Letter from the Co-Chairs of the NASMHPD Public Health Committee:

Dear Colleagues,

This series of calls for the NASMHPD Public Health Committee focuses on the three core functions of the public health model: Surveillance, Policy Development and Assurance. Each of these core functions may be the focus of a number of calls that will examine these CORE functions by:

- defining the function
- applying the function to children’s mental health, and
- examining current initiatives that are based on this function.

The NASMHPD Child, Family and Youth Division uses a number of different formats and brings different experts and participants to share their perspectives. We are excited about the work of this committee. We hope this combines the opportunities of a of learning collaborative with the practical approach to lead to systemic changes that can stem the growing tide of children with mental health needs and support the healthy social and emotional development of all children.

The first series of calls focuses on Surveillance/Assessment. The key feature of this function is the use of data to drive decisions and policies. However unlike what children’s mental health has traditionally used as data, i.e. ‘guessimated’ prevalence rates; penetration rates, cost estimates; the public health model uses a variety of different sources of data that allows a more epidemiological perspective. These may be population surveys, community observations or root cause analysis. The critical issue is to identify the trajectory for the population to the targeted health issue.

Here are some of the kinds of questions that these calls will help you address:

- What does surveillance/assessment mean for me in my role as a state leader for children’s mental health?
- How do I get started? What are the resources and data sets that are available now?
- How can I learn more about the core functions of a public health model and who are the partners that I should be reaching out to?
- What are the tools available and what are the shifts that I need to make in moving from my current role to a population based approach? How will it help children and families?

Sincerely;

Co-chairs:

Patsy Carter, Department of Mental Health, Missouri and

Charlie Biss, Department of Mental Health, Vermont