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Event to showcase progress of federal mental health grant to Ohio

On Sept. 8, the Ohio Department of Mental Health will host an event at the Capitol Theatre, Riffe Center, to celebrate Ohio's progress under the Mental Health Transformation State Incentive Grant (TSIG). The schedule from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. will include significant involvement from mental health consumers (youth and adults) and their families. Between 10 a.m. and noon, a program will feature directors from state agencies and other dignitaries, including Ohio First Lady Frances Strickland, Supreme Court Justice Evelyn Stratton and former Ohio Senator Robert Spada.

"The five-year TSIG grant to Ohio is wrapping up and the event is an opportunity to recognize accomplishments," said ODMH Director Sandra Stephenson. "More importantly, it offers a chance to get out the message that our work isn't done. Not only do many of the current projects need effort and resources to complete the vision, but continued transformation will be needed to truly respond effectively to health care reform and to the people we serve collectively."

The event title highlights its future focus: "Geared Up: Celebrating Progress and Sustaining Momentum to Support Recovery and Resiliency for Ohioans with Mental Health Needs." During the past two decades, Ohio has made great strides to move from institutional care to community care, include consumers and families in decision-making processes, and work collaboratively across systems. But resources are tight, the system has become even more complex, and many people with a mental illness seek care and rely on resources outside the mental health system – whether in primary health care, schools or the law enforcement system.

In 2005, Ohio received \$12 million from the U.S. government's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to enhance system transformation planning. This Mental Health Transformation State Incentive Grant (TSIG) was part of the federal response to the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. As one of seven states receiving initial funding, Ohio has served as a platform for learning about what strategies and activities hold the most promise for transforming mental health and related systems.

The Ohio Department of Mental Health (ODMH) has provided overall leadership and management of TSIG through its Office of Systems Transformation. Work groups include consumers, families and youth, representatives from all state agencies affected by mental health issues, and other major stakeholders. Activities have focused on the following areas: mental health system financing, access to health care and other benefits, access to care for youth, the impact of childhood trauma, criminal justice diversion and reentry, homelessness and housing, older Ohioans, employment, prevention and cultural competence.