

## INTERVENTION WITH A CAPITAL "I" MICHAEL BÜTZ, PHD

As many of you have heard from me before, we best serve the aims and goals of our profession by keeping the needs of our clients and our communities at the forefront of our thoughts and efforts.

At this point in time, there has been no greater need for our intervention than now! Montana has the #1 suicide rate in the nation per capita. Our clients, our communities, our state's citizens are desperately in need of the abilities and skills each of us possess. *But also, they need our knowledge and our voices as interventions in-and-of-themselves.*

The dawn of the 2009 Legislative Session lies before us, and we face challenges, perhaps arguably, greater than any other time in our state's history with regard to behavioral health services and preventative measures. The people of our state are dying in record numbers, and as professionals we have a duty to intervene in ways that are able to produce the greatest impact. While all of us have busy and demanding work with our individual clients, their families and possibly our communities as well as care systems; potentially, the best interventions that we can present are leading with our knowledge and voices to clarify, support and at times discourage legislative initiatives.

There has been no more momentous evidence of this possibility than the passage of parity legislation at the federal level. We have participated in, and witnessed a historic event. With one stroke this legislation opens up benefits to our clients that they otherwise would not enjoy. And now, it is incumbent on each of use to consider what lies beneath the unique distinction of having the #1 suicide rate in the nation; and, what we can do about it...

Though each one of us may contribute, and do their fair share – as coherent groups we can do more, and that influence can spread to other groups. And, with respect to the current crisis in this state, many of us can without a doubt provide a short list of why the crisis exists – our decision makers may, or may not know this even though we have said it before. We need to share these ideas, but also we need to update our knowledge of the current situation and initiatives under way here in Montana too. For example, two very important Interim Committees have been addressing first of all the status of behavioral healthcare services here in Montana, and secondly, gone to great efforts to filter behavioral health disorders and correction needs. See the work of the *Children's, Families, Health and Human Services Interim Committee* at the following link below and pay special attention to the report on Mental Health Services by the Consulting Group, DMA.

Link to CFHHS Committee:

[http://leg.mt.gov/css/Committees/interim/2007\\_2008/child\\_fam/default.asp](http://leg.mt.gov/css/Committees/interim/2007_2008/child_fam/default.asp)

Link to Executive Summary from Mental Health Study:

[http://leg.mt.gov/content/Committees/Interim/2007\\_2008/child\\_fam/assigned\\_studies/Montana%20MH%20Report%20Sec%20Exec%20%20and%20Rec%20Sum%20TOC.pdf](http://leg.mt.gov/content/Committees/Interim/2007_2008/child_fam/assigned_studies/Montana%20MH%20Report%20Sec%20Exec%20%20and%20Rec%20Sum%20TOC.pdf)

Also, the Law and Justice Interim Committee have produced a number of draft bills that should be of interest to each of us.

Link to L & J Committee:

[http://leg.mt.gov/css/Committees/interim/2007\\_2008/law\\_justice/default.asp](http://leg.mt.gov/css/Committees/interim/2007_2008/law_justice/default.asp)

*continued on reverse*

**INTERVENTION WITH A CAPITAL "I" (CONTINUED)**  
**MICHAEL BÜTZ, PHD**

We have a great deal that we can bring to the initiatives from these two committees as an association, and as individuals. There will be other legislative measures that come before us too, and there is little doubt about this.

As all of you know, we have steadily been working on following-through with Senator Weinberg's initiative to allow appropriately trained licensed psychologists to have prescription privileges. In the 2007 Legislative Session we participated in writing the bill, and the language is there. Legislators took notice, as did our colleagues, and in the end SB 522 fell short by six votes on the Senate Floor with very little lead time for educating these Senators – much to our amazement.

Since that time we have established that we have seven to eight licensed psychologists who have completed or who are in training to provide appropriate prescriptions. Since that time, we have partnered with Alliant International University/California School of Professional Psychology (AIU/CSPP) to help us champion quality education in this area, and we have supplied several psychopharmacology trainings for our members and state legislators. The legislators who have attended these trainings have all been impressed with how thoughtful the approach has been to educating our colleagues, and expressed their support. Several have stepped forward to offer to sponsor the bill for the 2009 session, both in the House and in the Senate. We also have reason to expect similar levels of support we received in the 2007 session from state agencies and other organizations. In short, we are well prepared to support this measure that will provide badly needed services in this time of crisis. And, each of you may recall, this was the fundamental reason we moved to support the Senator's initiative in the first place.

As Dr. Sutherland will share with you in his article on prescriptive authority, he promoted a series of presentations at the IHS/SAMSHA National Behavioral Health Conference in August in Billings. These presentations featured Dr. Marquez, President of Division 55, Dr. Tulkin who you have all come to know through AIU/CSPP, and others including several of us from Montana. The outcome, at this point in Montana the Chief Medical Officers of the Billings Area service units (six in Montana and one in Wyoming) have officially agreed to support a supervision/training protocol that will enable licensed psychologists to seek these privileges, and this level of discussion is also occurring at a national level as well. The panel that ultimately made the final points in this series of presentations was made up of those who have pledged their support to Montana's efforts, and MPA's own members.

We can make a difference, and have made significant advances on legislative matters in recent years through your advocacy, your knowledge, and most of all your caring for the well-being of Montana's citizens. Our Association and the citizens of Montana will need this same level of commitment from each of you in the coming 2009 Legislative Session. Speak to your legislators, ask them their concerns and ask them how we can help. Also when I, or another colleague, calls or emails to ask for your assistance please consider that lending your voice is an intervention that extends beyond your office and it will impact the lives of your clients, community and state for the foreseeable future.

That is an intervention with a capital "I".