



Department of
Youth Services

**Message from DYS Director Harvey Reed
Expanding Medicaid is “The Right Thing to Do”**

April 8, 2013

Dear Staff:

The Ohio Interagency Task Force on Mental Health and Juvenile Justice has recognized the challenges that many communities face in working with youth who are involved or at-risk of being involved with the juvenile justice system and who have significant mental health needs. An unintended consequence of not addressing mental health needs at the community level is creating a disproportionate number of youth with serious emotional disturbances in the juvenile justice, child welfare and education systems. The Task Force has recommended collaborative efforts to develop and improve the earlier identification of mental health needs and the service delivery and financing of systems and services responsive to the needs of this unique population.

More than half of the youth committed to DYS are on the mental health caseload and have multiple disorders that began in childhood and will persist into adulthood. Approximately 65% of youth are Medicaid-eligible when they arrive at DYS. As the number of youth in need of services increases, coupled with the increasing severity of those needs, the youth serving systems struggle to provide sufficient services to those youth identified as in an “immediate crisis.”

Basic behavioral health needs are left unaddressed because there is a lack of funding and system capacity; expanding Medicaid coverage for behavioral health services will free up county levy and state subsidy dollars that currently pay for these same services but without Medicaid or any other payer source.

Youth held in detention centers, Community Corrections Facilities and DYS facilities eventually return to their families, communities and neighborhoods. By providing these youth with needed physical and behavioral health care services and supports, we are promoting productive and healthy lives. Expanding Medicaid is the right thing to do to improve access to needed services and supports to divert youth from the juvenile justice system. In those instances when youth do get involved, Medicaid expansion will provide the much needed safety net to support success when youth return home.

Sincerely,

Harvey J. Reed, Director
Department of Youth Services