



STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH
and Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health

June 11, 2021

Re: Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTF)

Dear Commissioner Harpstead,

Members of the State Advisory Council on Mental Health and Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health, learned Wednesday, June 9, 2021 in a letter from the CEO of The Hills Youth and Family Services that Cambia Hills will close its doors with little notice on Friday, June 11, 2021. This represents another significant closure of a provider of intensive treatment for children and adolescents. It also represents the closure of the most ambitious PRTF project to date and elimination of over half of the beds that are currently licensed to provide this service in Minnesota.

We implore you to find a way to maintain service availability for these youth in need and request the following:

- The Commissioner of The Department of Human Services take responsibility for the immediate placement and care of the residents currently in the Cambia Hills facility
- Complete an intensive investigation into the roll-out of the PRTF benefit in Minnesota
- Develop a plan in collaboration with providers to address the following:
 - Development of a sustainable rate structure and business model to support facilities of multiple sizes with regular rate adjustments and rate reviews to ensure long-term sustainability of PRTFs
 - Provision of technical support to overcome obstacles to start-up in the areas of:
 - clinical care
 - psychiatric involvement/oversight
 - administrative operations
 - project management
 - continuous quality improvement
 - Development of an ongoing review process to ensure PRTF providers are not screening out referrals that meet criteria for this level of care in an arbitrary way that results in the most acute patients being denied care
- Form a task force of representatives who operate facilities at all levels of care to develop a comprehensive plan that ensures the continuum of services in Minnesota functions in a way to improve the flow of patients from one level of care to another and facilitates timely and appropriate care for all users of service
 - The task force should include representatives who have current, hands on experience operating facilities or services, including but not limited to:
 - Corrections
 - Inpatient hospitals
 - Residential programs
 - Congregate care settings
 - Partial hospitalization programs
 - Day treatment services
 - Outpatient services
 - Crisis response teams
 - Child and adolescent psychiatrist



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Cambia Hills was a 60 bed PRTF that has been in operation for almost a year. The impact of this closure is devastating to the provider community and to the overall effectiveness of the continuum of care for Children's Mental Health treatment in Minnesota. There have been many studies done and surveys compiled to determine the scope of the need for this type of treatment in Minnesota, all indicating that far too many children and adolescents are placed out of state every year because the care they need cannot be found in Minnesota. Hundreds of children remain on waitlists for the few providers in Minnesota that are able to overcome the many obstacles to providing quality care in Minnesota. For those who are placed out of state, transition back to their home community is quite difficult as service providers in other states do not understand the array of services in Minnesota and are unable to coordinate that transition.

Every Emergency Room in the state can tell you stories of patients who remain in their care, well beyond their ability to provide therapeutic care, as they await access to a provider that can most appropriately meet the needs of these children. Minnesota has worked for almost 5 years to establish the PRTF level of care in the hopes that adding this to the continuum of care would ease the funding and access issues we were seeing at that point. Since that time, we have seen a net decrease in available treatment options and much longer wait lists. To compound this problem the future of two PRTFs set to open later this year is in question absent the rate adjustment that was promised by DHS in May of this year. The efforts to make the PRTF level of care a viable option in Minnesota have largely failed and there is little evidence that this situation will change any time soon. To compound this problem the Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Hospital in Willmar, operated by the Department of Human Services, has not been funded to the levels necessary to operate to the capacity of the newly opened building.

As providers, consumers, and advocates for children and adolescents in need of effective mental health care we urge you to take an in-depth look at the crisis that is currently ongoing in the child and adolescent mental health system. We realize that the legislature has worked hard over the last several years to make improvements to the system and we appreciate that work. Despite those efforts, availability of resources has decreased and access to those resources has become more difficult. The current situation is at crisis levels and the most vulnerable of Minnesota children have the most to lose. It is important that at this time, DHS make a commitment to ensure the availability of services for highly acute youth either in community settings or state run programs. Prioritizing this work is an immediate need to ensure children and families do not go without necessary mental health supports.

Sincerely,

Michelle Schmid-Egleston, MA, LP
Co-Chair
Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health

Dave Lee, MA, LP, LMFT, LICSW
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State Advisory Council on Mental Health



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