

State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



CVH WHITING TASK FORCE

Meeting Summary

February 28, 2020 at 12:30 PM

CIPCI Collaborative Theater

Saint Francis Hospital and Health Center

260 Ashley Street, Hartford, CT 06105

Members present included Linda Schwartz, Mike Lawlor, John Rodis, Shaun Mastroianni, Nancy Alisberg, Paul Acker and Lori Hauser. Kimberly Beuregard was unable to attend.

Invited guests present included Monte Radler, Assistant Public Defender and Kevin Lawlor, Deputy Chief State's Attorney.

Co-chairwoman Linda Schwartz convened the meeting at 12:40 p.m.

Nancy Alisberg read a letter from a patient at Whiting Forensic Hospital that questioned the extension of his commitment beyond the commitment period authorized by the judge in his case. Attorneys Lawlor and Radler explained the law and procedures governing the Psychiatric Security Review Board and the court relating to extensions of the term of commitment and movement between the Whiting and Dutcher facilities. All task force members participated in an extended dialog during which the law and procedures were described in significant detail.

Attorney Radler indicated his preference for the probate court to play a larger role in commitment extension decisions. Attorney Lawlor indicated that he was reluctant to make a recommendation, but that the Division of Criminal Justice would be willing to continue discussion options, including potential unintended consequences.

The task force discussed a letter from Disability Rights Connecticut that responded to questions posed by the task force at the January 27, 2020 meeting. The task force expressed a concern that the number of patients interviewed, and records reviewed was low and questioned the process by which those patients and records were selected.

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The task force discussed potential options for oversight of the hospital, including the establishment of an inspector general; a further authority strengthening of the Whiting advisory commission; reconsidering the oversight authority and jurisdiction of the Department of Public Health and/or that of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Lori Hauser discussed possible options for an anonymous survey of patients and staff at the hospital. She provided some information regarding a prior survey conducted by the Yale Program for Recovery and Community Health (PRCH) and suggested that might be an appropriate group to conduct such a survey. In response to a question, it was made clear that PRCH is not affiliated with the Law and Psychiatry Division of the Yale School of Medicine.

The task force discussed plans for the next meeting where representatives of the unions representing employees at the hospital will be invited to make presentations to the task force. Members discussed plans for a meeting to be held later in the year when the legislative office building is once again available where individual employees of the hospital will be able to address the task force, as well as separate meetings where patients, family members and advocates will be provided an opportunity to address the task force.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned the meeting at 3:30 p.m.