

# 19th Annual Delaware Prevention Forum Kicks off Mental Health Month

Dover – “Building a System of Care to Support Youth, Families and Communities” is the theme for the 19th annual Delaware Prevention and Behavioral Health Forum held May 1st and 2nd at the Dover Sheraton. The two-day conference, which coincides with the start of Mental Health Month, provides an opportunity for attendees to hear and explore the latest theory and science, research findings, practical application, as well as innovative approaches and emerging trends in the field of child mental health. The Forum is expected to draw 450 attendees.

Governor Jack Markell presented a proclamation recognizing May as Mental Health Month and spoke about the importance of treatment and early intervention. “Children and youth dealing with mental or behavioral health issues need the services and supports that will enable them to achieve their full potential. Suicides among youth are the most tragic child mental health problem in our state. We must close a gap in the care of our adolescents by providing mental health resources in our middle schools. This investment will help ensure our kids get the services they deserve and over the long term, help Delaware build a better private network of child mental health providers. ” Governor Markell’s recommended budget for FY 14 includes a ten-fold increase in the number of trained, front line Behavioral Health Consultants in middle schools and after school and summer programming for youth statewide.

Workshops at the Forum covered a variety of topics including practices surrounding trauma informed care, the impact of gang violence and gun control on communities, and the inclusion of spirituality in mental health practice. Keynote speakers

included Dr. William Geary, Ph.D., of CADCA's National Coalition Institute who will address the Role of Treatment in Community-wide Prevention and Dr. Michael A. Lindsey, Ph.D., M.S.W., M.P.H. a child and adolescent mental health services researcher who will speak on Engaging Families and Children in Mental Health Services: The ACCESS Challenge.

Nearly one in five Delaware children, ages 2 – 17, to have one or more emotional or behavioral health conditions according to Kids Count data. "Working with pediatricians, mental health practitioners, early care and education programs, families and other community partners we can continue to strengthen our system of care, help remove the stigma associated with mental health issues for children, and put them on the pathway to a hopeful and fulfilling future," said Jennifer Ranji, Secretary for the Delaware Children's Department. The Department's Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services organizes the Forum each year.

The Children's Department provides services to children who have been abused, neglected, are dependent, have mental health or substance problems, have been adjudicated delinquent by the Courts, as well as prevention services targeted toward all youth. For more information, please visit [www.kids.delaware.gov](http://www.kids.delaware.gov).