



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
Karen E. Timberlake, Secretary

January 12, 2009

Dear Colleague:

Welcome to 2009! As we start the year refreshed and re-energized, I'm excited to share a new opportunity for us to work together to help improve the lives of our citizens.

One of our Department's goals is to make Wisconsin a national leader in reforming health care; we must assess emerging trends and advances in knowledge while striving for excellence for Wisconsin citizens. It is important to promote the equitable treatment of physical and mental illnesses with an understanding that substance use and addictive disorders may co-exist, necessitating an integrated approach to health care and prevention.

As a Department, we want to be a leader and support your efforts. The time has come for us all to further integrate our approach to improving people's health by recognizing that physical health, mental health, substance use and addiction are inter-related. While this may be an intuitive concept, it can be difficult to improve our health care delivery system and health outcomes without screening and treatment tools to assist us.

Within our agency, we have created a joint statement and action steps to bridge illness prevention and management, health promotion, public education and awareness efforts. Together, we can work to improve the lives of our citizens, leading people of all ages, from all families and communities to optimal physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual health. Our agency's Joint Statement, Endorsement Form, and Action Step Objectives are on our website at <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/mentalhealth/jointstatement/index.htm>

We ask that you not only sign the Endorsement Form, but also select objectives that your organization will implement. Claude Gilmore, our Youth Policy Director, will check with you quarterly to help identify any areas we may be able to assist you, as well as share your success with others.

As Kitty Rahl, who serves as the Director of Nursing for the Eau Claire Public Health Department and Co-Chair of the Maternal and Child Health Program Advisory Committee, says, "people are supportive when they learn how an integrated approach can be utilized." As one of the organizers of this initiative, Rahl agrees that it's critically important for Wisconsin communities to understand the magnitude of this framework - that we have truly created a Call to Action for utilizing this integrated approach to health.

Addressing mental and physical health, substance use and addictive disorders within a public health approach in Wisconsin is transformative. Our work is to improve life expectancy and health outcomes for individuals with these conditions and your participation will strengthen our statewide momentum toward this integrated framework.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen E. Timberlake".

Karen E. Timberlake