



# THE STATE OF GEORGIA

## EXECUTIVE ORDER

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BY THE GOVERNOR:

- WHEREAS:** The State of Georgia has historically been committed to the safety and care of its citizens who live with mental illnesses, and substance abuse; and
- WHEREAS:** Georgia's commitment has been exercised through various executive agencies, including the Department of Community Affairs, the Department of Community Health, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Human Resources, and the Department of Juvenile Justice; and
- WHEREAS:** Concerns have long been expressed about perceived or actual lack of sufficient funding, inadequate staffing and service delivery systems, overcrowding, treatment practices that unnecessarily separate consumers from their families, and the need for ongoing and effective advocacy on behalf of those children and adults living and receiving behavioral health services; and
- WHEREAS:** Georgia has articulated and sought a policy of supporting a community based service delivery system that holds promise for better allocation of resources and more sensitive services for its citizens and their families who endure mental illness, and substance abuse; and
- WHEREAS:** Forging and coordinating improvements in behavioral health delivery requires leadership and a multi-focused, multi-agency plan for the new century; and
- WHEREAS:** I generally agree with the intent expressed by the General Assembly in Senate Resolution 363, which called for a Mental Health Service Delivery Commission to explore opportunities for improvement, and I vetoed that resolution only to allow members of the Executive Branch of our government to have input and dialogue in the proposed commission, thereby creating a more inclusive and effective review; and
- WHEREAS:** I also agree with the General Assembly that the review of mental health service delivery should include consideration of:

- (1) The needs of our citizens, both children and adults, for improved behavioral health services and resources wherever they reside;
- (2) Whether Georgia's state hospitals are adequate in size, staff and security, taking into account which consumers can be appropriately housed in community settings;
- (3) Means to best use of public and private resources to relieve overcrowding in state facilities and to further consider methods to develop a full continuum of services and effective supports so that Georgia's citizens who live with mental illness and substance abuse may live and work when possible close to their families;
- (4) The provision of adequate forensic and related treatment services in our institutions and communities when appropriate;
- (5) The role of health insurance benefits coverage for those with mental illness and substance abuse; and
- (6) Creating efficiencies within Georgia's executive agencies involved in providing services to those with mental illness and substance abuse.

**NOW, THEREFORE, PURSUANT TO THE AUTHORITY VESTED IN ME AS GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA, IT IS HEREBY**

**ORDERED:**

That a Mental Health Service Delivery Commission be created to undertake a study of the conditions, needs, and issues addressed in this Executive Order or related thereto. The Commission shall conduct meetings at such places and at such times as it may deem necessary or convenient to enable it to exercise fully and effectively its powers, perform its duties, and accomplish the objectives and purposes of this Executive Order. The Commission is further authorized to retain the services of individuals or firms as determined appropriate by the Commission, as well as to call any party to testify and to require the attendance of witnesses and the production of non-confidential books, records and papers. The Georgia Department of Human Resources shall serve in an administrative capacity to assist the Commission.

**IT IS FURTHER**

**ORDERED:**

That the Commission be composed of 15 members: two members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate; two members of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives; a superior court judge experienced in dealing with mental illness and substance abuse appointed by the Council of Superior Court Judges; one citizen, appointed by the Governor, from within the law enforcement community; three citizens, appointed by the Governor, with

experience in mental health service delivery issues; two citizens appointed by the President of the Senate to represent consumers served by the systems described in this resolution, the advocacy groups for mental health or substance abuse, or members of the law enforcement community and two citizens appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives to represent consumers served by the systems described in this resolution, advocacy groups for mental health or substance abuse or members of the law enforcement community. The Governor shall appoint a parent of a child with a serious mental illness or history of substance abuse, and a legally competent adult with a serious mental illness or history of substance abuse. The chair of the Commission shall be appointed by the Governor. It is further


**ORDERED:**

That the Commission make recommendations to the General Assembly and the Office of Governor as it deems necessary or appropriate. The Commission shall make a report to the General Assembly and the Office of Governor on or before June 2, 2008, as to the progress of the Commission in identifying the challenges in the State's deliverance of mental health services; developing an organizational plan for coordinating the State's various systems and the financial and staffing needs of these systems to assure a safe and secure system of services; and anticipated and proposed implementation of action. The Commission shall stand abolished on December 3, 2008.

This 9<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2007.

  
GOVERNOR

ATTEST:

  
Executive Secretary