

April 26, 2021

Dear Members of the Local Mental Health Board,

My name is Linda Wight and I am speaking to you this evening representing myself and my family and not any other group.

We have had presentations recently on Assisted Outpatient Treatment and Housing That Heals. Hope is on the horizon for expanding criminal justice diversion and responding differently to crises using the Crisis Now model.

While these ideas are very exciting, tonight, I feel compelled to speak to you about what we should be doing right now:

First, as we review the MHSA plan, we need to remember our most fragile FSP adult and aging population. Prevention and Early Intervention funds were not available 20 years ago when this group was experiencing their first struggles with mental illness, but that doesn't mean you should exclude them from early intervention. Use AOT with fidelity with the court component for those that need it. AOT/ACT clients should also have good follow-up and shouldn't have to deteriorate so much to access that level of support again. It is so damaging to someone's sense of self-worth to have to suffer acute symptoms in the community under the guise of "least restrictive environment." Don't make it so hard to access a higher level of care when needed.

Secondly, let's complete the housing matrix and identify the holes in our housing continuum. We need to make sure people are matched carefully to housing with the appropriate level of support. With any surplus MHSA funds, our highest priority should be providing a social worker/peer resident support worker team for supportive housing properties starting with Homestead in Davis.

Lastly, let's work with our current housing partners now to encourage use of the social worker response number instead of police intervention when there are problems. Act early to solve issues and maintain good communication between property staff and case managers. It is more helpful to have collaborative support to advocate for a higher level of care than to have someone document for eviction which will have devastating long term consequences. Most importantly, make sure our 24/7 crisis number is working properly.

Thank you.

Linda Wight