

# WASHINGTON COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITY SERVICES

WASHINGTON COUNTY CENTRAL POINT OF COORDINATION

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November 12, 2009

MHI Mt. Pleasant  
1200 E. Washington  
Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641

To Whom It May Concern:

I am very concerned about the statewide discussions in regards to the closing of one of the Mental Health Institutes in Iowa. I believe that it would only be a detriment to Iowans to close any of the Institutes at this time. If there was ever going to be a closure of any of the Mental Health Institutes, there is a need to first IDENTIFY and DEVELOP the gaps in service and resources currently available. Closing down an institution will only jeopardize the lives of Iowans and the well-being of Iowa's communities. There are psychiatric bed shortages across the State of Iowa. Closing any of the Mental Health Institutes is only going to make it more difficult to locate a bed for individuals in crisis and at times make it impossible for individuals to access acute level of care services immediately upon imminent need of this service. This will in fact jeopardize the lives of Iowans in crisis needing immediate care. There are also gaps in care for individuals needing intensive long term residential support not available by the current structured system. The Mental Health Institutes are providing some long term support for individuals that would be in jeopardy of losing their lives or injuring others if inappropriately placed in community living placements.

Washington County utilizes the Mental Health Institute in Mt. Pleasant. During the Task Force Visit, many individuals spoke to the economic impact that a closure would have on our geographical area, which has already been struggling with the loss of many jobs over the past several years. However, I would like to focus on the care of the individuals in the surrounding communities and the availability of the services offered at the Mental Health Institute that would not otherwise be available. The Mt. Pleasant facility not only provides mental health services, but also substance abuse services not otherwise available or affordable throughout the State of Iowa. If this substance abuse treatment service was not available at the Mental Health Institute, there is a need to DEVELOP and provide ACCESS to these services in alternative settings.

If the Mental Health Institute in Mt. Pleasant was not available, the surrounding areas would not only have a greater difficulty placing individuals in an acute psychiatric bed, but would also have difficulty relocating those individuals back into their communities in which their families, friends and supports reside. The process of relocating someone back into a community that has the appropriate supports available to meet that individual's needs is already challenging; and if those individuals are placed at a Mental Health Institute or hospital far away from their original residence, relocating them back into their original residence will be even more difficult. Family, service and natural supports are very important in the recovery process. Taking away any of those supports will hinder individuals' ability to recover from their mental illness and becoming a productive citizen in their community.

Advocate for healthy Iowans and healthy communities by promoting recovery for these individuals and helping their families, friends and service providers to support their recovery. Maintain the Mental Health Institutes currently in operation, identify the current gaps in service coverage and develop solutions to the current problems before making any reductions that will obviously create a barrier to access of care.

Sincerely,

Bobbie Wulf, Central Point of Coordination Administrator  
Washington County Mental Health Disability Services