

Good Day from YOUR South Dakota Mental Health Counselors Association!

I want to take a moment and introduce myself and YOUR South Dakota Mental Health Counseling Association board and discuss the goals for the coming year.

My name is Duane Kavanaugh and I have worked in the field of Mental Health for nearly 30 years. I have had the great pleasure of working in numerous roles from, direct residential care to my current position as Counseling Director for LSS of South Dakota. During these years I have seen many changes and advances in the field of mental health. In the coming years we, as an association, need to take the lead in the direction of the state of mental health services in SD.

To help lead this journey I am very excited to name YOUR current board of directors. Stephanie Lund has agreed to serve as the President Elect for the next two years. Stephanie brings energy and excitement to this position and I look forward to working with Stephanie in the coming years.

Jamie (Fiegen) Peterson has agreed to remain in place as the Treasurer for our SDMHCA. Jamie has served in this position for the past several years.

Sarah Short Bull has agreed to take on the position of Government Relations. I was able to spend time with Sarah last year at Day on the Hill and see the passion that she will bring to YOUR work with legislators and make change in statute that can benefit the consumers we serve.

Robin Svendsen has stepped in to take the position of Membership. Robin will work to increase our membership in the coming year.

And finally, Brian Dannen is the Past President. Brian worked diligently in the past years to make SDMHCA a more active organization particularly on the legislative scene. One of the biggest changes Brian advocated for was that the board serve two year terms. This allows for more continuity and better understanding of the issues that face Mental Health Counselors on both the state and federal level.

So what is YOUR board's goals for the coming year. In the next year I would like to purpose the following:

- Advocate for Medicaid expansion in SD
- Advocate for continued expansion of Tricare coverage for Counselors
- Medicare coverage for Counselors

- Expand membership by 10 %
- Provide Continuing Education Training for our members, One training per year
- Begin regular dialog with the Licensing Board on issues that affect licensing, recruiting and retention of counselors in SD.

To accomplish these goals the Association needs **YOUR** support, assistance and energy. Please consider becoming a more active member of **YOUR** association. Reach out and encourage your colleagues to become a member, be ready to send letters make calls and contact legislators, and congressional leaders on what is needed for **YOUR** profession. If **WE** don't take care of our profession, no one else will.

I look forward for the next two years and hearing from you all. What does **YOUR** profession need and how you will work with **YOUR** association to make **YOUR** profession better!!!

Respectfully,

Duane Kavanaugh
SDMHCA President

