

Colorado Coalition for Long Term Solutions to the Staffing Problems @ CMHIP

June 15, 2017

Honorable John Hickenlooper
Governor of the State of Colorado
VIA E-Mail to Katie McLoughlin, Legal Counsel

Re: Long Term Solutions to Staffing Problems @ CMHIP

Dear Gov. Hickenlooper:

Fundamentally, we do not believe that the long-term staffing problems at the Colorado Mental Health Institute @ Pueblo can be resolved by retaining the same high number of beds in Pueblo.

A Long History of Problems

State Administrations have struggled at least since the 1990s and the Neiberger case and probably before to adequately staff CMHIP.

AND once in a blue moon or for a while State Administrations manage to do it – adequately staff the facility – BUT it never seems to last.

As former CMHIP Superintendent Bill May candidly admitted, the location of the institute was a big problem in obtaining and retaining staff.

The Latest Crisis

AND now the latest crisis – CMS finding the facility in “immediate jeopardy” based on inadequate staffing.

Staff & Patients Caught in the Middle

News reports include nurses saying their experiences at CMHIP were “horrible” – The facility was inadequately staffed, the turnover was high, and they felt they were put in situations that weren’t safe. www.koaa.com/story/35658098/nurse-recalls-bad-experience-working-at-pueblo-state-hospital# ; http://www.chieftain.com/news/pueblo/some-colorado-mental-health-institute-staff-calling-it-quits-over/article_06bebe90-ae7-5d5c-80be-157aa1aa025a.html

On the other side, patients complain about inadequate staff and they felt unsafe and unable to take advantage of opportunities that they were legally entitled to and essential to their recovery.

Further, especially on the Forensics Unit, it's very easy to write off the legitimate complaints of patients as just the rantings of criminal deviants with "Anti-Social Personality Disorder" – and that has wrongly happened in at least 2 cases we are aware of.

Additionally, clinicians are rightly concerned about the bad consequences that follow from burn-out and inadequate staffing.

Nothing About Us Without Us

In words we are sure you have heard before: "Nothing About Us Without Us."

The mental health community, including people who were at one time ordered to the civil and forensic units, need to be part of the decision-making process for a Long-Term Solution.

We are requesting an inclusive stakeholder group to consider Long-Term Solutions to the Staffing Problems @ CMHIP.

Sincerely,

s/ Amy Smith Executive Director BrainStorm Colorado aka MindFreedom Colorado	s/ Adam Kippes
s/ Julie Reiskin Executive Director Colorado Cross Disability Coalition	s/ Lacey Berumen, Ph.D National Board Member for NAMI
s/ Amanda Kearney-Smith Executive Director s/ Aubrey Boggs Outreach Coordinator Colorado Mental Wellness Network	s/ Valerie Corzine, Esq. Executive Director Orchid Mental Health Legal Advocacy of Colorado, Inc.
	s/ Ty Smith Founder & Director Youth Voice Colorado

