



Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee

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63rd Montana Legislature

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June 26, 2014

Gov. Steve Bullock
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620-0801

Dear Gov. Bullock,

The Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee recently voted to ask that you include funding in the 2017 Biennium Executive Budget to hire additional employees to work with intellectually disabled individuals who are at risk of a more restrictive placement because they are experiencing a mental health crisis.

The committee has been studying community crisis services as a part of the House Joint Resolution 16 study of state-operated institutions. That resolution sought a study of the institutions that serve individuals with a mental illness, intellectual disability, or chemical dependency to look for more effective treatment options or ways to provide services in a more cost-effective way.

Committee members decided to focus the study efforts on mental health services, including services that can be provided in a community in order to avoid a person's placement in a more restrictive, institutional setting.

During the study, we heard about mobile crisis response provided by the Developmental Services Division to intellectually disabled individuals who are in a community placement and who are in or approaching a mental health crisis. Because of the behavioral problems caused by their mental illnesses, these individuals may be in danger of being placed in the Montana Developmental Center or another more restrictive setting. The division's crisis and transition specialists work with not only the individual, but also the person's family and with the community provider to try to maintain the person's placement in the community.

Our committee applauds this proactive approach to responding to mental health crises. We believe that crisis services such as this are a key to preventing escalating mental health problems and to keeping people in the least restrictive setting possible.

In May, we voted to support the expansion of the division's effort by taking two steps:

- drafting a bill to appropriate \$345,000 a year for hiring five additional state employees to provide crisis and transition services; and
- formally asking you to include funding for these employees in the budget that you'll propose to the 2015 Legislature.

Although the committee is prepared to proceed with legislation for the additional employees, we think this idea warrants your endorsement and should be included in the executive budget. If you do make it a part of the budget, the committee stands ready to support the proposal when it comes before the 2015 Legislature.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Sen. Dave Wanzenried
Presiding Officer

c: Dan Villa, Budget Director