

SJR 47 Joint Subcommittee to Study Mental Health Services in the Commonwealth in the 21st Century

Work Group 1: Service System Structure and Financing

Purpose: To evaluate the existing public mental health service system (the system), including the types of services provided, the organization and structure of the system by which such services are provided, and the oversight and control of the system, and to make recommendations for reform of the existing system to ensure consistent delivery of a full array of high-quality mental health prevention, treatment, and recovery support services across the age range in a timely and effective manner throughout the Commonwealth.

Specific topics of study should include:

- The appropriate degree of centralization or decentralization of the system;
- The appropriate balance of community-based and institutional services;
- The types of services to be provided to ensure appropriate access to the full array of services for children, adolescents, young adults, adults, and elderly adults;
- Methods of ensuring timely access to appropriate services;
- Appropriate oversight of services, including the quality of services and service outcomes; and
- The cost of reforms to the existing system necessary to implement changes recommended by the work group and options for financing such changes.

Members: Senator Hanger (Chair), Senator Deeds, Delegate Farrell

Advisory Panel Chair: Dr. Richard Bonnie, Director of the Institute of Law, Psychiatry and Public Policy, University of Virginia School of Law

Staff: Sarah Stanton, Senior Attorney, Division of Legislative Services

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Work Group 2: Criminal Justice Diversion

Purpose: To evaluate any existing mechanisms in the Commonwealth for diverting individuals with mental illness who have committed criminal offenses into available mental health services rather than into the criminal justice system and to make recommendations for reform of any existing mechanisms or for the adoption of additional mechanisms for the diversion of such individuals into mental health services that are consistent with the need to address both the mental health needs of such individuals and the safety of the community.

Specific topics of study should include:

- Diversion mechanisms currently available in the Commonwealth, including the use by the courts of mental health dockets;
- Best practices in other states or countries;
- The stage in the criminal justice process when diversion is most appropriate and effective, specifically considering diversion at the time of arrest and at trial;
- Methods for identifying appropriate individuals for diversion and how such identifications are made;
- Appropriate oversight of diversion mechanisms;
- Identifying the services necessary to be available to individuals in order for diversion to be effective; and
- The cost of reforms to the existing mechanisms necessary to implement changes recommended by the work group and the identification of any cost savings associated with such changes.

Members: Delegate Bell (Chair), Senator Cosgrove, Delegate Watts

Advisory Panel Chair: Leslie Weisman, LCSW, Bureau Chief, Mental Health Entry Services, Behavioral Healthcare Division, Arlington County Department of Human Services

Staff: David Cotter, Senior Attorney, Division of Legislative Services

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Work Group 3: Mental Health Crisis and Emergency Services

Purpose: To evaluate the existing crisis response and emergency services system and provide recommendations for reform of such system to provide high-quality services to individuals experiencing acute mental health crisis while ensuring the safety of such persons and the community.

Specific topics of study should include:

- The legal process of the emergency custody, temporary detention, and involuntary commitment set forth in Chapter 8 (§ 37.2-800 et seq.) of Title 37.2 of the Code of Virginia;
- Any changes to such legal process that may be necessary to improve outcomes for individuals involved in such process and the safety of such individuals and the community;
- The legal process of mandatory outpatient treatment and changes that may be necessary to further facilitate the use of mandatory outpatient treatment in the Commonwealth;
- The services that are currently available for individuals who are the subject of an emergency custody, temporary detention, or involuntary commitment order and changes to such services to improve outcomes for individuals who are the subject of emergency custody, temporary detention and involuntary commitment orders;
- These services that are currently available to prevent individuals who are experiencing an acute mental health crisis from entering emergency custody; and
- Alternative transportation models to facilitate the safe transportation of individuals involved in the emergency custody, temporary detention, and involuntary commitment processes while ensuring efficient use of law-enforcement resources.

Members: Delegate Garrett (Chair), Senator Barker, Delegate Yost

Advisory Panel Chair: John Oliver, Esq.

Staff: Britt Olwine, Staff Attorney, Division of Legislative Services

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Work Group 4: Housing

Purpose: To evaluate the existing system for providing access to housing and surrounding services to individuals with serious mental illness who have housing needs and to make recommendations for reform of the existing system to ensure that such individuals receive such access and services and are able to maintain housing stability.

Specific topics of study should include:

- The effectiveness and cost-efficiency of housing programs or models;
- The identification of vulnerable populations;
- The supportive services needed to maintain housing stability;
- The integration of housing and surrounding services into the existing public mental health service system;
- The misuse and overuse of existing systems;
- Best practices in other states or countries; and
- The cost of reforms to the existing system necessary to implement changes recommended by the work group, the identification of any cost savings associated with such changes, and options for financing such changes.

Members: Senator Howell (Chair), Delegate Ransone, Delegate Torrian

Advisory Panel Chair: Mira Signer, Executive Director, NAMI Virginia

Staff: Tom Stevens, Staff Attorney, Division of Legislative Services