



August 3, 2012

Kathy Greenlee,
Administrator, Administration for Community Living
and Assistant Secretary for Aging
Administration on Aging
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Assistant Secretary Greenlee,

The country is aging rapidly and we are not prepared to meet the health care needs of the increasing population of older Americans. This is especially true of older persons with mental illnesses and/or substance use disorders. This has been well documented including the recently published National Academies Institute of Medicine Report "*The Mental Health and Substance Use Workforce for Older Adults: In Whose Hands?*" As far back as the "*Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*" Dr. David Satcher predicted this issue would become a "...major public health problem." Unfortunately little has been done to address the problem despite that warning 13 years ago.

The recommendations in the IOM Report present a real opportunity for governmental agencies, professional organizations, academic institutions, advocacy organizations, and other stakeholders to work collaboratively to develop and implement solutions. The Administration on Aging and the new Administration for Community Living are critical participants in the comprehensive approach that is needed to address the many needs of older Americans with mental health and substance use disorders. The National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging will be pleased to offer our assistance to your agency as you move forward with this important work.

The National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging was founded in 1991 and is composed of over 80 national organizations, federal agencies and state and local coalitions. The Coalition is an educational organization with the mission of improving the mental health of older Americans. The Coalition meets at least 3 times a year at the American Psychological Association in Washington, DC and has an executive committee and committee structure that function year round. More information about the Coalition can be obtained on our website www.ncmha.org.

In order to work most effectively we have two requests:

1. Will you please designate a senior level staff member as the contact person with whom we should communicate and work?

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2. Please consider a representative from the Coalition for committees or task forces that your agency creates related to older adults specifically or, committees that may impact older adults. Members of the Coalition have served on many such groups, either representing the Coalition or because of their expertise in the field, including our past chair, Willard Mays, who served on the IOM Committee on the Mental Health Workforce for Geriatric Populations.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. Kindly forward information about the staff member with whom we should communicate and work with on older adult mental health issues to Alixe McNeill at alixe.mcneill@ncoa.org (202-679-3665) and Willard Mays at wlmays1@att.net (317-881-1695). Should you have any questions or concerns, please let us know.

Sincerely,



Alixe McNeill, Chair
National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging

cc: Edwin Walker, AoA Deputy Assistant Secretary
Center for Program Operations (CPO)