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Shapiro Administration and County Officials Discuss Importance of Increasing Funding for County Mental Health Programs, Honor Cumberland-Perry Mental Health Services Employee



Carlisle, PA – Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) **Acting Secretary Dr. Val Arkoosh, DHS Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) Deputy Secretary Jen Smith,** and **OMHSAS Chief Medical Officer Dr. Dale Adair** joined leadership from Cumberland and Perry counties and other local officials to present the Dennis Marion Impact Award to Megan Johnston, Senior Human Services Program Manager with the Cumberland-Perry Mental Health Office. They also discussed Governor Shapiro’s proposed budget, which would increase funding to county mental health services for the first time since 2008 and allow them to continue providing much-needed programs to Pennsylvanians.

“During Mental Health Awareness Month, it is so important to recognize the dedication of county behavioral health employees, who administer critical, life-saving services for people in their communities every day,” said **Acting Secretary Arkoosh**. “DHS is committed to investing in behavioral health systems to expand capacity, address workforce shortages, and break down barriers that prevent people from receiving services they need and deserve. We know that working in the mental health field is not easy, and I want to thank the county and state employees who are helping our fellow Pennsylvanians stay healthy and thrive, and we must give them continued support to rise to their communities’ needs.”

The Dennis Marion Impact Award recognizes outstanding achievement in state or local government employees, encourages the highest standards of performance in Pennsylvania’s public sector, attracts outstanding individuals to a career in public service, and highlights public awareness of the value of public service and its impact on the behavioral health and quality of life of individuals and communities.

Megan Johnston received the Dennis Marion Impact Award for her excellent communications skills, fostering community connections, and the ongoing support she provides to students, parents, school administrators, and teachers. In her role as Senior Human Services Program Manager, Johnston is the primary contact for and provides oversight of all child-related mental health services across Cumberland and Perry counties. She also serves as the Child & Adolescent Service System Program coordinator and supervisor as well as the Elementary Student Assistance Program (ESAP) supervisor, and recently helped to implement ESAP in all the counties’ school districts. Johnston is well respected for her wealth of knowledge and her constant desire to remain up-to-date on recent changes to policy, practices, and implementation of services available in both counties.

“Just like Dennis Marion, Megan is building a legacy within the community, making a strong impact with our children, their families, mental health professionals, advocates, and teachers,” said **Annie Strite, Cumberland-Perry Mental Health administrator**. “We are proud to be recognized for our work; however, there is so much that needs to be done. We cannot meet the needs of our residents without sustainable state mental health funding.”

All Pennsylvanians deserve the security of knowing if they or a loved one are struggling, mental health care will be available and accessible quickly. Ensuring that everyone has equitable, affordable access to mental health services is a priority of the Shapiro Administration and DHS. Because many mental health services are administered at the county level, the [Governor's budget proposal](#) includes a \$20 million increase in base funding to counties to provide critical mental health services with a commitment to continue increases annually through the 2027-28 fiscal year. This is an overdue and necessary investment in county partners and local programs that will enable those who might not otherwise be able to get mental health services to receive them through county programs.

Established in 2017, the Dennis Marion Impact Award honors Dennis Marion's commitment to public service throughout his distinguished career. Marion served as OMHSAS Deputy Secretary from 2013 to 2017. Prior to his state employment, he served Cumberland County for 31 years in various positions, including County Administrator, Director of the Drug and Alcohol Commission, and Director of the Office of Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities. Because Marion's strong leadership, passion for public service, and commitment to the people he served did not stop at the boundaries of his work in any single county or agency, the Dennis Marion Impact Award recognizes strong performers who bridge disparate missions and drive toward a single goal of excellence in public service.

More information on [mental health services](#) available to all Pennsylvanians is available on DHS' website.

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