August 22, 2001

Joan Taglieri  
Chief Operations Officer  
Charles River Hospital  
203 Grove Street  
Wellesley, MA 02181

Dear Ms. Taglieri:

I am writing to inform you of a significant effort being undertaken by the Department of Mental Health to reduce the use of seclusion and restraint in psychiatrically hospitalized children and adolescents.

Seclusion and restraint are the most restrictive emergency interventions used in mental health facilities. Their use requires continual monitoring both within and from outside the institutions. As the public mental health authority, the Department of Mental Health has the major responsibility for external monitoring and licensing.

Our ongoing review of restraint and seclusion with children and adolescent indicates significant rates of use in many facilities. In some programs, restraint and seclusion appear to be used as non-emergent interventions. DMH staff have visited inpatient programs in neighboring states, revealing considerably lower rates and creative alternatives to restraint and seclusion. In contrast, in many programs in Massachusetts, the rates of restraint and seclusion appear to be rising.

Restraint and seclusion in children cannot be reduced by efforts directed solely at these interventions. The published literature as well as the experience of others who have successfully reduced the use of restraint and seclusion indicate that restraint and seclusion must be considered as part of the overall program in which they are used. Accordingly, reduction in the use of seclusion and restraint is both a worthwhile goal in itself and a means to enhance overall quality of care.
I have made addressing this problem a top priority for the Department. We are undertaking a Restraint Reduction Effort. In this effort, members of my staff will provide consultation, technical support, and focused training. However, the input and participation from the licensee and provider community is most important in this effort. A letter describing the roll-out of the effort will be forthcoming from Ken Duckworth, M.D., Deputy Commissioner of Clinical and Professional Services.

I know that you will share my interest in working together on this important effort. We have a collective responsibility to ensure that the most vulnerable children in the Commonwealth receive high quality, clinically appropriate and humane care.

Sincerely,

Mary Lou Sudders

cc: Ken Duckworth, M.D., Deputy Commissioner, Clinical & Professional Services
    Joan Mikula, Assistant Commissioner, Child/Adolescent Services
    Michael Weeks, Director, Licensing, Clinical & Professional Services