



January 3, 2017

Stefan Gildemeister
Division of Health Policy
Minnesota Department of Health
PO Box 64882
St. Paul, MN 55164-0882

Sent electronically to Stefan.gildemeister@state.mn.us

Dear Mr. Gildemeister:

On behalf of Allina Health, thank you for seeking community feedback on a request to expand services for psychiatric patients under the age of 21, as submitted by PrairieCare.

This year, I had the honor of serving on the Governor's Task Force on Mental Health, where we created a vision of high-quality, reliably accessible services across the spectrum of wellness to acute care. In service to the work of this Task Force, Allina Health encourages the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to use the recommendations of that task force as an evaluation lens for prioritizing and expanding services.

The Task Force recognized that the current capacity of the entire continuum of care is lacking, most notably with regard to intense community-based services. Therefore, highest priority for creating and sustaining a reliable continuum calls on the state to focus on building a community infrastructure necessary to adequately serve all our citizens.

While expansion of acute hospital beds may not fall into the category of community-based services, the Task Force did acknowledge the need for short-term services, including in-patient beds while the expansion of community-based services is under development. Within short-term services, the Task Force identified areas that warranted particular attention, including: improving care coordination and transition to community-based services, uneven access to inpatient care, and extremely limited options for families whose children need inpatient psychiatric hospitalization¹. So long as PrairieCare can assure that these particular issues can be addressed, we would support their request to expand services.

Allina Health is not-for-profit network of hospitals, clinics, ambulance, hospice & home care, pharmacy and specialty care. Within mental health, we care for more than 100,000 patients through inpatient services in geriatric, adult and adolescent programs, outpatient services in ambulatory care, adult day treatment, and adolescent partial-hospital treatment. To your specific inquiry on occupancy: some of our sites do use double-occupancy rooms, when it is clinically appropriate. There are advantages with double-occupancy, however, we acknowledge that there are also challenges that can impact how many rooms can actually have two patients. While it does not occur frequently, our sites have experienced a need to close a unit at less than full occupancy if specific accommodations or needs cannot be met.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on this request. If you would like to discuss our comments in greater detail, please feel free to contact me.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Goering".

Paul Goering, MD
Vice-President Mental Health Service Line
Allina Health

¹ https://mn.gov/dhs/assets/mental-health-task-force-report-2016_tcm1053-263148.pdf