



Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to the first edition of *Constella Leads*, [Constella Group's](#) quarterly online newsletter for our Mental Health and Substance Use Program. In this newsletter, we will share program developments with our colleagues from the field, including project work, white papers, industry news, and more. [This inaugural issue reflects some of the most pressing problems facing the mental health and substance use fields--from the avian flu and premature death to improved parenting practices. All of us must pay attention to these issues if we are to improve the quality of life for every one.](#)

We hope you find *Constella Leads* both informative and enjoyable, and welcome any comments or suggestions you may have.



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Preparing for Pandemic Avian Influenza

There can be no good health without good mental health. While most governmental units have mental health strategies in place to deal with localized disasters, they are nowhere near adequate to handle a disaster on a national scale, which is why an expansion of strategic planning and mental health services is an absolute necessity of an effective pandemic-preparedness plan.

A recent Constella Group white paper addresses the need to have adequate mental health services available to comfort those who experience severe personal loss, to continue mental health services for those currently receiving care, to help mitigate fear-driven panic, and to make provision for the backup of key personnel (e.g., nuclear power plant operators, telephone personnel, and key federal managers.) [You can receive a copy of this white paper by sending an e-mail to \[rmanderscheid@constellagroup.com\]\(mailto:rmanderscheid@constellagroup.com\).](#)

Kent County Michigan Prevention Initiative

Counties looking for guidance on how to better reduce the social and financial burdens on education, health care, and justice systems caused by poor health and poor mental health may want to look to Kent County, Michigan. Their recently initiated Prevention Initiative is designed to create sustained improvements in the health and well-being of the Kent County children by establishing prevention programs in the areas of child abuse and neglect, substance abuse, and primary prevention family support. [To increase the number of children who become successful adults, you may wish to adapt the Kent County approach to your own county or city.](#)

For the project, Constella will conduct both short and long-term evaluations of four programs (two are focused on primary prevention family support) to determine the effectiveness of each program individually, as well as their collective impact on the citizens of Kent County. This work provides an opportunity to demonstrate the positive impact of primary prevention programming, and can ultimately provide a model for other communities faced with addressing the cumulative effects of substance abuse, child abuse and neglect, and lack of family resources and support.

For more information on how you might adapt this program for use in your county, please contact Dr. Julie Marks, Senior Research and Evaluation Project Director with Constella at jmarks@constellagroup.com, or call her at 919-544-8500.

Premature Death

On average, [mental health clients are dying at a much younger age than the general population](#), despite the fact that the various causes of death between the two groups are consistent in nature. The disparity in length of life is about 25 years. This fact points to the critical importance of implementing much better primary care for mental health consumers.

"Congruencies in Increased Mortality Rates, Years of Potential Life Lost, and Causes of Death Among Public Mental Health Clients in Eight States," by Craig Colton and Ron Manderscheid appears in the April 2006 issue of [Preventing Chronic Disease](#), a peer-reviewed, bi-monthly, electronic journal sponsored by the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. The paper seeks to identify a direct correlation between mental health and physical health by comparing mortality rates, and causes of death of mental health clients/patients to those of the general population.

National Campaign to Prevent Dating Abuse Among Adolescents

Constella has launched a nationwide initiative on behalf of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to stop dating abuse among adolescents. Called **Choose Respect**, the national effort, now launched



in 10 major U.S. cities, is designed to motivate young people, ages 11 to 14, to challenge harmful beliefs about dating abuse and to take steps to form healthy, respectful relationships. According to CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, one out of 11 adolescents reports being a victim of dating violence.

The **Choose Respect** initiative aims to change that disturbing trend. Working with the CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC), Constella has managed the communications initiative since its formation in 2003. Constella's responsibilities include strategic development and planning, materials development, media relations and production, implementation, community partner training and technical assistance, and the national launch of the program. In preparation for the launch, Constella revised and developed key initiative materials, including a community and school toolkit, video documentary, media access guide, and a host of marketing materials, such as television and radio spots, posters, pocket guides, bookmarks and interactive learning tools. The initiative is slated to run through the fall of 2006.

If you would like to receive copies of these materials for use in your community, visit the website www.chooserespect.org. Most of the materials can be downloaded and further information on assistance can be found.

Neuroscientist-Consumer Alliance

"A Neuroscientist-Consumer Alliance to Transform Mental Health Care," by Amelia Compagne and Ron Manderscheid was published in the April 2006 issue of the *Journal of Behavioral Health Services and Research*. The paper suggests a potential transformation of the mental health care system with the introduction of new studies that focus on the role genomics plays in mental disorders. According to the paper, the convergence of disciplines regarding the mind, the brain, and behavior, could benefit both neuroscientists and mental health clients if both parties are willing to collaborate with one another.

The new frontier in mental health is genetic intervention, including personal psychotropic medications. Consumers and their family members should be consulted on all aspects of this important work.

For More Information

For more information on any of the items discussed in this edition or for further information on Constella's Mental Health and Substance Use Program in general, please contact me at:

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About Constella Group

Constella Group, LLC, is a leading provider of professional health services worldwide with more than 1,200 employees in 43 countries. Through our work in health sciences, international development, and pharmaceutical product development, we help public-sector, commercial, and nonprofit clients identify and address critical issues affecting human health.

In business for more than 30 years, we remain committed to our vision of *enhancing human health around the world, every day*. Whether communicating health prevention messages to the public, creating a social marketing program in family planning for a developing country, or helping a pharmaceutical client build relationships with regulatory authorities and manage its clinical trials, we are passionate about creating a healthier world, free of disease. We apply our resources, skills, and knowledge in the areas of research, communications and social marketing, social advocacy, training, policy development, program support, program evaluation, strategic consulting, technology, regulatory affairs, and clinical trials management.

Headquartered in Durham, NC, Constella has corporate offices in the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and India, as well as project offices in various countries throughout the world.

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