

State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



CVH WHITING TASK FORCE

MEETING SUMMARY

Rep. Steinberg convened the first task force meeting and welcomed members.

Rep. Steinberg, Sen. Abrams, Sen. Somers, Sen. Lesser, Rep. Petit and Rep. Young expressed their gratitude to those willing to serve on the task force. They stated that their presence at the meeting is a demonstration of the seriousness of this particular task force. The Legislature and the Public Health Committee have a role to play, parallel to, but not independent of the work the task force will be performing. The obligation of the Legislature is to be part of the solution, not only to ensure that the Whiting Forensic Hospital situation will not be repeated, but also to protect the safety and integrity of everyone who is at the facility going forward.

Task force members introduced themselves. They include:

Kim Beuregard, President and CEO of InterCommunity Health Care.

Mike Lawlor, Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at the University of New Haven.

Paul Acker, Chief of Staff at Advocacy Unlimited.

Nancy Alisberg, Former Managing Attorney at the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities, and Former Legal Director of Disabilities Rights Connecticut.

Linda Schwartz, RN, Former Connecticut Commissioner of Veteran's Affairs, and Former Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning at U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs.

Lori Hauser, Board Certified Forensic Psychologist at Whiting Forensic Hospital.

Shaun Mastroiani, Manager of Assisted Living Facility.

John Rodis, MD, MBA, FACHE, President at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center. Dr. Rodis was not present at the meeting due to scheduling conflicts.

The task force discussed the election of a chairperson. Ms. Schwartz suggested that it may be more effective to have co-chairs.

Ms. Beuregard made the motion to nominate Mr. Lawlor and Ms. Schwartz as co-chairs of the task force. Mr. Mastroinani offered the second. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Members discussed the legislative charge of the task force, Public Act No. 18-86. The discussions produced questions and concerns, one of which included Freedom of Information (FOI) laws regarding persons who speak to individual task force members outside of scheduled task force meetings. As such, it was decided that the task force would invite an expert from the FOI Commission to inform members of their privacy rights and those of persons who speak to members in confidence.

The task force also requested an expert from the Psychiatric Security Review Board (PSRB), and an expert to discuss the Patient Bill of Rights. Additionally, they requested the statutory definition of abuse and neglect from a behavioral health perspective.

Ms. Alisberg suggested that members familiarize themselves with the situation by reviewing various documents related to Whiting Forensic Hospital. They include:

Roe v. Hogan Settlement Agreement 12/5/90

Department of Justice, Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act Findings Letter 8/6/07

Department of Justice, Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act Settlement Agreement 1/20/09

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services report and summary 7/27/17
Arrest warrants (10) October, 2017

Public Health Committee Informational Forum November, 2017

Department of Public Health report August, 2018

The task force discussed receiving tours of the Connecticut Valley and Whiting Forensic Hospitals. The tours will be coordinated and scheduled by staff of the task force and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Members concluded that the next meeting should include presentations on FOI, PSRB, Patient Bill of Rights, and the statutory definition of abuse and neglect from a behavioral health perspective.

The next task force meeting will take place on Monday, May 20, 2019 from 3:00 to 5:00 PM.