



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lakewood Averts Placement of Level III Sex Offender into Adult Family Home

Legislators prevent export of offender from eastern Washington; City objects to placement practices

LAKESWOOD, Wash. – DSHS has cancelled plans to place a Level III sex offender released from Eastern State Hospital into a Lakewood adult family home. The City of Lakewood and local legislators insisted on the cancellation. Representative Mari Leavitt, Representative Dan Bronoske, and Senator T'wina Nobles negotiated with DSHS to arrange an alternative.

The City is thankful for their leadership on behalf of the residents of Lakewood to prevent this placement.

The City of Lakewood opposes the placement of high-risk sexual predators into inappropriate care settings intended for vulnerable persons. The City also objects to the placement of potentially violent patients into distant communities in which they have no history or support network.

"We acknowledge that residential care facilities support our most vulnerable residents. Adult Family Homes and Enhanced Services Facilities care for citizens with a variety of behavioral and physical health issues, and do this difficult work admirably. It is our contention that the placement of violent predators with a diagnosed propensity to reoffend into these residential facilities is improper."

- Heidi Wachter, City Attorney

The City of Lakewood has previously litigated against the release of sexual predators into residential care settings. In 2018, the Pierce County Superior Court denied a City motion, ruling that the City had no regulatory authority over state-sanctioned care or placement practices.

The City of Lakewood is preparing suggested legislation with the goal of ensuring proper supervision for high-risk psychiatric patients and the wellbeing of vulnerable residents of adult family homes. The City will also propose legislation to ensure "fair share" principles are followed in the placement of these patients near their area of origin.

The City of Lakewood does not generally oppose residential care or behavioral health facilities. The City has coexisted with Western State Hospital since 1871, and an Enhanced Services Facility has been permitted along Pacific Highway South. [129 adult family homes](#), one assisted living facility, and one nursing facility operate in Lakewood.

Unspecialized care, proximity to vulnerable residents, and only moderate supervision complicate the placement of sexually violent patients into adult family home settings. Recognizing the agency of behavioral health patients and the importance of support networks to positive outcomes, the export of offenders from their home communities creates additional concerns.

The City of Lakewood is grateful for the efforts of its representatives to negotiate an alternative to this placement, and will collaborate with lawmakers to offer [constructive input on behavioral health legislation](#).

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. [Detailed Situational Analysis by the City of Lakewood](#)
2. [DSHS ALTA Residential Care Facility Locator](#)
3. [Pierce County Sheriff Sex Offender Registry website](#)
4. [Pierce County Sex Offender Classification Levels](#)