

2016 Legislative Agenda

Ricky's Law: Involuntary Treatment Integration

Integrate the involuntary treatment systems for mental health and chemical dependency to allow involuntary commitments for individuals who pose a risk of serious harm to self or others due to substance abuse. Fund the creation of secure detox facilities to treat people detained for chemical dependency.

- Mental illness and substance abuse are highly correlated—it is estimated that as many as 70% of the individuals treated in our behavioral health system have a co-occurring disorder, meaning that they suffer from both a mental illness and a substance use disorder. This bill recognizes the need to treat both disorders, especially in times of crisis.
- This would bring the crisis systems into alignment with overall behavioral health integration.
- This law would substantially reduce the number of people ending up in the mental health ITA system because they would be more appropriately placed in the substance abuse ITA system. This would reduce the pressure for psychiatric beds.
- Involuntary substance abuse residential treatment is one-fifth of the cost of involuntary mental health treatment. It is an expensive mistake when patients end up in the wrong system.
- The return on investment for involuntary chemical dependency treatment is well documented in our state. The WSIPP study on the 2006-2009 state-funded secure detox pilot project found that: “savings from fewer hospitalizations and avoidance of more expensive detentions to mental health facilities more than offset the cost of secure detox.”
- Another study conducted by the University of Washington, in conjunction with the VA and DSHS, found that in the year following involuntary chemical dependency treatment, there was a 53% reduction in client use of detox services, a 33% reduction in the use of crisis mental health resources, a 44% reduction in inpatient psychiatric hospitalization, and a 29% reduction in the use of medical services. This resulted in Medicaid savings of over 7 million dollars in the three years following involuntary addiction treatment for the patient group in this study alone.
- Addiction disproportionately affects our service members and veterans. 1 in 3 Army suicides are related to drug/alcohol abuse. Seventy percent of homeless veterans have a substance use disorder.
- In Washington State in 2011, there were 892 drug overdose deaths and 992 suicide deaths. Substance abuse is the second most highly correlated diagnosis with suicide, second only to depression. Drug overdose deaths and drug-related suicide deaths are preventable. But families currently cannot intervene for their loved ones who are suffering with life-threatening addiction.