

Open House to Mark Partnership of Wabanaki Mental Health Association, NPC & PROTEA Behavioral Health Services

November 1, 2002

Bangor, ME — Wabanaki Mental Health Association, NPC (Wabanaki), founded in 1996 to serve mental health needs of Native Americans, announced today that it will join in partnership with PROTEA Behavioral Health Services (PROTEA), a Bangor-based mental health agency. Wabanaki brings years of excellent clinical services including case-management, substance abuse counseling and HIV/AIDS testing, to our Native American community. PROTEA contributes exemplary clinical services as well as a sound administrative and financial foundation. PROTEA will enable Wabanaki to expand services to its constituents to include Children's In-Home Support, medication management and psychological testing. This unique relationship will enhance the opportunity for continuing development of both organizations, enabling greater access to services and creating employment opportunities. This collaboration further demonstrates both organizations' commitment to recognizing the importance of cultural diversity in the delivery of mental health services.

"We're really enthusiastic about this opportunity to enhance and expand services we currently offer to the underserved Native American community," said Sharon Tomah, LCSW, Executive Director of Wabanaki. At the heart of this collaboration is the philosophy of "whole person" client care, focusing on involving all providers in effective treatment and services that are both psychologically sound and culturally sensitive. This may include working with a client's family, community, school, primary care physician and case manager, among others ? all within the bounds of strict confidentiality. This philosophy of treatment has been well received.

"We need to make sure people throughout Maine have access to the services they need," said Rowena Tessmann, Ph.D., RN-CS, PROTEA's Executive Director. "In Maine it isn't a matter of competing with other mental health providers, rather it is about working collaboratively with them and with various State departments to meet a critical shortage of services." Dr. Tessmann founded the agency based on the philosophy of "whole person" client care, in January 2001, to meet the need for quality mental health services throughout Maine. In less than two years, the agency's growth has resulted in the establishment of six offices and a combined total of nearly 250 employees and affiliated clinicians.

Funding for programs and services is provided in part by MaineCare (Medicaid), the Maine Departments of Behavioral & Development Services (BDS), Substance Abuse (OSA) and Bureau of Health (BOH). Additional funding is provided by contributions from PROTEA's founders and other small private grants and donations.

Wabanaki and PROTEA invite community members to attend an Open House at PROTEA, located at 187 Exchange St., Bangor, on Thursday, November 7th, between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Festivities will include a signing ceremony and live Native American music honoring Native American Month. Representatives from various State departments, as well as PROTEA and Wabanaki staff will be on hand to answer questions about mental health services in the State of Maine.