

September 6, 2013

Good Afternoon! Thank you for the opportunity to share with the Mental Health and Wellness Commission a few comments regarding mental health services in Michigan.

My name is Mary Simon and I am the Community and Residential Services Director at Sanilac County Community Mental Health. I am a 30 year employee and have seen many positive changes in mental health services over the years. Deinstitutionalization, Person-Centered Planning and the focus on least restrictive services and self-determination have all been positive steps for the people we serve. I would like to share with you though an area of services where a serious gap in available treatment is found.

We provide services to a number of individuals who have both a diagnosed intellectual disability as well as a diagnosed mental illness. In many cases, the course of treatment is more heavily weighed in helping individuals recover from their mental illness. Outpatient treatment is normally very effective and I am proud that Sanilac County CMH has excellent psychiatrists available to help the people we serve. But there are situations that arise when hospitalization becomes necessary because a person, due to the symptoms of a mental illness, becomes at risk of harm to themselves or others. We've also had situations where a serious medical condition interacts with the symptoms of a mental illness and requires inpatient treatment so that their medical condition can be closely monitored by trained medical staff, while psychiatric medications are being adjusted or changed. Adult Foster Care homes and family caregivers are unable to manage this level of care safely.

It is in these situations that we find it nearly impossible to obtain admission to an inpatient psychiatric hospital due to the diagnosis of an intellectual disability. Unfortunately, while searching for inpatient care, police involvement or emergency treatment in a local hospital has occurred, neither of which are appropriate answers to help the person who requires this specialized mental health treatment.

This continues to be a real gap in services in Michigan for individuals diagnosed with an intellectual disability. I hope the Mental Health Commission will include this as an area of concern in developing your recommendations. Thank you!

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