



**TESTIMONY OF MHM Correctional Solutions Inc. to CEAO
December 14, 2009**

Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone and members of The Commission on Enhancing Agency Outcomes, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Hal Smith. I am the Forensic Division Director for MHM Correctional Solutions headquartered in Vienna VA. I reside and work from my office in Milford CT. I have been involved in all aspects of correctional health services for over 35 years which includes Chief Executive for the NYS system for 2 decades.

I am here today to address 2 specific Commission recommendations regarding alternative approaches to manage and create cost savings for CT DOC health services and the reentry of low risk mentally ill inmates to community options.

I would like to discuss the Public/Private Partnership Model for state agencies which has resolved Correctional agency dilemmas throughout the country concerning cost, quality, and safety.

MHM currently contracts with 16 states for the provision of mental health and medical services including 5 Juvenile and Youth Alternative to Detention Programs in cities right here in CT through our contracts with the Judicial Branch.

Through our Public/Private Partnership with the Commonwealth of MA DOC we have together demonstrated positive results for the throughout the correctional system.

In the state prisons we opened the new Residential Treatment Units and Secure Treatment Program which have decreased the number of mental health 1:1 suicide and behavioral watches resulting in decreased CO overtime costs as well as the savings in medical costs for UMASS our partner in providing comprehensive health services. We have seen a decrease in completed suicides and less inmates being sent for psychiatric and medical hospitalization. We have also increased our trainings on suicide prevention and managing the more problematic inmates with the help of our nationally know experts from MHM's Corporate Clinical Operations group. These inmates present with high medical, mental health, and substance abuse problems and are frequently self injurious. This cohort of inmates consumes huge amounts of security and treatment resources. It has been shown in MA and many other states MHM serves that quality services are maintained while cost savings are accomplished. I would welcome you to speak with our clients about their experience with MHM in this regard.



A component of our MA contract includes all services provided at the Bridgewater State Hospital, the Commonwealth's largest public mental health facility with a capacity for 350 adult male patients. MHM is under contract with the DOC to provide comprehensive mental health, forensic evaluations, medical, dental, and medication management services at Bridgewater in keeping with the facility's Joint Commission accreditation.

Among our accomplishments since the contract began in 2006:

- **Significant staffing vacancies in psychiatry, nursing, and management staff:** Within the first six months of the contract, MHM reduced the psychiatry vacancy rate by 67 percent.
- **Failure to ratify a union contract over the past four years:** MHM ratified the union contract within five sessions.
- **High rates of staff overtime:** MHM reduced overtime cost by eliminating the nurse manager vacancies (from 60 percent to zero) and by reducing the nursing staff vacancies by 25 percent.
- **High admission rates:** MHM reduced hospital admission rates by increasing the number of case conferences in the correctional facilities.
- **Concerns regarding the use of seclusion and restraint:** MHM reduced seclusion and restraint hours by 20 percent
- Increase psycho-social, recreational and psycho-educational programming
- Reduced Self-injurious Behavior

Other Cost Containment Measure throughout MHM/DOC Contracts

MHM reduces both direct costs and secondary costs through the application of preventive measures, facilitation of continuity of care, and by coordination of services with security and facility operations and with medical providers.

- **Pharmaceutical Management** - Psychotropic medications are one of the highest cost line-items in a correctional healthcare budget. MHM provides a peer review mechanism, provider training, formulary management, and a system of data management and tracking to review prescribing trends, cost, and determine treatment efficacy. For the Missouri Department of Corrections, we achieved approximately \$1.8 M in savings through application of our pharmacy management program; and from 2003-2007, MHM helped the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections avoid \$12 M in psychotropic medication costs.
- **Caseload Management** - Our team of specialists help our clients establish specific level of care criteria, management systems, and program monitoring to continuously manage the mental health caseload. As a direct result of this program, which we implemented in August 1999, the percentage of inmates on



the mental health caseload has remained relatively stable while general populations have increased.

- **Utilization Review** - MMH applies a structured utilization review system in which only inmates who the more acute service level need receive it, allowing more inmates to move through the system to obtain the right level of care. MMH and the Pennsylvania Department of Correction focused on increasing the operational and staffing efficiency in four acute mental health units. We effectively reduced lengths of stay and reduced costs for the Department by approximately \$1,000,000.
- **Litigation Avoidance** - Litigation has a profound impact on the cost of providing a treatment program by instituting restrictive policies, imposing expensive and inflexible staffing ratios, and mandating the use of costly court monitors. MMH has extensive experience in resolving litigation with new clients and avoiding litigation in all of our current contracts by implementing a program featuring proven components such as a Continuous Quality Improvement Program and self-monitoring mechanisms.
- **Staffing** - MMH has expert national recruiting resources to maintain full staffing patterns (our overall fill-rate is currently over 97%) which serves to reduce litigation risk and ensure the quality of the mental health care. Furthermore, MMH has been successful in introducing and expanding the use of advanced nurse practitioners in several state correctional systems which results in significant cost savings for our clients without any reduction in the quality of services provided to inmates. The practice of using nurse practitioners in our contracts has grown steadily in recent years and nurse practitioners now comprise approximately 25% of our psychiatry positions overall.
- **Telepsychiatry** - An internal MMH review of over 600 Telepsychiatry contacts in the Georgia Department of Corrections in February of 2009 found that the number of patients seen in comparison to a conventional clinic was *10% to 36% greater* with no reduction in satisfaction or desired outcome. Telepsychiatry has allowed us to significantly increase productivity and reduce the costs associated with facility-to-facility transportation, travel time, and security availability. We now have more flexibility to adjust to the changing demands of the population, caseload, and placement.
- **Recidivism Reduction** - MMH provides community re-entry programs to reduce recidivism and cost and facilitate a continuum of care approach. We support and maintain community agency linkages, and we encourage community involvement in our treatment programs in accordance with client policies. Although our CT detention diversion programs target juvenile offenders, there are very similar underlying principals to providing community



alternatives for mentally ill adult offenders. I believe you will find the CT Judicial Branch very satisfied with our services and I would welcome you to visit our program here in Hartford, in New Haven or in our other 3 locations.

In closing I would again like to thank you for this opportunity and would welcome the prospect of meeting with interested parties to hear about potential cost savings while providing enhanced quality services.