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Director's Message

Thank you for rising to the challenges of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). The Department of Health Services continues to admit patients at the mental health institutes and in community programs. There is careful screening and a commitment to follow best practices to reduce risk to patients and staff. We continue to work with court officials to move people in and out of the mental health institutes. Some defendants are participating in hearings from the mental health institutes through videoconference technology. Please work with the mental health institutes to ensure this is an option before scheduling a hearing in which videoconference technology will be used. It is also important that court officials arrange to pick up defendants after a final disposition immediately following their hearing on competency matters.

Beth Dodsworth

Bureau of Community Forensic Services
Division of Care and Treatment Services

Data Tracker (State Fiscal Year 2020 / Third Quarter / January 1-March 30)

- **92** people were discharged by the state mental health institutes from inpatient treatment to competency services.
- **30** of these 92 cases were in court earlier than scheduled. This coordination with court personal resulted in these people spending a total of **1,039** fewer days at the state mental health institutes. Thank you for your help.
- **7** of these 92 cases resulted in doctor's testimony and/or a second independent opinion because the Department of Health Services competency report was challenged. These people spent a total of **358** additional days at the state mental health institutes due to delays in scheduling hearings on these matters. Please schedule these hearings in a timely manner.

Distribution of Court Orders and Supporting Documentation

All forensic-related court orders and supporting documents (criminal complaints and reports from examiners) should be sent to:

DHSMMHladmissions@dhs.wisconsin.gov. Paperwork should be routed according to the instructions provided on the order form. CR-270, Order for Examination under Wis. Stat. § 971.16 (Not Guilty by Reason of Mental Disease or Defect), and CR-277, Order for Examination under Wis. Stat. § 971.17(4)(c) (Not Guilty by Reason of Mental Disease or Defect), must be distributed directly to the court-appointed evaluator. This is not the responsibility of DHS.

Jail-Based Competency Restoration Program

There are 26 counties now participating in the Jail-Based Competency Restoration Program. Recent additions include Barron, Chippewa, Dodge, La Crosse, Marquette, Milwaukee, Rock, Sauk, and Vernon counties. Accordingly, the average daily population has grown from 14 (2019) to 19 (2020). This program has had the effect of reducing the average length of treatment to competency at the mental health institutes by about 10 days. More staff are now involved in managing this program. Each staff person now covers a region of the state. For more information on this program, call Susan Fischer at 414-271-5577.

Days Credit on Order

When a person has been committed under Wis. Stat. § 971.14(5), DHS requires the “days credit” be noted on order form CR-206 for the registrar to calculate the commitment expiration date.

Supervised Release Program

2017 Wisconsin Act 184 made several changes to Wis. Stat. ch. 980, Wisconsin’s sexually violent persons law. This act, effective March 30, 2018, impacted the way residences were determined for people who have been ordered by a court for integration into the community on supervised release. Prior to this act, a court would order the Department of Health Services to search for an appropriate residence for the person within or outside of their county of residence. This act requires the person to return to their county of residence. It also requires a local residence location committee to identify and provide a report on an appropriate residence for the Department of Health Services to lease. By law, the local residence location committee must include a representative the county’s human services department, a representative of the Department of Health Services, a local probation or parole officer, county corporation counsel or designee, and a representative from the county agency responsible for land use planning or land information. These temporary committees have 120 days after the court order to submit their report to the Department of Health Services. The Department of Health Services is then required to submit a supervised release plan to the court within 30 days that identifies the residential option and the services and supports that will be provided to the client.

This collaborative approach to the residence search process has been a success, with residence location committees formed in 29 counties since the act took effect. Twenty-nine placements have occurred because of this work.

Prior to 2017 Wisconsin Act 184, clients waited an average of 435 days at [Sand Ridge Secure Treatment Center](#) from the time the court ordered their supervised release to the time their supervised release plan was approved by the court. With the enhanced local involvement and the additional resources available to counties, the average amount of time a client waits at Sand Ridge Secure Treatment Center has been reduced to 250 days. The combination of local court oversight and local stakeholders identifying appropriate housing appears to be effectively addressing community safety concerns.

Contact [Alicia Boehme](#) with questions or concerns about the [Supervised Release Program](#).

Training Events

On-site training events are on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Department of Health Services staff are scheduled to present at the Criminal Law and Sentencing Institute in August and the Clerks of Circuit Court Association Conference in October.

Court Liaison and Tracking Services Staff

Wisconsin Community Services is the contracted provider of court liaison and tracking services for the Department of Health Services.

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