

The Historical Need

An important, but often overlooked, request has been made to the State Legislature over the past twelve years. The town of Laughlin again is asking this commission to bring forward financial support to provide a response to the acute mental health challenges facing patients living in the outlying town of Laughlin.

The patients living in Laughlin have been left to self medicate with alcohol, marijuana, and methamphetamine while increasingly becoming threats to themselves and our community. We ask the State's support to enable patients to continue their medication and/or monitoring of that medication.

Laughlin requests that the State join in addressing those suffering mental illness yet left with no intervention, help or treatment of their illness. We in Laughlin agree with Senator Townsend that "...the biggest obstacle to alleviating mental illness is a delivery system in need of direction."

This present situation is forcing our primary care doctors undo frustration in attempting to step up and fill the void. Our community asks for support of the parent unable to cope with their child's behavior resulting from the absence of treatment and the support of adult children attempting to care for their aging parents, this lack of mental health services truly affects our entire community.

Our medical professional's frustration is mirrored by our schools and police, our apartment property managers, the Boys and Girls Club, our courts, the resort properties and service organizations who all share in the commonality of road blocks at every avenue to professional mental health services.

From this encompassing need the Family Resource Coalition has embraced and molded all community stakeholders to bring forward and support a program to bring at least the minimal response to those in need.

In 2000, Hobbs-Ong Associates completed a study showing the state receives from Laughlin net revenues of at least \$35 million annually. At that time, the town had only requested funding from the state for two projects:

- (1) For monies to be spent in California to repair Needles Highway, the major arterial into Laughlin from Southern California and,
- (2) A mental health clinic or services.

(As an aside, a question has arisen about whether the County should consider funding this program instead of the State: the County returns matching funds and services to Laughlin for what the town has generated in revenue. Additionally, mental health services should

EXHIBIT E MentalHealth Document consists of 4 pages.

Entire document provided.

Due to size limitations, pages _____ provided. A copy of the complete document is available through the Research Library (775/684-6827) or e-mail library@lcb.state.nv.us.

Meeting Date 10/21/03

be a responsibility of the state. However, the county is amenable to forward state monies for this following project proposal.)

To date, the Laughlin community has requested very little from the state although millions of dollars generated from the community are utilized annually throughout the rest of the state. **Therefore, in all fairness, we would hope that Laughlin is due some measure of favorable consideration by the Legislature. This request is a relatively small one because the community remains sensitive to the fiscal and economic plight our state is facing. We recognize that insisting upon having a mental health clinic has been financially difficult to grant, as well as possibly fiscally irresponsible.**

While our community is suffering from the spread of addictions such as drugs, alcohol and gambling we suffer from the often mistaken assumption that we are a healthy and wealthy community. Indications that our community is facing many societal challenges include:

- ❖ Increases in the number of people on welfare
- ❖ Falling land values
- ❖ Flat population growth
- ❖ Lower relative salaries for employees
- ❖ More than 51% of Laughlin's families now have an income less than or equal to 80% of the national median - this is a first!
- ❖ A disproportionate percentage of the community is of senior citizen status
- ❖ Greater incidents of child abuse, neglect, and school drop-outs
- ❖ A high percentage of mental illness and acting out within school systems

The Concept

This proposal describes an opportunity for the State to join our town in bringing forward an interim solution for providing acutely needed mental health services to a rural population. Laughlin, Nevada is a community that has demonstrated a determination to help itself. Spearheaded by the Family Resource Coalition, a community-building process has brought together a true collaboration among the community's public, private, and voluntary sectors that is both visionary and unique.

Understanding that the State Division of Mental Health as the primary authority of the mental health systems, we ask to include in the public policy of this state to direct that mental health services be the responsibility of local agencies to the greatest extent possible.

The Family Resource Coalition has considered public, patient, and stakeholder input; ultimate cost-benefits and client care issues to ensure consumer choice and the best use of public money. We ask now that Doctor Brandenburg for the Division's involvement in ensuring the extent to which structural separation of our community mental health center's authority and provider roles are desirable and feasible.

Community stakeholders, realizing that the State's cookie cutter rural mental health clinic to be both expensive and unpalatable to legislative sessions in the past, formulated a community-driven and community-supported model that requires considerably less state participation. Also, the model moves to a self-sustaining operation if Medicaid billing is captured as presently enjoyed by the State Rural Mental Health Clinics.

As A Prototype

In order to receive some level of mental health services in our community, the Family Resource Coalition applied for a grant to the Legacy Foundation for \$35,721. These monies allow the community to have a Nevada Licensed Clinical Social Worker to counsel our clients for 17 weeks (approximately every third week) for this year. The community, however, needs the services of a psychiatrist to prescribe and provide the expertise for medication management. Local physicians are very willing to monitor psychotropic medications with consultation of a psychiatrist, but are appropriately wary about making decisions regarding the appropriate psychotropic prescriptions for any given patient without consultation.

While we believe that a strong case can be made for the State of Nevada providing the services of a complete rural mental health clinic to the residents of Laughlin, the realities of the budget constraints faced by the state make the provision of this level of service unlikely. As previously mentioned, the Laughlin community has a history of being a proactive agent in helping itself.

The present stopgap plan enjoys the full participation of the casino properties in Laughlin. They provide housing for the local social worker when he is in Laughlin during his contracted weeks of service. The town and the Family Resource Center have provided office space for the social worker. They have also assisted in providing clients with transportation to and from their mental health appointments. Therefore, the present scope of work that enjoys the support of the Legacy Foundation really does represent a community's efforts to help itself.

The Budget As Requested

Across the country community mental health centers are financed primarily by state general funds, federal block grants, some local funds, state contracts, and, increasingly, revenues from the Medicaid program. Therefore, we ask that this Commission request of the Interim Finance Committee that an appropriation from the State General Fund to Clark County for the sum of \$100,000 (\$50,000 for 12 months of service) for disbursement to the

Laughlin Family Resource Coalition for the provision of contracted psychiatric and mental health care services to the residents of Laughlin.

The present budget pays the LCSW his per diem, transportation, and provides funding for part-time support staff for client scheduling and billing. The funding being requested will sustain the work that has begun using the “seed money” from the Legacy Foundation, and would also allow the addition of a consulting psychiatrist, as mentioned above.

From the outset, the Legacy Foundation has identified its mission as being one of helping to support innovative responses to community need. The Foundation’s goal is to help in the creation and formation of such community programs, with the ultimate goal of the programs evolving into self-sustaining entities. The Legacy Foundation does not make commitments for permanent ongoing financial support. However, initial discussions for Foundation support of technological advancements do fall within their mission.

The Resulting Pro Forma

By having 12 months of the Divisions support and expertise to test the efficiency and effectiveness of this model, a Pro Forma report can be presented to the legislature regarding use of this model in Laughlin and the pilot program model that could be replicated for other outlying areas in Nevada.

Benefits to the State and the Community

In summary, the funding of the request will support the present scope of services for an additional year period. This support may also help convince the leadership of the Legacy Foundation to continue providing support to the project for a second funding year and securing technological equipment and systems. This time period would hopefully allow for an improvement in the state and community’s financial situation, allowing the creation of a permanent solution to the mental health needs of the Laughlin community.

Having waited many years to have these services, postponing the advent of further assistance will mean that more and more of our citizens will fall through the cracks – allowing for serious mental health conditions to remain unaddressed. The community believes in being proactive – addressing the needs before they produce additional tragic and irreversible results, thus costing large amounts of money in damaged lives, property and community health.