

July 2009

Foster Meaningful Relationships with Your Elected Officials to Advocate for Community Mental Health and Addiction Services!

Dear National Council Member:

It is my pleasure to invite you to join our **Key Contacts Network**: a coalition of addiction and mental health providers, consumers and family members from around the country who have meaningful on-going relationships with their elected officials and utilize these relationships to advocate for community mental health and addiction services. Whether you have a pre-existing relationship or would like to develop one, we invite you to complete our 5 minute [introductory survey](#) to get involved!

Many of you are active advocates – whether it is at the local, state, or national level; however, the need for a unified advocacy effort has never been greater. As state budgets continue to tighten and the U.S. Congress and Administration consider ways to reform the health care system, it is vital that the voices of individuals with mental health and substance use problems and the providers that serve them are heard. We need your assistance to achieve our collective advocacy goals!

Contacts with your Elected Officials that can be used as the Foundation to Become a Key Contact

- Have you ever participated in a small meeting with any of your elected officials (Members of Congress, Governor, or key staffers)?
- Do you have a personal connection/relationship to an elected officials' family members, close friends, or staff?
- Did you share the same educational background with any of your elected officials?

If you answered Yes to any of these questions, these are excellent contacts with your elected officials to build upon. Even if you have never had contact with your elected officials, we'll assist you to develop a relationship with your elected officials over time. Through the Key Contacts Network, you will receive specialized training from experts to hone your advocacy skills and learn from each other's advocacy successes. **Becoming a Key**

Contact and sustaining an on-going relationship with your elected officials will only require 2 hours of your time each month.

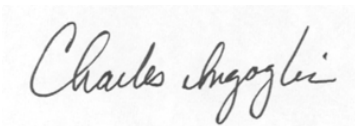
Here's How To Get Involved

- 1) Complete the Key Contacts Network [Introductory Survey](#) – it'll only take 5 minutes!
- 2) Request a meeting during the Congressional August recess with an elected official to tell them about the importance of comprehensive inclusion of community mental health and addiction services in health care reform. (Not sure who you should meet with? We can help! Just indicate you need assistance when you complete the [Introductory Survey](#))
- 3) Meet with your elected official(s) in August and tell us how your visit went by completing a brief online [evaluation](#).
- 4) Send a Thank You Letter to your elected officials and invite them to visit your organization in the next 3 months.

If you'd like more assistance, such as template 'Request a Meeting' and 'Thank You' letters, useful fact sheets and talking points for your meetings, and a 20 minute video on how to develop meaningful relationships with your elected officials, I encourage you to visit the National Council's Key Contact Network [webpage](#).

In the coming months, we'll be contacting you about future trainings and strategic advocacy opportunities. I strongly encourage you to become a Key Contact and join us in advocating for community mental health and addiction services. As always, if you have any questions, please [email me](#) at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Chuck Ingoglia
Vice President, Public Policy