

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Behavioral Health
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May 11, 2022

Simonne Maline, Executive Director
Consumer Council System of Maine (CCSM)
219 Capitol Street, Suite 7
Augusta, ME 04330

RE: CCSM CWIC Issue Statement -- April 2022

Dear Ms. Maline:

We appreciate the thought and work the CCSM has put into this issue statement regarding Community Work Incentives Coordinators (CWIC). We recognize the important role that CWIC's play in supporting individuals living with mental health conditions to gain and maintain employment. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is committed to continuing to support employment for individuals living with mental health conditions. Research has demonstrated the significance of work in supporting recovery, well-being, and community inclusion. This issue statement comes at an important time as Maine addresses workforce shortages across the state, creating even greater opportunities and need for individuals living with mental health conditions to become employed.

We would welcome the opportunity to hear more input from the CCSM regarding how we can address misinformation about work and loss of benefits within the mental health community. We hope the CCSM would be willing to collaborate with OBH to also look at ways the Work and Benefits Navigator training and other resources could be better utilized to help address this issue.

Although we cannot address specific commitments at this point, we will take your recommendations regarding the expansion of availability of CWIC into consideration. As part of our work to support employment and career advancement for individuals living with mental health conditions, as well as fulfilling our obligation to Maine's Employment First Statute, we are grateful for your attention to this issue and your input. We will look to engage with the CCSM for additional input as we move forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sarah K. Squirell', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sarah K. Squirell, Acting Director
Office of Behavioral Health

SKS/klv

cc: Jeanne M. Lambrew, Commissioner