

Sandhills Center Local Management Entity PRESS RELEASE

Sandhills Center has received the June 25, 2010 letter from Robert Morrison, President of Randolph Hospital, outlining his concerns regarding patients being seen in the Randolph Hospital Emergency Department who are in need of psychiatric and/or substance abuse services and his claims that Sandhills Center is not fulfilling its responsibilities. Sandhills Center unequivocally denies Mr. Morrison's claims, and is in full compliance with the requirements and responsibilities of a local management entity.

Upon receipt of Mr. Morrison's letter, Sandhills Center CEO, Victoria Whitt, forwarded his letter to the NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for review and response. DHHS is the state agency responsible for managing and overseeing the activities of Local Management Entities and assuring those entities of local government are meeting their statutory responsibilities.

DHHS supports Sandhills Center's position and the DHHS complete response, from Leza Wainwright, Director of the NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services, is attached. The response indicates that Mr. Morrison is misinterpreting both rule and statute regarding LME crisis requirements. The review of the situation indicates that Sandhills Center meets and exceeds all crisis service requirements and is providing the Randolph Hospital Emergency Department with a level of service far beyond what is required. This includes the following:

- Implementation of a Mobile Crisis Team that provides strong support for assessment and placement of patients in the ED,
- Paying the Randolph ED MDs to assess psychiatric patients,
- Funding day time Crisis Walk-in services designed to assess and place consumers during normal working hours in two locations in Randolph County,
- LME daily tracking of the status of psychiatric patients in the ED,
- Regular coordination meetings between LME staff, crisis providers and hospital staff,
- Strong LME care management involvement (e.g. going to ED, assessing consumers, working on placements, coordinating provider activity),
- Funding 2 Crisis Beds for adults with MH needs in Randolph County,
- Operating the 2nd largest 3 Way contract in the State which provides significant inpatient resources to Randolph County,
- LME funded inpatient contracts with Moses Cone and Highpoint Regional and other inpatient facilities that also serve Randolph County,
- Working with a provider (Therapeutic Alternatives) to develop a facility based crisis program in Randolph County.

Additionally, it is important to note that to the extent that Mr. Morrison feels that a psychiatrist is needed at Randolph Hospital, it would be the responsibility of Randolph Hospital to provide one.

Unfortunately there are still times when, despite the best efforts of all involved within the crisis service continuum and with all due diligence, an appropriate inpatient bed cannot be located for longer than anyone would wish. The fact remains there are times when the demand for inpatient psychiatric beds exceeds the system capacity and consumers are forced to wait too long in local Emergency Departments.

It is important to note that Sandhills Center and the NC Department of Health and Human Services share concerns about consumers waiting for appropriate mental health and/or substance abuse services for long periods of time in community Emergency Departments. We continue to work with DHHS in their collaboration with the NC Hospital Association, NC Sheriff's Association, Association of County Commissioners, NC Council of Community Programs and the Office of the Attorney General to address these complicated issues.