



May 10, 2004

Dear network provider,

With the release of Quality Alerts 10 and 11, we at the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership are pleased to begin implementation of an important outcomes management and best practice initiative. We do not pretend that it will be an easy task to implement outcomes management throughout a network of over 1,200 providers. However, we do believe that this is a task that is important from two perspectives: public accountability and healthcare quality.

Both federal and state governments, as well as consumer advocates, are increasingly seeking accountability for public dollars spent on behavioral health services. This outcomes initiative will build a foundation for that accountability. We also hope to build a framework whereby best clinical practices can be identified and promoted throughout our network for the purpose of increasing the quality of our behavioral health services.

This outcomes initiative evolved through many months of dialogue with provider associations, professional associations, and consumer advocates. All agreed that it is important to measure treatment outcomes; few agreed upon how outcomes should be measured; and all asserted that providers could not afford to bear the cost of measuring outcomes. In response to the concern about costs, the Partnership was fortunate to have the support of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Department of Mental Health, and the MassHealth Behavioral Health Programs Unit in identifying savings that could be applied to rate increases that were given to nearly all network providers, effective April 1, 2004. A portion of the rate increase (about 3.2%) was given specifically to pay providers for the outcomes initiative.

In addition to the network-wide rate increases, we have created a limited fund that will allow us to subsidize our preferred outcomes instrument, the Treatment Outcome Package (TOP), published by Behavioral Health Laboratories. This subsidy program is described in Quality Alert 11. We hope that providers will avail themselves of the opportunity to use the TOP since this system will greatly ease the task of implementing outcomes in their practices.

We realize that there are many challenges confronting Massachusetts behavioral healthcare providers. Despite the demands on your time, we hope that providers will be able to work with us toward the goal of finding more effective treatment methods for people who have been seriously disadvantaged by mental illness and substance abuse disorders. The Partnership can offer financial incentives, training, and technical assistance, where possible. We hope the provider community can help us to identify best practices, identify the barriers to adopting best practices, and promote these best practices at all levels of care within our network.

Both Quality Alerts 10 and 11 list the many ways that you can contact us about this initiative. Please, let us hear from you regarding your questions and concerns.

We would like to thank the many providers and advocates who contributed so diligently to the formulation of this policy. We tried to incorporate their good ideas, and we assume responsibility for any limitations in this policy.

On behalf of the entire Partnership staff, we look forward to continuing the dialogue with you to make this outcomes management and best practice initiative a successful endeavor for our Members and for all other stakeholders.

Sincerely,

Nancy Lane, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer

Wayne Stelk, Ph.D.
Vice President, Quality Management