

HJR 16: State-Operated Institutions ***Montana Mental Health Nursing Care Center***

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for the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee
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General Overview

The Montana Mental Health Nursing Care Center (MMHNCC) provides treatment to individuals who are mentally ill and in need of nursing care. Patients generally are unable to remain in their own homes or in facilities in their communities because of their mental illness, but do not need the level of treatment provided at the Montana State Hospital. Patients have either been:

- committed to the facility through a civil proceeding because they represent a danger to themselves or others;
- sentenced to the custody of the Department of Public Health and Human Services because they've been convicted of a crime but placement in a correctional facility is not appropriate; or
- moved from the Montana State Prison to the facility because of chronic medical conditions.

Operated primarily by the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS), the 125-bed facility is located in Lewistown. Residents are housed in one of five wings, according to the type of care they require. Administrative offices for both the center and other DPHHS divisions are located in the sixth wing.

DPHHS staffs and operates four of the five residential wings of the facility. In those units, residents are generally grouped as follows:

- higher-functioning, ambulatory residents who may pose some security concerns are housed in the A Wing, which recently was renamed by residents as Apple Wood;
- residents with a high incidence of problem behaviors are housed in the E Wing, or Echo Lane, which is a locked unit;
- dementia patients are housed in the F Wing, also known as Firefly; and
- individuals who require higher staffing levels because they need assistance with activities of daily living are housed in the G Wing, or Glacier Way.

Residents in those four wings have access to a common dining area and multi-purpose room.

In 2012, the state converted the facility's D Wing into a secure unit capable of housing up to 25 inmates from Montana State Prison. The offenders have chronic medical conditions that require a level of care that is not available in a correctional facility. DPHHS transferred \$813,000 in general fund to make improvements to the D Wing to create the secure beds.

The wing is now known as the Lewistown Infirmary and is operated by both DPHHS and the Department of Corrections. Patients in this secure wing do not have access to other areas of the facility and cannot move outside of the building without direct supervision.

In fiscal year 2013, the DPHHS-operated portion of the facility had an average daily population of 81 residents.

Makeup of the MMHNCC Population

Except for the inmates housed in the D Wing, all MMHNCC patients have a mental disorder that resulted in their commitment to the facility or their transfer from another mental health facility. However, they do not need the active level of treatment provided to patients at the Montana State Hospital.

Although the residents require nursing care, most are under the age of 65. The average age of residents was 58.6 years in 2011 and 64.1 years in 2012.

Mental Health Services at MMHNCC

Mental health services available at MMHNCC consist of:

- management of psychiatric medications; and
- assessment, behavior management, and counseling.

The facility has a staff of 119 FTE, most of whom provide nursing care to the residents. MMHNCC does not have a mental health professional on site on a daily basis. It does have a psychology specialist on staff and also contracts with a psychiatrist who visits the center 1.5 days per month. The psychiatrist provides medication management.

Costs and Payment of Mental Health Services

House Bill 2 appropriated about \$10 million of general fund to MMHNCC for each year of the current biennium. The appropriation does not reflect pay increases or retirement adjustments made in other legislation in 2013.

The center is expected to contribute about \$3.8 million to the state general fund in this fiscal year and \$4.3 million in the next fiscal year because of reimbursements it receives from either Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance, or payments from individuals.

MMHNCC is expected to average 84 patients per day this biennium. The average daily cost is estimated at \$330 per day, or \$120,450 per year, in this fiscal year and \$337 a day, or \$122,900 per year, in fiscal year 2015. Costs for the inmates held in the secure wing of the facility are not included in the figures.

Length of Stay and Recidivism

The average length of stay for residents at the facility is 2.35 years. There is no limit on the maximum amount of time that a person may be at the center, although a petition for recommitment must be filed when a patient's commitment order expires.

Individuals may be discharged to a nursing home, an intensive mental health group home, a private home, or a group home for individuals with traumatic brain injury. If they require a higher level of treatment, they could be discharged to the Montana State Hospital.

Information is not available on how frequently an individual discharged from the facility returns from a community placement.

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Sources:

- Interviews with and e-mails from the following Department of Public Health and Human Services officials, July through September 2013: Addictive and Mental Disorders Division Administrator Glenda Oldenburg, MMHNCC Administrator Ron Balas, and Public Information Officer Jon Ebelt
- *2015 Biennium Fiscal Report*, Legislative Fiscal Division, June 2013, Table 33-C
- Title 46, chapter 14
- Title 53, chapter 21
- *Authority for Renovation of Wing D of the Montana Mental Health Nursing Care Center*, legal memorandum from Legislative Services Attorney Julie Johnson to the Legislative Finance Committee, Sept. 7, 2012

