

July 7, 2011

Sherburne County
Health & Human Services

Ken Ebel, Director



Special Master Kathleen Blatz
Minnesota Judicial Center, Room 230
25 Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

FILED
Court Administrator

JUL 07 2011

By [Signature] Deputy

Re: State Operated Services staff contracted with Central Minnesota Mental Health Center

Dear Special Master Blatz,

62 CV-11-5203

The CommUNITY Project, a four-county mental health initiative serving individuals in Stearns, Benton, Sherburne and Wright Counties, respectfully requests that you consider granting the State Operated Services staff contracted by Central Minnesota Mental Health Center permission to return to work. The services affected are Assertive Community Treatment Teams, Crisis Beds and Crisis Response Team.

Early rulings authorized continuation of Medicaid payments to providers of the above listed services and the quarterly grant payments to counties to support adult and children's crisis services were deemed critical to life and safety. The state employees under contract to provide these services were not deemed essential. This discrepancy has resulted in the reduction of the very services deemed essential and may have simply been an oversight.

The services affected by the layoff of fourteen state employees include the Four County Crisis Response Team and Great River Assertive Community Treatment teams in St. Cloud and Monticello. This has necessitated a dramatic reduction in capacity to serve as it has reduced available staff by over 50% for crisis services, 50% for ACT in St. Cloud, and 20% for ACT in Monticello.

In addition, it should be noted that the State Operated Services staff providing the above-listed critical services have been working under contract between Central Minnesota Mental Health Center and the State of Minnesota as part of the Mental Health Initiative Redesign since 2004. The contract between Central Minnesota Mental Health Center and State Operated Services provides for 100% reimbursement to the state for the contracted employees in question. The services listed above have been identified by the CommUNITY Project as "priority services" and are required by state statute to serve the serious and persistently mentally ill in our four-county area.

These services are provided in other areas of the state as well through contracts with different agencies. We have reached out to these agencies but have not heard yet whether any of them will be joining us in this petition.

Sincerely,

Mary Jo Cobb, MSW, LICSW
Mental Health Supervisor
Chair, CommUNITY Project