

## Council Secures State Commitment to Address New Orleans Mental Health Issues

News Release

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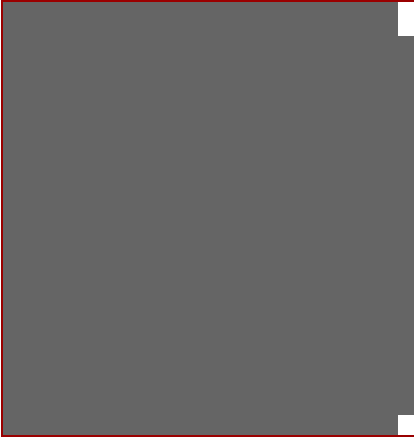
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**New Orleans, LA - February 26, 2008** - Today the Department of Health and Hospitals, under the new leadership of Secretary Alan Levine, unveiled a plan and funding to address the mental health crisis in New Orleans. The plan, which includes several components that Councilmember Shelley Midura and the City Council's Special Committee on Mental Health have advocated for, has both long and short term objectives.

The short term objectives include Assertive Community Treatment teams, Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) teams, housing subsidies for individuals transitioning back into the community after treatment, and crisis respite services. In all, Levine's proposal will direct approximately \$1.9 million strictly to New Orleans and its critically underserved mentally ill.

The longer term objectives, most to be executed within the next fiscal year, include legislative changes, additional mental health staff for Orleans Parish Prison, and Crisis Intervention Training for NOPD officers to better equip them to deal with the mentally ill.

"This is a big win for New Orleans, for public health, and public safety," said Councilmember Midura. "We have fought hard for these changes and I am thankful to Secretary Levine and Governor Jindal for their commitment to deliver. The proposal the Secretary outlined includes many components that I and my colleagues, Councilman Fielkow in particular, have been advocating for. Over the past few weeks we have had several conversations with the Secretary and his staff and I am encouraged not only by the swiftness of action, but by the willingness to listen to those on the front lines of this crisis on the street as well as in City Hall."



In her letter of February 12, 2008 to Secretary Levine, Councilmember Midura identified the need for:

- Community-based support services
- Creation of a FACT team
- Legislation strengthening Assisted Outpatient Treatment (Kendra's Law)

The plan released today included all of these items.

### **New Orleans City Council**

The New Orleans City Council is the legislative branch of New Orleans city government. The Council considers and enacts all local laws that govern the City of New Orleans. The Council also approves the operating and capital budgets for the City, as recommended by the mayor, and continually monitors revenues and expenditures for local government operations. The City Council is also the regulatory body for public utilities. It also reviews and has final say on many land use and zoning matters, as well as considers major economic development projects for the City. As a Board of Review for Orleans Parish, the Council examines appeals of property tax assessments for real estate taxes, and certifies tax rolls to the Louisiana Tax Commission. Other responsibilities of the Council include overseeing the operation of the public access television in Orleans Parish.

The City Council is comprised of five districts and two councilmembers-at-large. Council President and Councilmember-at-Large Arnie Fielkow; Council Vice-President and Councilmember-at-Large Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson; District "A" Councilmember Shelley Midura; District "B" Councilmember Stacy S. Head; District "C" Councilmember James Carter; District "D" Councilmember Cynthia Hedge-Morrell; and District "E" Councilmember Cynthia Willard-Lewis.