

House Federal and State Affairs Committee Testimony
HB 2667
February 13, 2024
By Randy Callstrom

Chairman Carpenter and members of the committee,

Good morning. My name is Randy Callstrom, and I am the President and CEO of Wyandot Behavioral Health Network (Wyandot BHN). We are the Community Mental Health Center (CMHC) and Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) serving Wyandotte County. And we provide a spectrum of mental health, substance use disorder, housing, and crisis services.

Late in 2013, the State of Kansas made the decision to close Rainbow Mental Health Facility which was a state psychiatric hospital located in Wyandotte County. An RFP was issued asking Wyandotte and Johnson County how the operating dollars for Rainbow could be better used to serve both communities. A joint proposal from Wyandot Behavioral Health Network, Johnson County Mental Health, and Heartland RADAC, a substance use disorder treatment agency, was submitted, and subsequently awarded with Wyandot BHN being the lead agency.

On April 7, 2014, RSI, the first crisis stabilization center in the state of Kansas opened. And in a couple of months, we will celebrate our 10-year anniversary. The goals are to reduce unnecessary hospitalization – especially the state hospital- bookings into jail, to stabilize people in crisis, and connect them to ongoing services. RSI offers sobering services for individuals who are inebriated or high on other chemicals, most of whom have had contact with law enforcement. We offer a 24-hour observation unit to assess the level of need and next steps for our guests and have a unit providing up to 10 days of crisis stabilization services. Very importantly, staff from Wyandot BHN or Johnson County Mental Health are connected to each person as they are discharged for a warm handoff for ongoing treatment.

In the 10 years RSI has been in operation, we have served over 17,000 individuals, most of whom were at risk of being hospitalized or going to jail. 30% of admissions have been brought to RSI by law enforcement officers from Wyandotte or Johnson County. And 62% have been uninsured, while only 23% had Medicaid. This is particularly important because commercial insurance does not have a billing code for the services provided at RSI. Only Medicaid offers reimbursement for crisis intervention. Another way of saying this is that 3 out of 4 people served at RSI in the last 10 years did not have a resource to pay for the services.

But these services have had a significant impact on people's lives. This is one story.

Jane had been struggling with severe mental illness and substance use for years, which had led to the loss of familial relationships, loss of her housing and a life on the streets. Her symptoms and drug use eventually led her to RSI, where she received counseling and started on medication for her mental illness. When Jane was discharged from RSI, she received a safety plan and connections to substance use treatment, therapy, case management, and housing services. After leaving RSI, Jane worked with staff to find a safe place to live. By helping her obtain safe, stable housing, and the support of her treatment team, Jane was able to focus on her goal of recovery, rather than worrying about where she would seek shelter on any given night. She now takes immense pride in her home and has surpassed one year of sobriety. This has also allowed her to rekindle and strengthen relationships with her family.

Crisis stabilization centers have tremendous impact on people's lives. They are a diversion to hospitalization and jail and provide a significant cost saving to the state and counties.

Sustainable funding which covers the cost of operating these programs is critical. I urge you to support HB 2667.

Thank you for your attention. And I am happy to answer any questions at the appropriate time.