

Governor Sam Brownback Names Mental Health Task Force

<http://governor.ks.gov/frontpagenews/2013/07/10/governor-sam-brownback-names-mental-health-task-force>

TOPEKA – Kansas Governor Sam Brownback announced Wednesday his appointments to the Governor’s Mental Health Task Force, established to re-evaluate the state’s mental health system and determine ways to make it stronger and more effective.

The Governor has asked the appointees to look for ways to enhance collaboration among state agencies that administer mental health programs and to better utilize the resources Kansas devotes to mental health services. Task force members will examine key factors necessary for enhancing community support structures and increasing the capacity of Kansas communities to help those with mental illness.

Members of the Governor’s Mental Health Task Force, listed below, were drawn from communities large and small across Kansas, and represent a diverse mix of disciplines, academic backgrounds, and social services and community experiences.

“The goal of this task force is to identify frayed areas of our mental health safety net and work to reinforce it. We have assembled a strong team to address this complex set of issues that touches the lives of so many Kansas families,” Governor Brownback said.

“The experiences and backgrounds of these task force members will be critical in helping us to devise a way forward as we strive to strengthen the current system,” said Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services Secretary Shawn Sullivan, whose agency will oversee the task force’s work. “Members of our behavioral health staff and other expert staff will provide support and assistance to the task force effort.”

The state’s multi-faceted mental health care system includes the two state mental hospitals and Kansas’ 27 Community Mental Health Centers which, along with private contractors, residential facilities and providers, make up the mental health safety net that Kansas has created over many years.

The Mental Health Task Force goals set by Governor Brownback are to:

- Determine what State Agencies and communities can do to better identify, treat, and support individuals with mental illness to live meaningful and productive lives in their community. This includes individuals who:
 - Currently use the mental health system
 - Are not reached by appropriate mental health services
 - Are at risk of serious life disruption due to exacerbation of mental health symptoms.
- Identify and recommend specific community solutions that have the potential to minimize and prevent the exacerbation of chronic mental health conditions and support individuals to live meaningful and productive lives in their community

Appointed to the task for by the Governor are: Dr. Rick Goscha, Lawrence; Dr. Karen Countryman-Roswurm, Wichita; Captain Bill Cochran, Topeka; Judge Tom Webb, Sublette; Dr. Steven Davies, Horton; Dr. Rick Gaskill, Wichita; Amanda Adkins, Kansas City; Ric Dalke, Garden City; Dr. Charlie Griffin, Manhattan; Dr. Michael Leeson, Lawrence; Becky Gray, Pittsburg; Cathy Ramshaw, Topeka; Pastor David Redmond, Concordia; Les Sperling, Lindsborg and Mark Potter, Cheney; Father Richard L. Daise, Salina.

The first formal meeting of the task force has been scheduled for 10 a.m. through 4 p.m. on July 18, 2013 in the DCF Learning Center, 2600 SW East Circle Drive in Topeka.

At the conclusion of its deliberations, the taskforce will issue a report to the Governor with its findings and recommendations.