

House Health and Human Services Committee  
HB 2160  
February 2, 2021  
By Randy Callstrom  
Wyandot Behavioral Health Network

The mental health system in Kansas has largely been stagnate since Mental Health Reform was passed over 30 years ago. Meaning - there has not been a significant enhancement of mental health services for the residents of Kansas in that time. Meanwhile – changes in the role and procedures for the State Hospital has placed a greater burden on the community mental health centers to treat and keep individuals safe in their local community - but without any additional resources.

House Bill 2160 would not only enhance services for those seeking mental health care and provide greater funding for those services, it would be the first transformational legislation for mental health since 1990.

Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics, or CCBHCs, require many of the services already provided by a CMHC, including outpatient therapy, case management, and other rehabilitation services for those with Severe and Persistent Mental Illness and children with Severe Emotional Disorders. But a CCBHC provides much more than what is currently available.

A CCBHC must look at the overall health of a person and include primary health screening with ongoing monitoring of key health indicators. Crisis services, suicide prevention, and substance abuse services would be enhanced across the state, as well as the expansion of peer support and family support. Evidenced Based Programs are another key feature of a CCBHC. For example, in the CCBHC plans for Wyandot, we would develop an Assertive Community Treatment program or an ACT Team to address the highest risk clients in our community.

Together – these enhancements will lead to a reduction in admissions to the State Hospital, bookings into local jails, and incarcerations in the state prison system.

But without a well trained and stable workforce, the mental health system in Kansas will never truly meet the needs of our clients as well as we could. With the

last Medicaid rate increase coming over 14 years ago and grant funding from the state currently at 2008 levels, community mental health centers are unable to keep up with market rates for the salaries of mental health providers, and we struggle to recruit and retain staff.

Wyandot Behavioral Health Network is separated by a river from the Kansas City Missouri metro where there are now four (4) CCBHCs. They have all significantly increased their salary structures, paying \$10,000 to \$15,000 more for the same level of provider. And we are now far behind in salaries compared to schools and the Managed Care Organizations, as well.

Yet, every day, we ask our staff to work with the most challenging clients who are the highest risk for being hospitalized, dying from suicide, being booked into jail, and face daunting social determinants of health including homelessness.

HB 2160 provides an opportunity to enhance mental health services for Kansans and provide desperately needed funding for Community Mental Health Centers. Simply said, it is the best opportunity in a generation to transform the system of care for some of the most vulnerable citizens in the state.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today. I strongly encourage you to pass House Bill 2160.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Callstrom