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# APPENDIX F

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## 2005 Select Committee findings and recommendations

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### A. Findings

Based on testimony and information presented to the Select Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, the committee finds:

1. That there is a significant shortage of psychiatric health care providers at the Wyoming State Hospital and throughout the state. The shortage includes psychiatrists and other allied health care providers including advanced practice registered nurses with a psychiatric specialty, physician assistants and primary care physicians who are adequately trained in treating persons with mental health or substance abuse problems.

2. That there is a wide disparity in the mental health and substance abuse service delivery system throughout the state. While some areas of the state have adequate treatment systems, with appropriate staffing at the local community mental health center and hospital, other areas suffer from inadequate resources, facilities and staffing. In particular, the Big Horn Basin is not currently served by any psychiatrist.

3. That, due to a low population base, lack of local funding and other reasons, some community mental health centers have not been able to develop the full array of services or staffing necessary to meet the mental health or substance abuse treatment needs that may occur within their area of responsibility.

4. That psychiatric care, medication management and crisis stabilization are often unavailable in many areas of the state and that such service can reduce the number of persons involuntarily committed to the Wyoming State Hospital under Title 25 of the Wyoming Statutes, if such services were available within a reasonable time.

5. That the Wyoming State Hospital is understaffed and frequently overwhelmed in attempting to accommodate persons committed to the facility under court order. To address the shortage of available beds and staff, the administrator of the State Hospital has frequently entered into contracts with local hospitals in the state that have acute psychiatric care beds and staff trained in providing the acute psychiatric care that will enable to patient to stabilize and return to the community in the shortest amount of time possible.

6. That the Wyoming State Hospital is currently the only facility designated to provide treatment under W.S. 25-10-101 through 25-10-305, despite a requirement since 1989 that the Department of Health, under W.S. 25-10-104(a)(vii), promulgate rules to establish standards for other treatment facilities, designate hospitals meeting those standards to provide treatment under the act, and enter into contracts with those designated treatment hospitals to provide treatment under W.S. 25-10-101 through 25-10-305.

7. That the designation of mental health and substance abuse treatment regions in the state may allow for the formation of partnerships among treatment providers within each region to

develop a broader array of treatment options and services that can be provided within the region, thereby reducing the number of persons who have to be committed to the Wyoming State Hospital and other facilities.

8. That early assessment and treatment is less costly and more effective than crisis response to psychotic episodes. Partnerships such as exist in Natrona County between the school district and the Central Wyoming Counseling Center to conduct assessments of children are effective in identifying and addressing behavioral and emotional problems in children before those problems escalate into unmanageable problems for the school district and parents of children who are seriously emotionally disturbed.

9. That consumer education, training and support agencies, such as UPLIFT, are of significant value to families of persons with mental illness.

10. That there is still a significant stigma attached to persons with mental illness and that the stigma is exacerbated for families who are required to relinquish custody of their child to the state to obtain the mental health services the child may need, but the family can't afford.

11. That many mental illnesses are biologically based, and with appropriate medication and therapy, those illness can be ameliorated to enable the person to lead a more normal and productive life.

12. That the problems of the mental health and substance abuse treatment system are complex and cannot be resolved in the time authorized for the study by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. There is a continuing need to review the system and to find possible solutions to the problems that exist.

## **B. Recommendations**

The Select Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services recommends:

1. That legislation the Select Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services will sponsor during the 2006 Budget Session of the Legislature receive favorable consideration by the standing committee to which the legislation is referred. The legislation will address:

- a. The building and staffing needs of the Wyoming State Hospital;
- b. Possible solutions to improve the relationship with advocacy agencies and the Wyoming State Hospital;
- c. Funding for community mental health and substance abuse centers to improve services to clients and to avoid involuntary commitments to the Wyoming State Hospital, to the extent possible;
- d. Enhancing recruitment for psychiatrists and other psychiatric health care providers, including advanced practice registered nurses with a psychiatric specialty,

and enhancing voluntary training for primary care physicians, mental health workers and allied health care providers to develop systems of care that can provide acute psychiatric care;

e. Authorizing the Department of Health to apply for a Medicaid waiver to enable families with children in need of mental health services to obtain those services without having to relinquish custody to the state;

f. Requiring mental health insurance parity;

g. Authorizing pilot projects to determine the viability of regionalized mental health services;

h. Appropriating funding to the Department of Health to enhance the mental health and substance abuse services in the state.

2. That the Wyoming Legislature enact into law the legislation sponsored by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services during the 2006 Budget Session of the Legislature.

3. That the Legislature authorize the Select Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services to continue its efforts to identify and assess problems with mental health and substance abuse treatment services during the 2006 interim and recommend solutions in the 2007 General Session of the Legislature.

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