County forms plan to take over mental health

It may not be perfect, but a ten-tative agreement has been reached between Oakland County and the state government for local management of county mental health programs

management of county mental health programs.

Should the County Board of Commissioners and Mental Health Board approve the new agreement, Oakland County will have the right to determine how it distributes funds for mental health needs; currently, the state manages mental health programs for the county.

for the county.

Under the proposed program, known as full management, the county will be able to direct funding according to its needs, according to

ing to Dr. Richard Cooper, direc-tor of the Oakland County Com-munity Mental Health Services Board. One area in which the county will consider increasing funding, Cooper added, is alterna-tives to hospitalization, such as

tives to hospitalization, such as crisis centers and group homes. "Right now, if a patient is seri-culy mentally ill and need to be taken out of his own home, the only place he can be taken is to Clinton Valley," Cooper said. "We have patients at Clinton Val-ly currently who shouldn't be there, but there's no other place for them to go."

for them to go."

While critics of full management have charged that such a plan would allow the state to cut funding, Cooper said the current

proposal has two clauses to pre-vent cutbacks.

"We built into our contract a drop-dead clause," he said. "If funding drops below 95 percent of the provious year's full funding, the contract terminates automati-cally and direction reverts back to *he attac."

cally and direction reverts back to the state."

To keep the state from circum-venting the drop-dead clause by cutling the mental health budget to 96 percent every year, the con-tract also names a dollar figure below which the budget cannot drop.

Still, county commissioner Marilynn Gosling, R-Bloomfield Hills, said the proposed contract didn't quite grant everything she'd hoped for.

"I always like to get a little more than I expect," she said. "I would like the state to reach equity in funding of mental health."

health."
Nonetheless, Gosling concluded that "it's a fair contract."
Should the contract receive approval, Osklend County will become the second-to-last county in

the state to implement full man-agement; currently, only Oakland and Macomb counties lack such agreements.

The county's move toward full management was slowed by its 1983 lawsuit charging the state with inadequate funding. Until the lawsuit was decided last

spring, the county could need overhual its funding procedures now, Cooper said, the state is eager to hand over control of its mental health programs to the county.

"I don't think the state wants o continue operating these proto continue ope

MORC opposes county control

BY TIM CARVELL STAPF WRITER

While state and county mental health officials prepare for the approval of a proposed full management program for Oakland County, one organization is mounting a campaign to keep control of country in the country of country and compaign to keep control of country or the country coun mpaign to keep control of coun-mental health agencies in the

ty, one organization is mounting a campaign to keep control of county mental health agencies in the state's hands.

The Macomb-Oakland Regional Center (MORC) has good reason to fear full management; currently, it is under state control, because both Macomb and Oakland counties' mental health programs are state-run. But if the County Commission and Mental Health Board approve the full management proposal, Oakland County will direct its own programs — and MORC's funding will be placed in jeopardy.

To prevent such a transfer, Barbara Bergum, president of the Association for Macomb-Oakland Regional Center, has charged the

Michigan Department of Mental Health with sloppy governance.
"We demand an immediate moratorium on all closures of state mental health agencies and all transfers of state community placement programs to county Community Mental Health (CMH) Boards until there is a review and evaluation made by the department as required by the Mental Health Code," Bergum wrote in a press release.

Bergman, who could not be reached for direct comment, proceeded to charge the Department of Mental Health with recklessly closing state facilities, and the CMH boards with failing to represent their constituents.
"Community Mental Health Boards are comprised of county commissioners and political appointees with little or no experience in mental health who serve as a rubber stamp for the boards' executive directors," Bergum

wrote. These who support the full management agreement called Bergum's fears unfounded. Courty commissioner Marilyan Gesling. R-Bloomfield Hills, said MORC would not be disbanded under full management, but it would have to compete with other agencies for the county's business.

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"The staff feels that MORC is going to be destroyed," Gosling and. The state would like to privatize MORC. In the forescentification, we will be contracting with MORC to provide client home. If MORC were outbid, then they might lose." Such an agreement may frighten MORC, according to Dr. Richard Cooper, director of the Oakland County Community Mental Health Services Board. "What they're trying to do is preserve their own jobs, Cooper said. "They want to preserve their high pay and good benefits."



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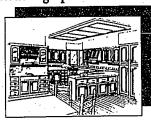
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