

Dear Advocate,

All of us at the National Council want to take this opportunity to wish you a happy New Year and extend a tremendous **thank you for all of your advocacy efforts**. We have much to be proud of: the historic passage of the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act that set the stage for mandating mental health and addiction benefits within healthcare reform and the requirement that they be offered at parity; an increase in appropriations for SAMHSA's co-location of primary care and behavioral health services grant program; and the withdrawal of the controversial Medicaid rehabilitative services rule proposed by the previous Administration.

Yet, as we look forward to 2010, we know that much more work lies ahead as national healthcare reform nears reality and the demands on community behavioral healthcare organizations will only grow. Working with you the National Council will continue to fight for the inclusion of behavioral healthcare organizations within the Health Information Technology (HIT) incentive programs, work to establish construction funds to support your infrastructure needs, and explore additional ways to strengthen and expand the behavioral healthcare safety-net. One thing remains more certain than ever before – the future success and strength of the behavioral healthcare system depends on your continued commitment to active advocacy and willingness to bring others into the advocacy effort.

We'll do our part: The National Council will continue to seek opportunities to make your involvement in our advocacy work as simple and meaningful as possible. We'll use our e-newsletters, Action Alert system, website, and webinars to help you stay informed about advocacy opportunities on critical mental health and substance use issues.

But, **we can't be successful in 2010 without you**. We ask that you start out 2010 on the positive note by doing the following:

1. **Forward this message** to at least 3 other people in the behavioral health field and **encourage them to [sign up](#) to receive our Action Alerts and our weekly public policy e-newsletter**, the Public Policy Update.
2. **Make plans to attend the National Council's Annual Hill Day** – June 29 & 30 in Washington, DC. [Hill Day](#) provides you with the latest information on health reform and other critical mental health and substance use issues so that you can be the most effective advocate you can be. We also need you to help make a real, visible impact on your Members of Congress as they move forward.
3. If you haven't done so already, **[complete a brief online survey](#) about your agency's construction needs in 2010**. We recognize that many of your agencies would like to renovate or expand your facilities but are unable to get the funds to do so – we need to quantify your needs in order to advocate for infrastructure funds in 2010.

Once again, we want to wish you a very happy New Year and thank you for your tireless commitment to advocating for behavioral health services.