



# ***Year One of the Governor and County Executive's Community Alternatives to Boarding Task Force***

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*To address a mental health community treatment crisis, Governor Jay Inslee and King County Executive Dow Constantine jointly convened the Community Alternatives to Boarding Task Force (CABTF) in August 2014. The growing number of individuals involuntarily detained for inpatient psychiatric care held in temporary settings not designed to serve their mental health needs prompted the Governor and Executive to a call for action. This phenomenon, known as "psychiatric boarding," was also the subject of a Washington State Supreme Court ruling that became effective in December 2014. The first year of the CABTF's work is summarized below.*

## **Membership**

The CABTF is comprised of a broad range of high-level representatives from the legal, judicial, and treatment systems that impact individuals involved in the involuntary commitment process. Participating organizations include the state Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR); Western State Hospital (WSH); the Washington State Hospital Association; evaluation and treatment (E&T) providers Harborview Medical Center and Navos; King County Department of Community and Human Services staff; King County's Involuntary Treatment (ITA) Court; and senior policy advisors for the Governor and Executive.

## **Approach**

The CABTF and its partners have worked to end illegal psychiatric boarding in King County and maintain the gains achieved, with a view toward a system designed to intervene earlier, reduce demand, and deliver the right care to the right person at the right time.

## **Areas of Focus for the CABTF's First Year in 2014-15**

- Achieve and maintain compliance with the pivotal 2014 Washington Supreme Court decision *In re the Detention of D.W. et al*;
- Increase optimal placement of people detained for involuntary psychiatric treatment under the state's Involuntary Treatment Act (ITA) directly into certified E&T facilities designed to serve such individuals;
- Reduce the use of temporary single bed certification (SBC) detention authority; and
- Reduce demand for involuntary care and ITA Court services by supporting the development of a comprehensive service continuum that results in improved behavioral health care throughout the treatment system and across the population.

## **Immediate System Improvements to Date**

To improve ITA system effectiveness, the CABTF:

- Established structured guidelines for patient placement to match patients to the appropriate treatment setting;

- Extended patient placement hours, with centralized coordination;
- Established communication lines between inpatient psychiatric facility executives and the County to expedite placement when necessary;
- Started to centralize capacity tracking and reporting for King County's involuntary psychiatric beds;
- Streamlined SBC approval processes at Western State Hospital (WSH) that had caused delays;
- Increased collaboration at the ITA Court;
- Engaged local community hospitals to agree to care for involuntarily detained patients even under new, stricter guidelines from the state; and
- Dramatically increased the rate at which involuntary patients are directly and immediately placed into appropriate facilities for treatment.

## **Long Term System Design Work**

System design work is already under way and will continue into the CABTF's second year, including:

- Envisioning system improvements beyond the typical constraints of current systems;
- Rigorous environmental analysis and linkage to related efforts;
- Advocacy on policy and budget legislation that will affect the continuum of care and the ITA system in particular over the long term; and
- Convening workgroups that are identifying specific recommendations in several areas:
  - diversion and front-end reengineering;
  - alternatives and resources for individuals with dementia, developmental disabilities, and traumatic brain injuries;
  - workforce support and development;
  - behavioral health integration; and
  - legislative and policy changes.

## **Forthcoming Reports**

The CABTF's design recommendations and further work to address emerging system challenges will be outlined via two forthcoming reports in 2016.