

Community Mental Health Member Authorities

Bay-Arenac
Behavioral Health



CMH of
Clinton.Eaton.Ingham
Counties



CMH for Central
Michigan



Gratiot Integrated
Health Network



Huron Behavioral
Health



The Right Door for
Hope, Recovery &
Wellness (Ionia County)



LifeWays



Montcalm Care
Network



Newaygo County
Mental Health Center



Saginaw County CMH



Shiawassee
Health & Wellness



Tuscola Behavioral
Health Systems

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CMHSP Board Members Should Unite To Protect Consumer Voice In MDHHS Procurement of Pre-Paid Inpatient Health Plans

By Ed Woods, Board Member LifeWays CMHSP and Chair, Mid-State Health Network Board of Directors

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Jackson, MI - Recently, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) announced that it would issue a request for proposals (RFP) for Pre-Paid Inpatient Health Plans (PIHPs). Michigan's 10 PIHPs provide managed care functions for services and supports provided by behavioral healthcare providers, including Community Mental Health Service Providers.

At the time of this press release, MDHHS plans to structure the RFP in a way that renders current PIHPs ineligible to bid, essentially eliminating the PIHPs and their publicly appointed consumer-driven boards. While this action may have been well-intended, it will silence the voice of consumers.

Michigan has a long history of supporting consumer choice, including requiring consumers and family members to be CMHSP and PIHP board members. Consumers are proud to be full participants in the administration of the network and have served the citizens of Michigan with distinction. They attend committee and board meetings every week, providing a clear and transparent voice on how mental health policies and procedures directly affect their treatment plans and quality of life. Nowhere else in private industry or governmental agencies do consumers have such a large and powerful platform to be seen and heard.

If this RFP process goes forward, consumers will be devastated, and we, as board members, if we do nothing, will be responsible for the destruction of our public consumer-driven mental health system. Ask yourself, who speaks for us, the consumer? Currently, board members speak for us, and it's time to speak up. We should be working together – all of us – existing PIHPs and CMHSPs to find a way or to create an entity that would be eligible to bid—an entity with a public consumer-driven board and leadership vetted and hired by a publicly appointed, consumer-driven board. It's time to block out the noise around lawsuits and legality; it's time for ideas and strategies – and mostly actions – that will preserve our public system; the board association (CMHA) will lead resistance efforts and will work to change or defeat this initiative. Meanwhile, we need to open another front in this battle for consumer voice.

It's time to exercise your authority as a duly appointed board member and demand accountability from leadership and ourselves. We cannot stand by and watch the consumer voice be crushed without providing an alternative to the current narrative around who can bid on these new regions. We should have no preference on which PIHP or individual leads this effort; we just need our fellow board members to agree to come up with a plan. After all, this is the only action which we, as board members, have total control.

Use your voice and demand a plan of action that gives us a chance to bid on these new regions. If we continue to stand around and wait for someone to save us, we will certainly lose. Our voice will be headquartered in another state, and the loss of local control and choice will only be the beginning of a complete takeover of our beloved public mental health system. If we continue down this path of waiting and seeing happens, we will be responsible for the shameful dismantling of a system that has, without hesitation, promoted and listened to consumers as equals instead of as numbers on a spreadsheet.

I have been a CMHSP Board member for over 35 years, it has been my honor to serve the men and woman in this state suffering from mental illness and substance use disorder. I watched my brother deal with his schizophrenia every day by fighting through obstacles and barriers until his death 2 years ago. He fought back against his illness without hesitation every day. Don't we owe this system and our consumers our best effort, or do we just wait and see what happens?