



March 2006

Report No. 06-21

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Corporation Made Progress But Needs More Narrow Focus

at a glance

During its second year of operation, the corporation has improved its outreach to state agencies and has more fully addressed its statutory responsibilities. However, the corporation continues to focus its policy recommendations only on the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) and needs to address all agencies in the substance abuse and mental health systems.

To date, the corporation's work has not had a substantive impact on state mental health and substance abuse system outcomes, with the exception of improving data collection and analysis between DCF and AHCA. However, the corporation can play a needed role for the state by providing independent analyses of the state's substance abuse and mental health systems; accordingly, the corporation should be given more time and be continued beyond its October 2006 sunset date.

To improve the corporation's effectiveness, the Legislature should consider narrowing the corporation's focus to improving interagency coordination with a specific set of goals for it to achieve. The corporation should facilitate meetings among agencies involved in the substance abuse and mental health systems to solve interagency coordination issues.

Scope

As directed by Ch. 2003-279, *Laws of Florida*, OPPAGA and the Auditor General examined the state's substance abuse and mental health systems and management. This report assesses the impact of the Florida Substance Abuse and Mental Health Corporation on the state's substance abuse and mental health programs.^{1, 2} The report addresses four questions.

1. To what extent has the corporation worked with state agencies to create integrated substance abuse and mental health systems?
2. To what degree has the corporation met its statutory responsibilities?
3. To what extent has the corporation improved substance abuse and mental health system outcomes?
4. Should the Florida Substance Abuse and Mental Health Corporation be continued?

¹ OPPAGA issued a preliminary report on the corporation in March 2005, *The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Corporation Has Not Addressed Its Responsibilities Fully*, OPPAGA [Report No. 05-17](#).

² As required by Ch. 2003-279, *Laws of Florida*, OPPAGA issued a preliminary report on the impact of organizational changes in the Department of Children and Families in February 2005, *DCF Substance Abuse and Mental Health Programs Provides Benefits But Also Challenges*, OPPAGA [Report No. 05-07](#). OPPAGA issued a final report on this topic in February 2006, *Centralizing DCF Substance Abuse and Mental Health Programs Produced Benefits*, OPPAGA [Report No. 06-12](#).

Background —

The 2003 Legislature created the Florida Substance Abuse and Mental Health Corporation to oversee the state's publicly funded substance abuse and mental health systems and make policy and resource recommendations to improve the coordination, quality, and efficiency of these systems. The corporation is a not-for-profit organization independent of state government and is to annually evaluate and report on the status of the state's substance abuse and mental health systems.³

The corporation, which is administratively housed within the Department of Children and Families (DCF), has two employees, an executive director and an administrative assistant. For each of Fiscal Years 2003-04, 2004-05, and 2005-06, the Legislature appropriated the corporation \$250,000.⁴

The corporation is governed by a 12-member board of directors appointed by the Governor, the Speaker of the House, and the President of the Senate. Board members are to be community or business leaders with experience or interest in substance abuse or mental health issues and are to include consumers and those with a perspective on the child welfare and criminal justice systems. Three ex-officio board members represent the Department of Children and Families, the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), and the Florida Association of Counties. The board chairperson, who is appointed by the Governor, has appointed ad hoc committees to address issues related to adults and elders, children, agency data systems, and legislative affairs.

³ Chapter 2003-279, *Laws of Florida*.

⁴ This funding is provided through the DCF substance abuse and mental health Other Personnel Services and Expense budget items. As a result, the department does not contract with the corporation and its employees are provided salaries but not personnel benefits.

Questions and Answers —

To what extent has the corporation worked with state agencies to create integrated substance abuse and mental health systems?

In Ch. 2003-279, *Laws of Florida*, the Legislature required the corporation to work with state agencies that fund, purchase, or provide mental health and substance abuse services and to develop memoranda of agreement with these agencies. The corporation improved its outreach to these agencies during its second year of operation, but needs to work more actively with them.

In our March 2005 report, we recommended that the corporation increase outreach to all agencies involved in the substance abuse and mental health systems, not just DCF and AHCA. We also recommended that the corporation complete the required memoranda of understanding with these agencies. More involvement with other state agencies would enable the corporation to be informed of major substance abuse and mental health issues.

In its second year of operation, the corporation continued to work closely with DCF and AHCA, which are the major funding sources for substance abuse and mental health services in the state. The corporation also took steps to involve other agencies in its assessment of the state's substance abuse and mental health systems. For example, the corporation invited the Departments of Juvenile Justice and Corrections to make presentations at its board meetings, and the Departments of Elder Affairs and Health made presentations and provided information to corporation ad hoc committees.

The corporation also has established memoranda of understanding with the Department of Juvenile Justice and the Agency for Health Care Administration, in addition to its memorandum of understanding with DCF. The corporation also organized and facilitated several meetings with extensive representation from state agencies, providers, and consumers to assist the Department of Children and Families with its goal of transforming the state's mental health system.

Although invited, representatives from state agencies other than DCF and AHCA do not routinely attend corporation board and committee meetings. This limits the corporation's breadth of information on critical system issues. To have an effect on the state systems and to more fully inform board members about funding needs, new initiatives, and state agency coordination issues, the corporation needs to more actively engage state agencies by providing a forum for their meaningful participation with the corporation.

One option would be for the corporation director to arrange short, limited agenda monthly meetings of agency staff responsible for substance abuse and mental health programs to discuss coordination issues and develop solutions. Such meetings could be conducted via conference calls or in Tallahassee so as to be near these agencies' headquarters offices, since lengthy, out-of-town board meetings are difficult for key state agency staff to attend on a regular basis. Then, at the quarterly corporation meetings, the director could inform the board of the issues discussed at the inter-agency meetings. The director could act as a liaison for the board by taking their suggestions for issues to discuss with agency managers and informing the agencies of possible solutions developed by the board to address identified issues. This would allow the board to share issues it becomes aware of through its public forums, react to problems and possible solutions identified by agencies, and offer alternative suggestions.

To what degree has the corporation met its statutory responsibilities?

During its second year of operation, the corporation more fully addressed its eight statutory responsibilities related to the substance abuse and mental health systems. The corporation has fully addressed five responsibilities and has partially addressed its remaining three statutory responsibilities.

Statutory responsibilities

1. *Review and assess the collection and analysis of needs assessment data as described in s. 394.82, Florida Statutes.*

The corporation has met this responsibility by reviewing needs assessment data for the Department of Children and Families' mental health services and assessing the methodology used by the department. We previously recommended that the corporation assess the department's methods for collecting and analyzing needs assessment data, analyze needs by specific service categories, and prioritize needs with projected costs. In response to our recommendation, the corporation did a more thorough review and analysis of the department's needs assessment data in 2005 and found deficiencies in the department's data including:

- the department's methodology for determining needs had not been updated in several years;
- the projected needs were based upon national prevalence rates, not an actuarial analysis as required by statute;⁵ and
- DCF's needs assessment was not conducted in collaboration with AHCA, as required.

The corporation has recommended that the department revise the process for collecting and analyzing needs assessment data to more accurately capture information.

2. *Provide mechanisms for substance abuse and mental health stakeholders, including consumers, family members, providers, and advocates, to provide input concerning the management of the overall system.*

The corporation has met this responsibility by consistently providing a forum for stakeholder testimony. At each board meeting, the corporation allows time for public input. Consumers, providers, advocates, and other stakeholders address the corporation on issues relating to substance abuse and mental health services for children and adults. Mechanisms for

⁵ The department informed the corporation that the actuarial analysis had not been conducted due to lack of funding. The department estimates that an actuarial analysis would cost \$100,000.

stakeholder input include public forums, presentations, focus groups, and round table discussions. Corporation board meetings are well attended by provider organizations, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders.

3. *Prepare budget recommendations to be submitted to the appropriate departments for consideration in the development of their legislative budget requests and provide copies to the Governor, President of the Senate and Speaker of the House for their consideration.*

The corporation has met this responsibility by preparing budget recommendations for several agencies for Fiscal Year 2006-07 in July 2005. Our March 2005 report recommended that the corporation establish working relationships with all state agencies involved in substance abuse and mental health treatment in order to develop these recommendations. We also recommended that the corporation's recommendations be prepared in July 2005 to be useful to agencies during the state's budget cycle.

Since our March 2005 report, the corporation has heard presentations from agencies and providers on funding needs and made budget recommendations to the Department of Children and Families, Department of Juvenile Justice, and the Agency for Health Care Administration for their consideration. These recommendations include reducing geographic funding inequities for mental health services across DCF districts, increasing funding for substance abuse family intervention specialists to work with child welfare clients, and restoring funding and positions for juvenile justice prevention programs.

4. *Review data regarding the performance of the publicly funded substance abuse and mental health systems.*

The corporation has met this responsibility by reviewing performance from a number of agencies and making recommendations for improvements. We previously recommended that the corporation review performance measures and data related to substance abuse and mental health services of relevant state agencies.

In response to our recommendation, the corporation reviewed performance measures and data from DCF, AHCA, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Juvenile Justice, and the Department of Elder Affairs and made several recommendations that the agencies have taken under advisement. For example, the corporation recommended that AHCA, the primary funding source for mental health services, develop performance measures related to mental health and substance abuse services, since it currently does not have such measures.

5. *Make recommendations concerning strategies for improving the performance of the systems.*

The corporation has met this responsibility by developing strategy recommendations for improving the performance of the mental health and substance abuse systems based on information provided by agencies and other stakeholders. We previously recommended that the corporation expand its examination of the performance of the substance abuse and mental health systems beyond DCF and AHCA and managed care issues. To do this, the corporation needed to include other agencies; take a consistent approach to evaluation of funding, clients served, the coordination and integration of services and programs, and the use of evidenced-based practices; and make recommendations to improve performance.

Based on our recommendations, the corporation heard presentation from agencies and developed strategies and recommendations for improving the performance of the systems, including developing an integrated behavioral health care database across state agencies, collecting and sharing behavioral health care data across agencies, and improving the collection of client satisfaction and pharmacy data.

6. *Review and assess the status of the publicly funded mental health and substance abuse systems and recommend policy designed to improve coordination and effectiveness.*

The corporation has partially met this responsibility by gathering information regarding substance abuse and mental health issues and making policy recommendations. However, these recommendations have focused on DCF and AHCA and not other agencies.

We previously recommended that the corporation expand its focus to determine whether programs and services in other agencies are integrated and efficacious and to examine interagency coordination and service impediments.

In this second year of operation, the corporation made policy recommendations concerning the Medicaid reform initiative (AHCA) and the need for DCF to coordinate the delivery of substance abuse and mental health services for persons with co-occurring disorders based on presentations from agencies, providers, and consumers. However, to fully meet this responsibility, we continue to recommend that the corporation assess all aspects of the state's substance abuse and mental health systems to determine impediments to coordination, integration, service delivery, and effectiveness. This would allow the corporation to make policy recommendations addressing needed changes in statute, rules, and practices to reduce or eliminate barriers to coordination among agencies.

7. Recommend priorities for service expansion.

The corporation has partially met this responsibility by making recommendations for expanding certain services in the Departments of Health, Corrections, and Children and Families. In our previous report, we recommended that the corporation establish priorities and cost projections for services that it recommends for expansion. In response to our recommendation, the corporation heard presentations from agencies, providers, and advocates on existing service delivery system and service needs and developed recommendations based on this input. For example, the corporation recommended that state agencies fund programs and staff for prevention and early intervention programs.

However, the corporation's recommendations were not specific and did not address which prevention and early intervention services currently exist in the state, identify which prevention and early intervention programs should be funded to meet mental health and substance abuse needs, or project costs for these programs. In another recommendation, the corporation encouraged counties to establish

mental health crisis intervention teams in local law enforcement agencies. However, because these teams would need to be locally funded, this action would increase costs for local government.

To fully address this responsibility, the corporation should be more specific in its recommendations for service expansion priorities. For example, the corporation's recommendations should consider their effect on the substance abuse and mental health systems by addressing the numbers of persons to be served, cost, which identified system issue the recommended service expansion would address and how, which government entity would be responsible for ensuring that the service expansion recommendation is carried out, and possible funding sources.

8. Review, assess, and forecast substance abuse and mental health manpower needs and work with the Department of Children and Families and the education system to establish policies, consistent with the direction of the Legislature, which will ensure that the state has the personnel it needs to continuously implement and improve its services.

The corporation has partially met this responsibility by making recommendations to address manpower needs. We previously recommended that the corporation assess DCF staffing needs, including estimated costs, and work with state community colleges and universities to determine the steps that should be taken to develop and maintain a skilled workforce. In response to our recommendation, the corporation heard presentations from representatives from provider associations, the Florida Mental Health Institute, and the Florida Certification Board. The corporation developed recommendations that included establishing a work group on behavioral health workforce planning, enhancing workforce training programs, and increasing salary levels for those working in the behavioral health care field.

However, the corporation has not conducted a thorough review or assessment of staffing needs in DCF and provider substance abuse and mental health programs, current baccalaureate and graduate curricula and recommended

changes, or specific pre- and in-service staff development needs. To fully address its responsibility, the corporation should review and assess the status of the DCF and provider workforce by examining educational and training requirements, salary ranges, vacancy and turnover rates, and workload and caseloads for administrative and direct service positions. In addition, the corporation needs to work with the state university system to examine and revise the curricula of human services programs to develop a workforce that can work within a transformed mental health system.

To what extent has the corporation improved substance abuse and mental health system outcomes?

Chapter 2003-279, *Laws of Florida*, lists six anticipated system outcomes that could be affected by the corporation:

- coordination of services across agencies,
- efficiency of service delivery to clients whose care moves across agencies,
- quality and consistency of services across agencies,
- use of evidenced-based practices,
- collection and analysis of common information on services and outcomes, and
- satisfaction of clients and communities.

The corporation has had some impact on the collection and analysis of common information and data between DCF and AHCA, but has not yet had an effect on the other major system outcomes.

The corporation has had some impact on the collection and analysis of common information for recipients of substance abuse and mental health services. Several stakeholders stated that the corporation has helped to improve the collection and analysis of common information describing the services delivered and outcomes achieved for individuals receiving substance abuse and mental health services. This outcome was addressed by the corporation's work with DCF and AHCA on developing common data sets on shared clients. The corporation specifically recommended collecting and sharing information on client demographics, services

received, functional assessment ratings for adults and children, consumer satisfaction, and pharmacy data for Medicaid recipients.

The corporation has not yet had an effect on other system outcomes. Stakeholders noted that the corporation had not yet had an impact on other major system outcomes for several reasons. First, an advisory body alone cannot bring about major changes in system outcomes. The corporation is limited to making recommendations that other entities must implement if improved system outcomes are to be achieved. For example, the corporation does not directly affect the allocation of resources within and among state agencies.

Second, the corporation has limited staff and resources to carry out its responsibilities. The corporation relies on state agencies and advocacy groups to perform analyses of the substance abuse and mental health systems rather than funding its own analyses or using consultant services.

Finally, several stakeholders stated that the corporation has addressed too many issues, including some not directly related to its statutory responsibilities, such as private health policy insurance parity for substance abuse and mental health treatment. The breadth of the issues covered may hinder board members from developing a thorough knowledge of the issues facing each agency's substance abuse and mental health programs and services.

Should the Florida Substance Abuse and Mental Health Corporation be continued?

Although it has not yet fulfilled its potential, the corporation could play a useful role by helping to coordinate the state's substance abuse and mental health systems, and thus it should be given more time and continued beyond its October 2006 sunset date. However, several stakeholders asserted that the corporation needs to show tangible results soon, or it should not continue. A more narrow focus and more tightly structured meetings may help the corporation be more effective.

The corporation should be given more time to demonstrate results. While the corporation has the potential to play an important role in

improving substance abuse and mental health services, stakeholders asserted that the corporation had not been operating long enough to determine its effectiveness and noted that, with complex systems, it takes time to understand and address the issues. These stakeholders also stated that the breadth of the corporation's statutory responsibilities limited its ability to fully examine issues in detail, which hindered its advisory role. Thus, the Legislature should consider extending the corporation beyond its October 2006 sunset date to demonstrate its effectiveness in improving the state's substance abuse and mental health system. However, the corporation should not have an indefinite timeframe before showing tangible results. If the corporation cannot demonstrate more impact within the timeframe established by the Legislature, such as two years, it should not be continued.

The Legislature could improve the corporation's effectiveness by narrowing its focus. Some stakeholders asserted that the corporation could be more effective if the Legislature narrowed its focus to a few critical system outcomes with concrete goals to achieve, rather than currently required annual activities. One such critical outcome is interagency coordination of the substance abuse and mental health systems, because the state would benefit from an entity to facilitate a seamless service delivery system across agencies. The corporation's responsibilities cross agency lines and thus it has the potential to accomplish what a single government agency cannot achieve. As an objective, outside entity, the corporation could create a forum to improve inter-agency service coordination. The corporation's success in providing a public forum for stakeholder testimony also allows the board to help identify issues that require such attention. In focusing on interagency coordination, the corporation should strive to identify service needs across agencies, increase collaboration among agencies, and identify impediments to service provision.

The corporation could enhance its internal effectiveness. To enhance the corporation's internal effectiveness, stakeholders recommended several actions. First, stakeholders, who regularly attend the board's statutorily required quarterly

meetings, recommended that the corporation change its meeting structure to focus more narrowly on its statutory responsibilities. These stakeholders suggested reducing the number of information-only presentations at each board meeting, particularly presentations that do not align with the corporation's statutory responsibilities. These stakeholders also recommended that corporation staff prepare material for board members to review before the meeting so that the board can have more informed and structured discussions and decision making.

Second, as previously discussed, corporation staff could hold separate short, limited agenda monthly meetings with key personnel of state agencies solely for the purpose of discussing service coordination and integration issues. These issues could then be presented to the corporation board for consideration at its quarterly meetings. These stakeholders noted that the current meeting structure is too large and addresses too many topics to allow agencies to discuss issues in an in-depth manner and develop solutions.

Finally, stakeholders suggested that the corporation would benefit from more detailed strategic planning at the beginning of each calendar year to identify goals and objectives related to its statutory responsibilities. This would allow the corporation to prioritize its goals for the year, stay focused on these goals, and track its progress throughout the year.

Recommendations

The Legislature should consider

- extending the corporation beyond its October 2006 sunset date, such as for two more years, to allow the corporation more time to have an impact on system improvements; and
- modifying the corporation's responsibilities to narrow its focus to improving interagency coordination with a specific set of goals, such as identifying service needs across agencies, increasing collaboration among agencies, and identifying impediments to service provision.

To enhance its effectiveness in improving system outcomes and inter-agency coordination, the corporation should implement the recommendations listed below.

- The corporation director should facilitate short, limited agenda monthly meetings of agency staff responsible for substance abuse and mental health programs to discuss coordination issues and recommend solutions. Such meetings could be conducted via conference calls or in Tallahassee so as to be near these agencies' headquarters offices.
- At the quarterly corporation meetings, the director should inform the board of the issues discussed at the inter-agency meetings, and act as a liaison for the board by taking its suggestions for issues to discuss with agency managers and informing the agencies of possible solutions developed by the board to address problems agencies identified. This would allow the board to share issues it becomes aware of through its public forums, react to agency problems and possible solutions, and offer alternative suggestions.
- The corporation should be more selective about the issues on which it focuses. The corporation should spend less meeting time on information-only issues and instead identify those issues that require joint action from agencies, and then develop specific action steps needed to accomplish improved system outcomes.
- The corporation should conduct more detailed strategic planning at the beginning of each calendar year to identify goals and objectives related to its statutory responsibilities. This would allow the corporation to prioritize its goals for the year, stay focused on these goals, and track its progress throughout the year.

If the Legislature does not choose to narrow the corporation's responsibilities, the corporation should take three actions to meet its existing statutory responsibilities.

- The corporation should determine whether programs and services in agencies other than DCF and AHCA are integrated and efficacious and examine interagency coordination and service impediments.
- The corporation should be more specific when identifying service expansion priorities. The corporation's recommendations for service expansion should include the effect on the substance abuse and mental health systems by addressing the number of persons to be served, cost, which identified system issue the recommended service expansion would address and how, which government entity would be responsible for ensuring that the service expansion recommendation is carried out, and possible funding sources.
- The corporation should conduct a detailed assessment of DCF and provider substance abuse and mental health staff needs. The corporation should also work closely with the state university system to examine and revise the curricula of human services programs to develop a workforce that can work within a transformed mental health system.

Agency Response ---

In accordance with the provisions of s. 11.51(5), *Florida Statutes*, a draft of our report was submitted to the Chair of the Florida Substance Abuse and Mental Health Corporation for review and response.

The Chair's written response to this report has been reproduced in its entirety in Appendix A, page 9.

Appendix A



Florida Substance Abuse and Mental Health Corporation

David L. Miller
Chair

Joseph P. George, Jr
Vice Chair

Rocky Rodriguez
Secretary / Treasurer

March 3, 2006

Gary R. VanLandingham, Director
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Members

Re: OPPAGA Report entitled, *Florida Substance Abuse and Mental Health Corporation Made Progress But Needs More Narrow Focus*

Patricia Barton

Dear Mr. VanLandingham:

Christine Cauffield

Larry D. Hart

Peter Hampton

Susan Latvala

Melanie G. May

Jeane Ann McCarthy, M.D.

William Allen Mellan, Jr Ph.D.

Ted Serbousek

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the OPPAGA report on behalf of the 12 gubernatorial and legislatively appointed members of the Florida Substance Abuse and Mental Health Corporation ("Corporation"). Throughout 2005, the Corporation worked steadily to accomplish its statutory mandates. Not unlike the substance abuse and mental health services delivery system itself, the Corporation's responsibilities and objectives are far greater than the resources allotted. The breadth of the mandate, while broad in scope and well intended, is greater than the 12 voluntary directors and two staff could reasonably accomplish without substantial reliance upon and input from the very state agencies the Corporation is tasked to evaluate.

The Corporation members appreciate the thoroughness of the OPPAGA report and agree with the report's primary recommendation that the Corporation's focus should be narrowed by the Legislature in statute in order for the Corporation to more effectively provide oversight and leadership.

Ex Officio Members

Jennifer Flinn
Columbia County Commission

Alan Levine, Secretary
Agency for Health Care Administration

Lucy Hadi, Secretary
Department of Children and Families

The Corporation agrees with the OPPAGA report that one of the most critical functions and roles that the Corporation can play is facilitating greater coordination and collaboration between state agencies. The Corporation is most proud of the facilitation around collaboration issues that have been accomplished so far. The Corporation, as noted in the report, is currently chairing the Mental Health Transformation Working Group -- an entity, comprised of multiple state agencies, advocates, consumers and families, appointed by Governor Bush to develop a comprehensive action plan for mental health reform in Florida. The Corporation took the lead to ensure the mental health system in Florida is transformed from a preferred-provider system to a consumer driven system embracing prevention, resiliency, and recovery for children, adults and families. This transformation must ensure that services are directed to the needs and goals of reintegrating consumers into the community where they can successfully live, work, go to school, and enjoy life.

The work of the Corporation continues to be inspired by the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. The New Freedom Commission was established by President George W. Bush in April 2002 as part of his commitment to eliminate inequality for Americans with disabilities. The President's Commission identified policies that should be implemented by federal, state, and local governments to maximize the utility of existing resources, improve coordination of treatment and services, and promote

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successful community integration for adults with serious mental illnesses and children with serious emotional disturbances.

Though the Corporation agrees that by narrowing the focus of the Corporation, the Corporation can more effectively play a needed role for the state by providing independent analyses of the state's substance and mental health systems, it is important that in doing so the objectives are not diminished. In keeping with the broader statutory mandate in 394.655, the Corporation believes that the following mandates need to be retained:

1. Provide mechanisms for substance abuse and mental health stakeholders, including consumers, family members, providers, and advocates to provide input concerning the management of the overall system.
2. Prepare budget recommendations to be submitted to the appropriate departments for consideration in the development of their legislative budget requests and provide copies to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives for their consideration.
3. Make recommendations concerning strategies for improving the performance of the systems.

Regarding accomplishments the Corporation has made so far, the Corporation has already made a substantive impact on the state mental health and substance abuse system by: highlighting the treatment gap; spearheading the submission of the mental health transformation grant to the federal government; providing substantive feedback to the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) on Medicaid Reform and the potential impact of Reform on behavioral healthcare; and providing a vital forum for stakeholders to present their concerns, observations and suggestions for improvement.

Regarding Medicaid reform, the Corporation has been providing frequent input to AHCA on the potential impact on the behavioral health care system. The Corporation is urging AHCA and DCF to develop a coordinated and accurate data system, which could be used to analyze cost shifting that may occur to DCF programs from Medicaid. While Florida may save dollars in Medicaid, those savings may be reappearing as increased costs in funding in other state agencies and local governments. For example, Medicaid costs may decrease, but costs for institutional care, crisis stabilization, and the correctional system may correspondingly increase. For this reason, evaluations of the pilot programs should include a study of cost shifting to other state and local systems, including county jails and county-run mental health treatment systems. It is essential that Medicaid Reform not be looked at in a vacuum and that consideration be given to the delivery of services as a whole. The Department of Children and Families and AHCA must work to articulate a single reform design. The Corporation sees continued oversight and further recommendations on the implementation of Medicaid reform as a critical focus of the Corporation in future years.

As recognized in the OPPAGA report, Corporation meetings function as a forum where people can come to voice concerns about the system but the Corporation meetings have also served as a source of information about what changes are taking place at the state agency level. Many times, state agencies operate in isolation of each other and yet consumers, families, children and providers must deal with several different agencies at once. The Corporation has been the source of information about system collaborations

and individual agency initiatives, and where those individual agency initiatives intersect either positively or negatively.

The OPPAGA report does not fully capture the wealth of expertise the Corporation members bring to the system; the invaluable work Corporation members conduct on behalf of the treatment systems in their local communities; the involvement of Corporation members on the hiring committees for the DCF Assistant Secretary for Substance Abuse and Mental Health and the DCF Substance Abuse Program Directors; and the involvement in developing drug court legislation.

The Corporation stands ready to continue to serve as a resource to the Legislature and the Governor on the status and future needs of the publicly funded substance abuse and mental health systems.

The Corporation thanks the Legislature and its staff, Governor Bush and the Cabinet Secretaries and their staff for working closely with the Corporation to improve the system of care for individuals with substance abuse disorders and mental illnesses. We all must work together to reduce the tremendous human, social and financial costs of unmet mental health and substance abuse treatment needs.

Serious consequences result from the State's inability to effectively design a system of care to timely identify and deliver appropriate levels of mental health and substance abuse services to individuals in need.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the OPPAGA report.

Sincerely,



David L. Miller

Cc Senator Tom Lee, Senate President
 Representative Alan Bense, House Speaker
 Senator Evelyn Lynn
 Representative Hugh Gibson
 Corporation Board members

The Florida Legislature

Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability



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- [Florida Government Accountability Report \(FGAR\)](#) is an Internet encyclopedia of Florida state government. FGAR offers concise information about state programs, policy issues, and performance.
- [Best Financial Management Practices Reviews of Florida school districts](#). In accordance with the *Sharpening the Pencil Act*, OPPAGA and the Auditor General jointly conduct reviews to determine if a school district is using best financial management practices to help school districts meet the challenge of educating their students in a cost-efficient manner.

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