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Child Mental Health Services Receives Highest Grade Yet From JCAHO

WILMINGTON _ Cabinet Secretary Cari DeSantis of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families announced today that the Division of Child Mental Health Services has been re-accredited for a three-year period by the Joint Commission of the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO).

Child Mental Health Services provide mental health and substance abuse treatment to more than 2,200 children and their families each year who do not have health insurance or are covered by Medicaid but require services more intensive than the basic 30 hours of outpatient treatment can provide. The division was the first child mental health system and the first public system in the nation to receive JCAHO accreditation in December 1997. DCMHS maintained its accreditation in 2000 and now in 2004 receiving the highest grade and least number of recommended improvements since the first accreditation.

“This re-accreditation highlights the commitment of the Children’s Department to families in Delaware,” said Secretary DeSantis. “Despite national economic challenges they have been able to maintain high quality services, manage their resources responsibly, and meet JCAHO accreditation standards.”

The Joint Commission evaluates and accredits more than 16,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States. An independent, not-for-profit organization, JCAHO is the nation's predominant standards-setting and accrediting body in health care. Since 1951, JCAHO has developed state-of-the-art, professionally based standards and evaluated the compliance of health care organizations against these benchmarks. The JCAHO Accreditation team reviewed the following criteria: assessment and care; education and communication; improving delivery system performance; behavioral health wellness; continuum of care; rights, responsibilities and ethics; management of the environment of care and human resources and information.

The Department seeks accreditation as just one aspect of its quality assurance efforts. Both the central operations of the Division and its statewide network of behavioral health care providers were included in the accreditation survey. Division services range from outpatient to psychiatric inpatient care with 18 levels of care to serve children. There were no concerns or recommendations noted in the provision of care.

“Our staff have broadened their responsibilities and incorporated new services that allow us to serve more children at home and in their communities. We have been able to introduce new providers to our system, begin Drug Court and Individualized Residential Treatment, and provide mental health and addictions support to the children’s juvenile justice system,” said Susan Cycyk, director of Child Mental Health Services, who added that “all this occurred while maintaining quality of service as evidenced by the JCAHO re-accreditation.”

On any given day, the Children’s Department provides services to approximately 8,200 children who have been abused, neglected, are dependent, have mental health or substance problems, and/or have been adjudicated delinquent by the Courts. For more information, please visit <http://www.state.de.us/kids/>.