



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
1115 Washington Street SE, Olympia, Washington 98504-5010

November 3, 2015

Dear Teammate,

First, thanks for your hard work and dedication. Your commitment to transforming lives is truly outstanding. Your work is heroic.

Recent and ongoing federal Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and state Department of Health (DOH) surveys have confirmed concerns of WSH senior management, the BHSIA leadership team and what I have heard from you. Our inability to fill staff vacancies at almost every level has not allowed us to provide the quality of care and the treatment hours our patients need and deserve.

Rather than do the bureaucratic thing, I accept responsibility. To the good we have worked hard to achieve compensation increases (yes, not enough, but the first step forward in years), implement the Ad Hoc Safety committee recommendations (including a PICU, more PERT teams and more training) and secured important capital funding (ward renovations, safety renovations, new commissary, pharmacy and kitchen). I trust you know from my many visits I care deeply about you, your work, your environment and our clients.

I need to apologize, however, for not being firm enough and courageous enough with the courts. The state and federal court systems continue to mandate that we accept additional patients on their timelines, and that we – nearly instantly – open four new wards. As you know firsthand, opening four new wards is much like mandating that we open an additional hospital.

Until now, I have not just supported, but required, the opening of a new civil ward and new forensic competency restoration beds. My goal had been to meet a federal court timeline for additional in-hospital competency restoration services and to address civil commitment waiting lists. Regardless of my earlier direction, I have become increasingly concerned we might not be able to achieve this safely. *As of the most recent and ongoing CMS/DOH visit, I've now concluded, with input and agreement of the full management team, that we cannot stay on track to open new wards at WSH. I have concluded we must take a full pause on expansion until we are able to fill our many deep staffing needs.*

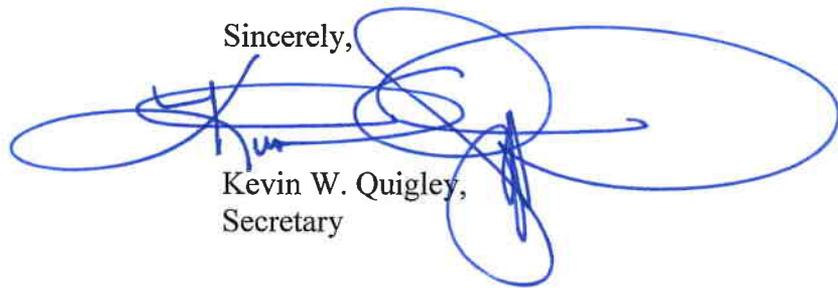
Additionally, I am also in agreement with CMS/DOH that we have not yet done enough to create a vibrant culture of safety. I have asked CEO Ron Adler to hire a Chief Safety Officer reporting directly to him and tasked with working with each service delivery group to create and implement more and better strategies to reduce patient-to-staff and patient-to-patient assaults. This will take the engagement of all of us and the Chief Safety Officer will ensure this gets the highest level of attention and focus. CEO Adler has fully embraced this idea.

I want you to know that beyond being among the most dedicated social servants in the state, you are also some of the most efficient. To fill the gap my actions will create in needed forensic restoration beds, we will contract to open 30 beds at a former juvenile rehabilitation facility, Maple Lane, in Chehalis. This will be strictly time limited, 12 to 24 months, with every expectation that all these patients will eventually be served at the hospital as we achieve adequate staffing. All our financial projections demonstrate that it is most economical to serve these patients within WSH when we have the staffing and physical space needed to do this.

It bears commenting that as we work to make the changes needed at WSH, we will need to redouble our efforts at communications and engagement. Better and timelier information sharing will be an important part of this.

Thank you for your dedication to our patients. In the coming weeks I will schedule some listening tours at the hospitals between shifts to ensure that you can share your insights, concerns and vision with me directly. Thanks again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kevin W. Quigley', is written over a large, stylized blue oval graphic. The signature is somewhat cursive and overlaps the oval.

Kevin W. Quigley,
Secretary

DSHS: Transforming Lives