

Mental health budget boost ignores adults

By Kathy Parrish
staff writer

Used to cutbacks, Oakland County mental health officials are pinching themselves at the thought of getting \$3.1 million to expand services.

But some of the people who use those services object to the way the state wants the money spent.

Appearing before the county's Health and Human Resources Committee, residents urged more programs for mentally ill adults.

The 1984 expansion money is slated for mentally ill children and adolescents, hearing impaired, Hispanic clients and developmentally disabled (DD) adults over age 26. (People who are developmentally disabled are those with autism, epilepsy, cerebral palsy and/or mental retardation.)

Programs for mentally ill adults are expected to be a state funding priority next fiscal year.

"I want to encourage your support for the mentally ill," Bill Hayes told county commissioners. The Beverly Hills lawyer has a mentally ill son.

"But I'm against the budget allocations. We can no longer accept budgetary discrimination against the mentally ill adult."

THE CONCERNS grew out of the announcement that Michigan Department of Mental Health will give Oakland County \$2,668,597 to expand programming. The money will be available from Oct. 1, 1984 to Sept. 30, 1985 if the county matches 10 percent of it.

During the past two years, the state has cut back the amount it gives Oakland County for mental health services. Most dramatic was an October 1982 cut of \$2 million and 31 staff members.

Citing urgent need for more treatment services, Community Mental Health Services Board director Thomas J. Malueg Wednesday pleaded with

commissioners to allocate \$91,758 in matching funds from Oct. 1 through Dec. 30. The county would have to allocate another \$176,101 for Jan. 1 through Sept. 30, 1985.

"I know it's a whole hell of a lot of money, but I think you can see the need is great," said Malueg, who called the request the "most important thing I've had to ask you for."

While asking the commissioners to pass the proposal intact, he admitted a compromise would be acceptable to him.

"I'm open to anything, frankly. We need this so badly."

While approving the proposal, which goes next to the county's finance committee, commissioners expressed some concern over the state determining how the money will be used.

"It's their (the state's) priorities or nothing. And we have to make sure their priorities are ours and educate them to our concerns," said Malueg.

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT of Mental Health is providing funds to help patients Malueg said have been underserved. Included are Hispanic, hearing impaired, developmentally disabled adults who've left public school special-education programs, and parents of clients who need respite care and other family support services.

Also included are:

- Admission screening and discharge planning staff to work with patients entering and leaving Clinton Valley and Fairlawn Centers. The two state hospitals in Pontiac deal with mentally ill adults and children respectively.
- Development in Commerce Township of two six-bed foster-care homes for developmentally disabled residents. Township residents would help plan and operate the homes.

APPEARING ON behalf of the mentally ill were members of the Alliance for the Mentally Ill in Michigan, National Parents of the Severely Impaired of Oakland County, Citizens Advisory Council of Clinton Valley and Oakland County Regional Interagency Coordinating Committee for Developmental Disabilities.

There was concern about plans to "divert" patients from crowded Clinton Valley and Fairlawn to private hospitals.

Commissioners were also told about lack of homes for mentally ill patients, day-care programs and other services like respite care to take care of a patient in the home.

"Many patients are in the home with their parents," explained Dorothy McQueen, who has a mentally ill son. "It's like living with a ticking time bomb."

ANOTHER CONCERN is the plan to hire case-management coordinators to help discharged patients get settled in the community.

Bill Hayes objected, saying the coordinators are not needed because there are no services to "walk" them to.

"I know, because I've walked my son through the system for eight years."

"We're all on the same side," the director of Community Mental Health Services Board told the county commissioners. "No one understands how much we're underserving patients of Oakland County than I do. I'm painfully aware and I hope they convince you of the compelling needs."

Discriminatory bidding practices alleged

An attempt to rebuild the work on the Oakland County Jail has been vetoed by County Executive Daniel Murphy.

"We conformed to fair practices of advertising, and it would be grossly unfair and grossly in error if we reject the low bid of the lawful bidder," explained Murphy.

The \$187,566 roofing job was awarded to Michigan Roofing and Sheet Metal, a Detroit firm which happens to be a woman's business enterprise.

COMMISSIONERS VOTED to rebuild the project after re-

ceiving a letter from a Pontiac law firm on behalf of Price Brothers Roofing Co., which has done repair work on the jail roof but was not offered a chance to bid on the new roof.

"Inasmuch as Mr. Price is both a minority and a resident of the City of Pontiac, many other members of this community have expressed outrage at the blatantly discriminatory

method employed by you in awarding the contract in question," stated the letter from Hatchett, DeWalt, Hatchett & Hall.

"We have further learned that some of the contractors submitting bids on the project were personally called by telephone to advise them of the pendency of this action."

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