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JOHN M. HOUSTON
COMMISSIONER

Over the years, our Office of Public Information & Community Relations (PICR) has partnered with advocacy groups, community mental health centers, and other stakeholders to assist them in their public relations efforts. We realize that while several providers are large enough to have staff designated for public relations, most do not; which is why we want to continue to assist you through our PICR. They are available to advise you in building better community relations, enhancing your image, and disseminating stories through local media. One of the most powerful tools we have to combat stigma is sharing inspirational stories about our consumers, their challenges, and their victories. You will also find that the public is often more appreciative and respectful when they know about the work that is being done through your organization.

Therefore, we are offering to help you in two ways. First, when you send stories about initiatives or consumers (with releases) to our PICR they can spread the word across the state through our quarterly newsletter and worldwide through our website. Second, they have developed a Public Relations Tool Kit that has concise and relevant “how-to” information to help you create and disseminate positive messages on your own through your local media. Hopefully, the Kit will encourage you to be more proactive with the media in your area. The Kit contains numerous ideas about developing your own PR plan, writing press releases, and crisis message management.

One new item of interest is the section on awards. We have three that may be awarded to someone in your organization upon request. They are the Dr. Peter Bryce Award, the Caring Hands Award and the Citation of Excellence Award. The attractive certificates are signed by the Commissioner and have the department gold seal attached. Criteria for the awards are explained in further detail in your Kit.

→ We want to be of service to you.

All of the components of this Kit can be found online at www.mh.alabama.gov/COPI. Included online is a project request form for you to request advice from the PICR, in order for the PICR to respond in a timely manner. Please feel free to share the Kit with others.

Sincerely,

John M. Houston