

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH & SERVICE INTEGRATION ADMINISTRATION

Psychiatrist Recruitment and Retention

Transforming
Lives

Request	FY16	FY17	15-17
FTE	0.0	0.0	0.0
GF-State	\$5,389,000	\$5,805,000	\$11,194,000
Total	\$5,389,000	\$5,805,000	\$11,194,000

DECISION PACKAGE SUMMARY

The Behavioral Health and Service Integration Administration (BHSIA) requests funding to fully fund psychiatrist and medical director pay at the two state hospitals and the Child Study and Treatment Center (CSTC). The increase in pay addresses two significant issues: 1) ongoing shortage of psychiatrists and difficulties with recruitment, and 2) retention of both psychiatrists as well as Medical Directors. By funding this request, BHSIA expects to improve the recruitment and retention of Psychiatrists and Medical Directors.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Sufficient psychiatric physicians are required for providing patient care under The Joint Commission (TJC) accreditation standards and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid (CMS) certification regulations. Medical Directors are critical leaders at the state hospitals in meeting TJC and CMS requirements.

The state hospitals have experienced ongoing difficulties with recruitment and retention of Medical Directors. The state hospitals have also experienced significant shortages of psychiatrists for a number of years and the problem is increasing as additional psychiatrists are required for increased bed capacity at the hospitals due to recent court actions and legislation.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) competes from a very small pool of potential psychiatrist candidates and there is increased competition for the limited pool in Washington. The state hospital's ability to effectively compete for available psychiatrists is hampered by the current salary structure, working conditions involving high risk patients, and mandatory call due to staff shortages. The state hospitals do not have a competitive advantage to offer individuals who have a range of other employment and compensation options.

Although the hospitals have had limited success attracting psychiatrists, retention of psychiatrists is difficult because the hospitals are located in geographic areas with other hospitals or medical centers that recruit state hospital psychiatrists, such as Madigan Medical Center, American Lake Veterans Administration and St. Joseph's in Tacoma; MultiCare in Pierce County; Veteran's Administration (VA), Seattle; St. Peter's, Olympia, and the VA Medical Center in Spokane. DSHS psychiatrists have already left employment to work for the VA and others are being called and recruited by the VA on a frequent basis.

The need to address the shortage of psychiatrists is urgent. The State Supreme Court issued a unanimous opinion on August 7, 2014, ruling that the Involuntary Treatment Act (ITA) and WAC 388-865-0526 do not authorize the detention



DSHS VISION

People are healthy • People are safe • People are supported • Taxpayer resources are guarded

DSHS MISSION

To transform lives

DSHS VALUES

Honesty and Integrity • Pursuit of Excellence • Open Communication • Diversity and Inclusion • Commitment to Service

of persons in hospital emergency rooms or acute care centers (“psychiatric boarding”) based solely on the unavailability of beds in certified evaluation and treatment centers. In addition, on April 2, 2015 a federal court ruled on a lawsuit regarding the long wait times for forensic services due to lack of hospital capacity; the ruling requires the state provide competency forensic services within certain timelines. These court rulings create the need for additional bed capacity at the hospitals, and psychiatrists are required and necessary in order to increase bed capacity. The 15-17 operating budget directed the addition of three wards at WSH and two at ESH.

Both Western State and Eastern State Hospitals have made continuous and extensive efforts to recruit psychiatric physicians, utilizing both state and private recruitment resources. Eastern State Hospital contracts with a private physician recruitment firm which made an exception in their recruiting standards to accommodate the DSHS salary deficiencies. Even when the hospitals are successful in recruitment efforts, the psychiatrists often leave to take better paying jobs from other public employers. WSH has been unsuccessful to-date in filling the hospital’s currently vacant Medical Director Position, due to salary limitations, and both hospitals have experienced Medical Director retention difficulties.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

The state hospitals cannot absorb the salary increase within their current base because they have been running a deficit for three years out of the last four fiscal years. The requested increase will allow state hospitals to recruit and retain psychiatrists and medical directors that have specialized skills. The timeline is urgent due to the state’s responsibilities to maintain sufficient psychiatrist and Medical Director staffing and to meet responsibilities under recent court rulings.

EXPECTED RESULTS

In order to respond to both court cases, the state hospitals must open additional wards and will be unable to do so if there are insufficient psychiatrists. Funding this request will better allow DSHS to retain the psychiatrists currently employed as well as assist in the recruitment of additional psychiatrists to meet the need to increase capacity at the state hospitals. Funding the salary increases for the Medical Director positions is expected to result in filling the vacant position at WSH and retain the incumbents at both hospitals. Other expected results include meeting TJC and CMS requirements.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACT

No concerns are anticipated. The Union of Physicians of Washington (Coalition) is expected to support the proposal. Disability Rights Washington and other advocacy groups are expected to support the proposal.