



Home | Newsroom | Media | Administration | NJ's Priorities | Contact Us

Press Releases | Public Addresses | Executive Orders | Press Kit | Reports

Home > Newsroom > Press Releases > 2010

Governor Christie Announces Appointees to Mental Health Facilities Evaluation Task Force

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Panel to Assess Plan to Close Hagedorn Psychiatric Hospital

Trenton, NJ – In a continuing effort to responsibly reduce costs and adjust the mental health system to reflect current needs, Governor Chris Christie today announced the appointment of members to the state Mental Health Facilities Evaluation Task Force.

The Governor charged the 21-member task force with completing a thorough and swift examination of the Department of Human Services' (DHS) closure plan for Hagedorn Psychiatric Hospital in Glen Gardner. Under an agreement with the federal government, the Department of Human Services has an obligation to move recovering psychiatric patients out of their respective hospitals and into the community.

"In this current economic climate, we must evaluate every opportunity to reduce costs responsibly while serving patients properly and effectively in the community," said Governor Christie. "I trust the members of the task force will evaluate and guide that process."

The task force's responsibilities include providing assessment and advice concerning the plan's consistency with the US Supreme Court *Olmstead* decision to enable people to live in the least restrictive settings, provisions for maintaining quality gero-psychiatric services and geographic accessibility for New Jersey residents; and consideration of cost differentials between inpatient hospital care and community services. They will meet regularly through January and hold three public hearings - one in the northern, central and southern regions of the state.

"The Governor has appointed very knowledgeable people with diverse perspectives," said DHS Commissioner Jennifer Velez. "We look forward to their active participation in this process."

The Governor's 11 appointees include: Sylvia Axelrod , Executive Director, NAMI NJ; Carolyn Beauchamp, President, Mental Health Association in New Jersey; Kenneth J. Gill, Ph.D., CPRP, Chair, Department of Psychiatric Rehabilitation and Counseling Professions, UMDNJ; Karen Kubert, Director, Warren County Department of Human Services; Judith A. Lucas, Ed.D., APN-BC, Research Assistant Professor, Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research, Rutgers University; Gail Masson, M.A., Board of Trustees, Hagedorn Gero-Psychiatric Hospital; Barry Johnson, Director, Monmouth County Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services; Joseph A. Miller, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., Corporate Director, Neurosciences and Behavioral Health, Meridian Health; Margaret Swarbrick, Ph.D., OTR, CPRP, Director, Institute for Wellness and Recovery Initiatives, Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey; Wayne Vivian, President, Coalition of Mental Health Consumer Organizations of New Jersey; and Debra Wentz, Ph.D., CEO, New Jersey Association of Mental Health Agencies.

The remaining members will be appointed by designated members of the Legislature and Commissioner Velez, in accordance with state law.

DHS today provided the task force with the Department's proposal to close the hospital on June 30, 2012. The plan proposed by DHS asserts that closing Hagedorn allows for continued census reduction, regional access and quality services for older adults while averting the need for on-going capital investments. The plan predicts a \$9 million savings in Fiscal Year 2012, annualizing to approximately \$44 million savings beginning in Fiscal Year 2013.

More details regarding the state Mental Health Facilities Evaluation Task Force can be found at the following link: www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dmhs/home/taskforce.html.

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