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network on addressing the treatment needs of deaf and hard of hearing children. The Implementation Team is pleased to have a coordinator of her caliber aboard. She is already hard at work! Please welcome her! She can be reached at [mary.sterritt@mhcd.org](mailto:mary.sterritt@mhcd.org), 720-949-7484 (VP) or 303-504-6521 (voice).

Again, the four goals of the Action Plan, guiding the implementation of this grant, will lead to a long-term, sustainable approach to providing services. The goals include developing a long-term governance structure, establishing a technical assistance and education center that partners with a statewide network of competent providers, developing standards for providing services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals, and establishing and engaging a network of consumer and family leaders.

See <http://www.coloradodeafcommission.com/advocacy/mhsa.aspx> for more information about our mental health and substance abuse system-level advocacy.