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HEALTH FACILITIES &
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD

July 11, 2020

The Winnebago County Community Mental Health Board is requesting a Public Hearing regarding the application for exemption to discontinue a 20-bed acute mental illness category of service at Javon Bea Hospital – Rockton Avenue (#E-032-20).

A meeting between community mental health advocates and local legislators to discuss the issue leads us to question data Javon Bea Hospital presented on stay rates. The application states that there is an insufficient patient census for the continued operation of an inpatient acute mental illness category of service at the Javon Bea Hospital, averaging at “2-3 patients per day”. It was also published by our local news here: <https://www.wifr.com/2020/07/06/mercyhealth-petitions-to-dismantle-mental-illness-ward/>. The average daily census remains, on average, between 9 – 10 patients through 2018. 2019 data was not included in the application. One example:

Acute Mental Illness Services at Mercy health 2018 (pulled from application <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/hfsrb/Projects/ProjectDocuments/Exempt/E-032-20/2020-07-01%20E-032-20%20Exemption%20Application.pdf>)

- *14 peak beds*
- *593 admissions*
- *3,521 inpatient days*
- *5.9-day average stay*
- *Average daily census 9.6*

Javon Bea Hospitals, and the Mercy Health System, portray themselves to the community as comprehensive systems of care. These hospitals operate two emergency rooms and it is difficult to conceive comprehensive health care without a behavioral health unit backing up their emergency care system. During this pandemic access to all levels of mental health care, including hospitalization, are essential for individuals living with mental illness. Almost immediately it became apparent that stress emanating from the pandemic began to cause increases in anxiety screenings, and depression. People with mental illness cite COVID-19 as a reason and loneliness and isolation as factors. Many individuals admit to having suicidal ideation, which for a small percentage of patients will require inpatient hospitalization.

On October 31, 2012 Singer Mental Health Center closed their doors and the community lost 47 adult beds at that time. Without access to hospital care, seriously ill individuals deteriorate, families and caregivers crumble under stress, emergency rooms and jail cells fill to the brims, and first responders find themselves increasingly preoccupied with mental health calls.

Access to mental health services is a critical issue in our community and residents of Winnebago County in Rockford Illinois deserve more mental health resources, not fewer. Psychiatric bed shortages can cause loss of life.

Sincerely,

Winnebago County Community Mental Health Board

Mary Ann Abate President, Dick Kunnert Vice President, Dr. Reverend Ed Copeland Treasurer, Danielle Angileri Secretary, Dr. Bill Gorski, Dr. Julie Morris, Dr. Terry Giardini, Linda Sandquist, Tim Nabors

Advisers: Wendy Larson Bennett, Jay Ware