

Alberta Association for  
Community Living

Alberta Association for  
Marriage and Family Therapy

Alberta Association of  
Registered Occupational  
Therapists

Alberta College of Social  
Workers

Alberta Mental Health  
Self Help Network

Alberta Psychiatric  
Association

Boyle Street Co-op

Canadian Mental Health  
Association

Depression and Manic  
Depression Association of  
Alberta

Edmonton City Centre  
Church Corporation

Psychologists' Association  
of Alberta

Registered Psychiatric  
Nurses' Association of  
Alberta

Schizophrenia Society of  
Alberta

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The AAMIMH acknowledges  
the ongoing participation of  
the **Premier's Council on  
the Status of Persons with  
Disabilities**, recognizing its  
mandate as an objective  
liaison between community  
and government stakeholders

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## MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### MENTAL HEALTH ALLIANCE CALLS ON MINISTER TO TRANSFER MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES TO RHAS – *Concept supported by the Alberta Medical Association*

Edmonton, Alberta, October 30, 2001

As an essential step to improve Alberta's approach to treating mental illness, thirteen leading professional, consumer, family and advocacy organizations are calling on Health and Wellness Minister Gary Mar to transfer the administration of all of the Alberta Mental Health Board's programs and services to local Health Authorities (RHAs) across Alberta, while ensuring that standards are set for consistent and quality mental health care that meets the local/community needs and allows access to services.

Dennis Anderson, Chair of the Alberta Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (AAMIMH), said the plan would "reduce administrative costs, eliminate duplication, eliminate the shifting of responsibilities between health Authorities and generally provide Albertans with a better level of service."

Dr. Richard Hibbard, an Edmonton psychiatrist and member of the Alliance, says "patients are shuffled between hospitals because of lack of bed availability," and while the Health Authorities recognize patients remain in hospital longer than necessary, they are reluctant to provide community service alternatives, because that is a Mental Health Board responsibility. "As a result, patients can't get out, the beds are filled and other sick people can't get in," added Hibbard.

Anderson also reported that some Health Authorities turn away people with mental illnesses by denying services like "home care," because "community care is the responsibility of the Mental Health Board." The system has "costly and negative financial incentives," said Anderson.

Alberta physicians attending a recent meeting of the Alberta Medical Association's Representative Forum agreed; they resoundingly supported a resolution – earlier proposed by Dr. Hibbard and carried by the Alberta Psychiatric Association – urging the Minister to transfer the AMHB programs to Regional Health Authorities. On October 19, the Board of the AMA also endorsed the resolution.

The Alliance proposal, which also calls for the retention of a restructured Mental Health Board to advocate, set standards, monitor progress and protect mental health dollars, has been discussed with the Health Minister, the Premier's Advisory Council on Health, with many of the Regional Health Authorities and with the Alberta Mental Health Board. "Inefficiency, costly duplication, responsibility shuffles and unnecessary stays in overburdened hospitals do not serve people well," said Anderson, "and we cannot afford inefficiency in the current climate."

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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Backgrounder enclosed (Governance document)

\* Mr. Anderson will be available for personal interviews and camera session between 10:30 a.m. and noon at 200A Lousage Centre, 10140 - 117 Street, Edmonton.