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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 27, 2012

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INFORMATION CONCERNING RECENT ARREST OF INDIVIDUAL FOR PRACTICING MEDICINE WITHOUT A LICENSE

Columbia, S.C. – The Department of Mental Health (DMH) has determined that the individual who was recently reported arrested for allegedly illegally assuming the identity of a qualified South Carolina physician worked for several months in a DMH inpatient facility in Columbia. The individual was not an employee of the Department, but rather was employed by a private company with which DMH contracted for temporary physician services.

Like many healthcare providers, the Department of Mental Health requires additional or temporary physician coverage due to physician resignations, illness, or a variety of other reasons – some planned others unplanned. To address this need, the Department contracts with firms to provide temporary physicians.

To date, this is what the Department has been able to determine:

1. The individual's credentials reflected that he was qualified as a family practice physician.
2. The individual's credentials were checked by both the temporary physician services Contractor for which he worked (Contractor), and DMH, and his credentials appeared to be in order.
 - The credentialing process included all documentation required of a regular employee;
 - Queries to the National Practitioners Databank, Healthcare Integrity and Protection Databank and the American Medical Association;
 - copies of diplomas and board certification and verification of State medical license, and state and federal DEA certificates
 - criminal background check
 - check of abuse registries
3. Since the individual apparently had stolen the identity of a physician in good standing, none of the documents reviewed presented an issue. Further, he was being presented by a Contractor, which had already conducted its own credentialing review.
4. Dates of assignment within the Department's Division of Inpatient Services were 9/2/11 to 1/10/12;
5. The individual was filling in for an employed physician on extended medical leave;
6. Services: Patient Histories and Physicals, sick-call, general medicine;
7. Although the individual was an employee of the Contractor, the nature of the practice settings in DMH inpatient facilities are such that the individual was supervised by the Medical Director of the facility to which he was assigned. Additionally, he interacted daily with nursing staff and other staff in the facility;
8. There were no clinical problems that were noted by his supervisor or other clinical staff during the time that the individual was working in DMH facilities;

(more)

In light of the apparent fact that the individual was not the physician he was represented to be, the Department is taking several actions:

- A. The Medical Director of the facility is doing a patient record review to look for possible patient care concerns related to this individual's actions. To date, none have been noted;
- B. The Department is reviewing its pre-placement procedures, including its credentialing procedures, to determine if additional measures are needed to guard against a re-occurrence of this type.
- C. The Department's legal staff is reviewing the agency's contract remedies.

The South Carolina Department of Mental Health's mission is to support the recovery of people with mental illnesses, giving priority to adults with serious and persistent mental illness and to children and adolescents with serious emotional disturbances. The Agency serves approximately 100,000 citizens with mental illnesses, including more than 30,000 children and adolescents, and provides outpatient services through a network of seventeen community mental health centers and numerous clinics. It also operates four hospitals, one community nursing care center, and three veterans' nursing homes.

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