

GMCB Public Comment**Submit Date:** 3/7/2023**Name:** Heidi Henkle**Topic:** UVMMC's use of surplus 2017 funds: history

Comment: History: After the demise of the awful Waterbury hospital in which abuse was rampant, we opened MCTR in 2013 with 7 beds, VPCH in 2014 with 25 beds, and Linden Lodge in 2022 with 12 beds. What did that do to resolve the ER overload problem? Pretty much nothing, as far as I can see, and that makes sense- it doesn't make sense that creating inpatient psychiatric beds would do much to alleviate that problem. To alleviate that problem, we would need to decrease the number of people going to ERs with psych problems in the first place (good outpatient care when people first start having problems) and we would need good outpatient care for people to be released to after the hospital. I asked the department of mental health how much the introduction of these hospitals improved the ER overload situation, and they don't know. They don't keep data on it. So we have a belief that building more hospitals will alleviate the ER overload problems, but we don't have any data to indicate that this is true, and we have quite a bit of evidence that it's not- we built three locked facilities in the past 10 years and we still have the ER overload problem. It seems from experience that building psych hospitals doesn't have the effect some want to believe that it has. I don't think the money should be spent at UVMMC's discretion. I think it should be spent on evidence-based practices with the guidance of DMH, and I would like to have VPS have a seat at the table directly, as well, to make sure the money is spent on things that people who have mental health struggles actually find to be helpful. It's more difficult to prevent abuse, in psych hospitals than in other treatment situations, because the power difference between patients and staff is so huge and witness access is so limited. It's very important that psychiatric care be helpful and not harmful or abusive. We do not want to go back to what we had pre-Irene. it was abusive. Also, the longer history is of deinstitutionalization and then failure to fund adequate outpatient mental health services, leaving people to languish on the streets. The solution is to fund adequate outpatient mental health services. Then people can thrive without being in institutions. Just going back to locking people up more, again, is a stupid idea for a solution, and one that isn't consistent with modern knowledge. We are more intelligent than using that for a solution. We should be flexible enough to allow the use of modern knowledge and intelligence, to come up with the best possible mental health system.

Staffing. People want jobs where they feel they are doing things that are good, ethical, and make other people's lives better. The Buddhist term for this is "right livelihood." People also want jobs that are sustainable for themselves in terms of stress. Very few people want to or are willing to work in a psych hospital, for both of those reasons. I'm not. I would not be willing to work in a psych hospital, for both of the above reasons. I'm far from being alone in that. I have some friends who have worked in psych hospitals. Both of them found it to be miserable and quit doing it. Many people would be interested in working in outpatient mental health care or a peer-run crisis respite. Myself included. If you build a psychiatric hospital, you will have trouble staffing it. There aren't even enough people willing to work on them, to staff the psych hospitals we already have. Building another, won't cause more people to be willing to work in them. You will have a big problem. On the other hand, if you invest in outpatient mental health care and peer-run crisis respites, you will find that people will want to staff them. Especially if you make sure the jobs are good, and don't focus solely on jobs within a designated agency (which can have employer-employee relations issues). Create good jobs and right-livelihood jobs. You will find staffing much easier. Steer clear of creating jobs no one wants, especially psychiatric hospital jobs. The job vacancies will sit there forever. People can make money just posting Youtube and Tiktok videos. They don't need rotten horrible jobs. People want good jobs. Lots of people are eager to work at

peer-run things. If you create those, you will have lots of staff. And they have excellent mental health outcomes.

Post Comment: Yes