

News Release

Transforming Lives

April 28, 2016

The Behavioral Health Administration provides inpatient and outpatient psychiatric treatment, recovery support along with prevention and intervention programs for people with mental health needs and substance abuse concerns. It operates three state psychiatric hospitals that deliver high-quality services to adults and children with complex needs. BHA's team of 2,804 ensures that nearly 150,000 people receive needed services each year on a \$910 million annual budget.

DSHS and CMS negotiating an agreement to fix systemic issues at state hospital

OLYMPIA – The state Department of Social and Health Services and the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) will work together to negotiate a Systems Improvement Agreement (SIA) – a structured agreement that safeguards patients while providing time for Western State Hospital to implement systemic improvements to hospital operations.

Successful negotiation and completion of an SIA will return WSH to substantial compliance with all Medicare Conditions of Participation.

“WSH provides critical services to Washington citizens, and we are pleased that CMS has agreed to consider an SIA. This is an opportunity to focus the energy of our new leadership toward making the sustainable, long-term changes needed to ensure we provide safe, quality care,” said Carla Reyes, assistant secretary for the DSHS Behavioral Health Administration.

An SIA negotiated with CMS will stipulate the terms under which the hospital agrees to:

- Obtain independent consultative review (at its expense and with CMS approval);
- Acquire expertise in the development and implementation of an effective hospital operations improvement plan and quality assessment and performance improvement program;
- Engage the services of an independent, full-time, on-site compliance officer for the duration of the agreement; and
- Other terms specified by CMS, including a resurvey by CMS within six to 12 months.

Contact:
Kathy Spears
DSHS Communications Manager
(360) 902-7893
Kathleen.spears@dshs.wa.gov



Transforming Lives

CMS will suspend the hospital's termination order and maintain federal funding pending its fulfillment of the agreement. The SIA specifies the qualifications and responsibilities of the independent consultant and stipulates the content and frequency of reports that are to be submitted to CMS.

"This is our opportunity to make the right changes," Reyes said. "With the continued surveys and complaint investigations – which are absolutely legitimate in holding us accountable for operating a safe and quality hospital – we have been applying Band-Aid fixes to address symptoms rather than solutions that address the underlying root causes of serious repeat violations.

"There are so many dedicated and hard-working professionals at the hospital. We just don't have a functional organizational model in place to help them be more successful. The independent review and guidance provided under an SIA will help us remedy these gaps and attract additional high-quality staff."

Under the SIA, once the hospital is resurveyed and demonstrates substantial compliance with all of the CoPs, the pending termination is stopped. CMS then restores the deemed status and dismisses the SIA.

###