



— Your community partner for responsive, effective and affordable behavioral health care —

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**Community Forum on Mental Health**

*Spotlight on 2008 Laws and Anticipated Funding and Policy Issues in Next Legislative Session*

**Rochester, Minn.** – Four local mental health organizations are teaming up to offer people with a mental illness, their family members and health care professionals a preview of the behavioral health landscape. Kathleen Kelso, director of public policy, and Ed Eide, executive director, of the Mental Health Association of Minnesota will review new mental health laws and discuss anticipated issues for the state’s 2009 legislative session.

The community forum is being held September 11, 2008, at Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center’s main campus in Rochester located at 343 Wood Lake Drive SE. It will be held from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

“This forum offers individuals, professionals and others a unique opportunity to learn about legislative changes and their impact on mental health community-based programs,” said Patricia Carlson, executive director for Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center. “It provides a clear overview of key updates that can significantly impact how services are provided.”

Carlson added the community forum will offer people an opportunity to report what is working for them and what needs improvement in the mental health system in their community. This information will be shared with candidates during political campaigns and with legislators at the Capitol in 2009.

Mental illnesses are biological brain disorders that affect about one in five persons and are the leading cause of disability in the U.S. for ages 15-44. Minnesota has steadily promoted and funded effective treatments and rehabilitation in both the public and private sectors; however, access to full mental health benefits remains limited for many children, adults and their families.

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As with other chronic conditions, people get worse while waiting for services, when earlier treatment would avoid complications. Affordable housing, community supports and employment supports are sorely lacking. Treatment and support to children at their schools and homes is difficult to obtain.

The forum is being sponsored by the Mental Health Association of Minnesota, Olmsted County Human Services, Southeast Mental Health Initiative and Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center.

#### **About Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center**

Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center enhances the quality of life for residents in southeastern Minnesota by serving as a community resource for the understanding and treatment of behavioral health and substance use disorders. The organization collaborates with government agencies, schools, non-profit groups and others to provide programs dedicated to improving the mental health of adults, adolescents and children. Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center is a private, non-profit organization serving Olmsted and Fillmore counties. For more information, visit our Web site at [www.zumbromhc.org](http://www.zumbromhc.org) or call 507-289-2089.

#### **About Mental Health Association of Minnesota**

The Mental Health Association of Minnesota (MHAM) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit agency that responds to the needs of individuals with mental illnesses and their family members through a range of advocacy and education services. Founded in 1939, MHAM is the state's first mental health advocacy and education organization. For more information, visit our Web site at [www.mentalhealthmn.org](http://www.mentalhealthmn.org).

#### **About Olmsted County Human Services**

The Olmsted County Human Services department provides a range of mental health-related services for adults, children and families. For more information, visit the Olmsted County Web site at [www.co.olmsted.mn.us](http://www.co.olmsted.mn.us).

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