

Don't punish the stable

Editor: Regarding county spokesman Mark Hendrickson and his efficiency argument for the Mental Health Department: Does streamlining care for mental health patients include discharging "functional schizophrenics?"

Fourteen years ago, I suffered a severe mental breakdown, was given medication, placed on disability, etc. A few years later, a state appointed psychiatrist classified me as functional (which is true) and I subsequently lost my SSI benefits and (more importantly) my Medicare benefits. The good news was that the department was willing to work with me to provide low-cost treatment to see the doctor and had a system in place for acquiring no-cost medications (the main medication I take runs roughly \$400 a month).

As the department began cost cutting measures recently, it decided 400 or so of us could disappear from the caseload and save them dollars. I work, take my medication regularly, do not abuse drugs or alcohol and am functional. But let me ask you this: Why should I? Had I continued to use drugs, ignored my doctor's recommendations and became non-med compliant, I would be enjoying a monthly check, full insurance benefits and still be a part of their caseload. For 400 or so of us, we will be penalized for being functional.

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