

June 22, 2016

The Honorable Joe McDermott  
Chair, King County Council  
Room 1200  
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember McDermott:

This letter transmits the final report of the Community Alternatives to Boarding Task Force (CABTF) in response to King County Council Motion 14225. The motion asked the CABTF, co-convened by the Governor and the King County Executive in fall 2014, to review and develop recommendations for short- and long-term sustainable solutions for early intervention, prevention and least restrictive alternatives for individuals in mental health and substance abuse crisis.

The CABTF includes a diverse range of stakeholders engaged with this treatment access crisis, including representatives from the Governor's Office, the King County Executive's Office, the state Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery, Western State Hospital, Washington State Hospital Association, Harborview Medical Center, Navos, DESC, King County Department of Community and Human Services, King County Superior Court, King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office and King County Department of Public Defense.

This report's main purpose is to address the charge of the Governor and Executive and fulfill the requirements of Motion 14225 by presenting the CABTF's behavioral health strategic plan focusing on involuntary treatment system demand.

To place its primary content in context, this report begins with significant background on psychiatric boarding and the inpatient psychiatric treatment access crisis, citing data from the CABTF's first two progress reports including:

- Key laws and definitions, especially those associated with the Involuntary Treatment Act (ITA) in Washington state
- The phenomenon of psychiatric boarding in Washington and King County, including history, major drivers and the *In re the Detention of D.W.* Supreme Court ruling that helped create momentum for change

- Early major improvements locally in direct access to preferred evaluation and treatment services that were achieved as King County and the CABTF responded to the crisis in late 2014 and the first half of 2015;
- Access challenges at Western State Hospital beginning in mid-2015 and their effects locally, including the erosion of earlier gains even as legal compliance continued;
- Larger contextual factors and system change processes that present challenges and opportunities in the effort to improve treatment access; and
- Legislative action from 2015 and 2016 that relates directly to involuntary treatment access and community-based alternatives.

The Strategic Plan outlined by the CABTF in this report, designed to improve access to the right care at the right time for people in behavioral health crisis, includes:

- Ongoing immediate improvements including system efficiencies and new partnerships to improve access to the right care at the right time given existing resources
- Active support for multiple projects working to bring online a significant expansion of inpatient psychiatric bed capacity in King County to address an enduring shortage of such beds
- Most significantly, a broad-ranging, prioritized set of proposed system resources and improvements that, when resourced and implemented, would significantly reduce involuntary treatment demand.

Recommendations across the continuum are represented, including prevention and early intervention; crisis diversion; psychiatric hospital discharge and re-entry; and policy changes. The CABTF members used a carefully selected set of prioritization factors, and a multistage process, to identify certain improvements as priorities for action. To support a thoughtful but timely effort to bring these changes to reality, this report identifies several potential initial implementation steps for the CABTF's 13 elevated priorities.

The CABTF sees great opportunity in the present crisis, and intends to remain engaged in the work even as its charter concludes. The CABTF members look forward to continuing their role as innovative system problem solvers, with a special focus on bringing partners together to mobilize resources for effective and expedited implementation of these essential priorities.

The CABTF's work to address this treatment access crisis via collaborative upstream innovation and upstream interventions contributes to two of the County's Strategic Plan priorities in the Health and Human Potential domain: protecting the health of communities and ensuring a network of integrated and effective health and human services is available to people in need. In addition, it supports the County's fair and just principle and addresses a key Equity and Social Justice determinant of equity: access to health and human services.

It is estimated that this report required 495 staff hours to produce, costing \$29,020.

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If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Adrienne Quinn, Director, Department of Community and Human Services, at 206-263-9100.

Sincerely,



Andi Smith  
Senior Policy Advisor  
Office of Governor Jay Inslee



Betsy Jones  
Health and Human Potential Policy Advisor  
Office of King County Executive Dow Constantine

Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers  
ATTN: Carolyn Busch, Chief of Staff  
Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council  
Carrie S. Cihak, Chief of Policy Development, King County Executive Office  
Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget  
Adrienne Quinn, Director, Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS)  
Jim Vollendroff, Director, Behavioral Health and Recovery Division, DCHS