WHEREAS, population growth, economic stresses, emergency and disaster needs, and other factors have increased the demand for community-based mental health services and hospital treatment throughout New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, these demands have placed undue stress and strain on community-based mental health services for New Jersey citizens, increased the number of persons seeking inpatient treatment in local community hospitals and at county-operated facilities, and increased the census at State adult psychiatric hospitals; and

WHEREAS, there is a need for greater access to safe and affordable housing, community-based mental health services, and supportive social services that has resulted in increased lengths of stay in hospital settings, utilization of substandard community housing and homelessness; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interests of the citizens of this State to provide a comprehensive mental health services system so as to assure the availability of, and access to, treatment, rehabilitation, and supportive services necessary to assist persons with mental illness reach and maintain their highest level of functioning in the least restrictive setting;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RICHARD J. CODEY, Acting Governor of the State of New Jersey, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and by the Statutes of this State, do hereby ORDER and DIRECT:

1. There is hereby created a Governor's Task Force on Mental Health (hereinafter "Task Force") which shall (a) undertake a comprehensive review of New Jersey's mental health system, and (b) make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature concerning legislative, regulatory and administrative changes that are needed to improve the delivery of and access to mental health services in New Jersey.

2. The Task Force shall consist of 11 voting members, including 10 public members appointed by the Governor to serve at his pleasure, and the Commissioner of Human Services, or his designee, ex-officio. The Governor shall designate a Chair and Vice-Chair from among the members of the Task Force. The public members may be professionals or advocates experienced in the field of mental health or related services.

3. The Task Force shall organize as soon as practicable after the appointment of its members. Vacancies on the Task Force shall be filled by appointment by the Governor. The members of the Task Force shall serve without compensation.

4. For the purpose of assisting it in meeting its responsibilities under this Executive Order, the Task Force shall (a) convene a Statewide Mental Health Summit; (b) hold at least three regional public hearings; and (c) form advisory committees that may include non-members of the Task Force.

5. The following State Departments or agencies are authorized and directed, to the extent consistent with law and within budgetary constraints, (a) to appoint a liaison to the Task Force, (b) to cooperate with the Task Force and (c) to furnish it with such information, personnel and assistance as are necessary to accomplish the purposes of this Order:
In addition, the Department of Human Services shall furnish the Task Force with such staff, office space and supplies as are necessary to accomplish the purposes of this Order.

6. The Task Force is charged with the responsibility for reviewing and evaluating the following:

- the current effectiveness of the mental health system in New Jersey;
- the availability, accessibility and gaps in the mental health services and insurance provided;
- mental health housing needs;
- employment, training and education needs;
- community support services and inpatient services
- the current State hospital system, including capital needs; and
- ways to redirect more services to the community and to divert hospitalizations.

7. The Task Force shall develop specific recommendations concerning the following:

- increasing bed capacity at the State psychiatric facilities;
- a strategy that addresses housing and services for people with mental illness;
- enhancing and correcting the Residential Health Care Facilities/boarding homes/single room occupancy serving the mental health population. In this regard the Task Force should consider (a) increasing licensing monitoring by the Departments of Community Affairs and Health & Senior Services; (b) creating a fund for maintenance for owners under determined criteria; (c) expanding case management services for residents; (d) expanding training for operators in areas such as substance abuse, nutrition, first aid and the like; and (e) increasing the SSI State supplement for homes meeting an established standard.
- increasing the community capacity for behavioral health services, which will include, but not
be limited to, mobile outreach services;

○ diversionary programs, outpatient services and outreach to the criminal justice system

○ "Wellness and Recovery" services in the community and in the hospital setting; and

○ parity for mental health services.

8. The Council may meet and hold hearings at such place or places as it shall designate and shall report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature by March 31, 2005.

9. This Order shall take effect immediately.

GIVEN, under my hand and seal this 16th day of November in the Year of Our Lord, Two Thousand and Four, and of the Independence of the United States, the Two Hundred and Twenty-Ninth.

/s/ Richard J. Codey

Acting Governor

[seal]

Attest:

/s/ Paul T. Fader

Chief Counsel to the Governor