

Regional Advocacy Coalition for the Responsible Continuation of Social Safety Net Services

Bucks Mont Collaborative

We are advocating for an extension of leases of three social safety net programs which are set to end June 30, 2022. These programs provide unique transitional housing and services to 232 of our community members each year.

Here for Us MontCo Advocacy Coalition

HopeWorx, Inc.

These programs are currently on a portion of the grounds of Norristown State Hospital, which is being transferred to Norristown. This transfer was set in motion 5 years ago after the announcement of the closing of the civil section of the Norristown State Hospital. While we agree with the economic aims of the land transfer, promises were made that these critical services would not be removed from the social safety net. As the deadline approaches, we struggle to identify whose responsibility it is to keep those promises, and we need your help.

Montgomery County Community Support Program

NAMI Montgomery County PA

While plans are being made to move people who are currently served by these programs, they are not finalized, and it is unlikely that these plans will be complete by June 30th. We are concerned that vulnerable people will be faced with a gap in service, or multiple moves, and certainly they are already experiencing the anxiety of not knowing for sure what will happen. Given the unique level of care provided, we are also concerned about losing skilled workforce due to the uncertainty of moving these programs, further impacting their ability to be operational after their moves.ⁱ

Pennsylvania Peer Support Coalition

Southeast Region Community Support Program

Western Region Community Support Program

Beyond our concern for the people currently being served by these programs, we are also concerned about the ongoing capacity of our social safety net. For people who might need these services in the future, where will they be served, and will there be enough capacity? While its hopeful that some programs will be moved to new locations, other programs may close and be lost to the safety net, increasing already long waiting lists for services.

Social Safety Net Services Impacted

Two Residential Treatment Facility programs provide recovery, rehabilitation, and education, through rapid stabilization. This diverts individuals from more costly and restrictive inpatient hospitalization.

The third program is Montgomery County's largest homelessness transitional program.

All three of the programs provide needed housing and supports to allow individuals to return to community life. As many as 92 individuals are served at any point in time, and 232 individuals annually.

Inpatient behavioral health providers have contacted NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Health) Montgomery County PA to express concerns about these residential treatment programs closing as they have people that have been waiting over a year to go there and now have no discharge plan. Taking away these beds takes away the possibility of patient discharges from inpatient facilities, which then creates a ripple effect, for example leaving Emergency Departments with patients waiting to receive inpatient mental health care. This same phenomenon happens with other services, where people get stuck in short term places without treatment while waiting for space to open up in treatment facilities.ⁱⁱ

Regardless of whose decision this is, we ask that the lease be extended for 6-12 months to allow programs to be fully operational in the new sites. This is a timeline issue, not a land use issue. Please support this in whatever role you play, and whatever influence you can exert.

ⁱ *People with mental illness to lose home over Norristown land deal.* WITF. (2022, March 2). Retrieved March 2, 2022, from <https://www.witf.org/2022/03/01/people-with-mental-illness-to-lose-home-over-norristown-land-deal/>

ⁱⁱ Whelan, A. (2022, February 28). *The Philly Region has few beds for behavioral health patients - and intense demand.* <https://www.inquirer.com>. Retrieved February 28, 2022, from https://www.inquirer.com/health/hospitals-behavioral-health-beds-inpatient-capacity-pennsylvania-covid-20220227.html#amp_tf=From%20%251%24s&aoh=16460009832714&csi=0&referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com&share=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.inquirer.com%2Fhealth%2Fhospitals-behavioral-health-beds-inpatient-capacity-pennsylvania-covid-20220227.html