



Policy Request

Geographic Equity in Discharge from State Facilities

The City appreciates the State's recent efforts to move toward a more community-based mental health system. As the home to Western State Hospital, the City of Lakewood has long shouldered an inequitable share of the state's responsibility to treat and care for the mentally ill. Transitioning to a community-based system presents an opportunity to not only provide more accessible services to those who need it most, but also for the communities of our state to share this responsibility supporting the state's community-based health system. To ensure this transition is successful, the State should establish policies that ensure equitable responsibility for those discharged from state institutions, including those with criminal backgrounds.

What is the problem?

Individuals are discharged from state facilities into less restrictive alternatives (LRAs) in Lakewood at an inequitable rate compared to other communities throughout the state, despite the individual's county of origin. Additionally, individuals are placed in LRAs that do not have the appropriate services to meet the individuals needs and/or protect public safety.

Recent Examples:

- Accused murderer found not competent to stand trial but conditional release planned from Western State Hospital into the Lakewood community.
- A sexually violent predator, also classified as Level 3 sex offender, committed in Thurston County was released from the Special Commitment Center to an adult family home in Lakewood on the basis that adequate housing was not available in his county of commitment. He received treatment in King County.
- A sexually violent predator, also classified as Level 3 sex offender, committed in Spokane County was released from the Secure Community Transition Facility in Pierce County on the basis that return to his county of commitment would be inappropriate. He received treatment in Thurston County.
- A sexually violent predator, also classified as Level 3 sex offender, committed in Mason County was released from the Special Commitment Center to an adult family home in Lakewood.
- A man released from Western State Hospital to an adult family home in Lakewood was accused of assaulting a fellow resident, leading to his death.
- Level 3 sex offender who committed crimes in Okanagan and Spokane counties, determined likely to reoffend was planned to be released from Eastern State Hospital to an adult family home in Lakewood.

Some Solutions:

- Institute fair share policies for discharge planning from state hospitals for individuals that have a history of one or more violent acts (extend SB 5163 policies, that only apply to the Special Commitment Center, to state hospitals)
- Disclose publicly accessible and relevant criminal history for certain persons during the discharge planning process
- Be required to provide a report on the availability of less restrictive alternative services in regional service areas
- Procure additional services (e.g. housing, mental healthcare, etc.) within a regional service area if existing services are not adequate
- Implement Department of Health credential waivers for treatment providers working in underserved counties

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