



September 15, 2020

Patrick J. O'Donnell
Clerk of the Legislature
State Capitol, Room 2018
Lincoln, NE 68509-4604

The Honorable Pete Ricketts, Governor
State Capitol, Second Floor
P.O. Box 94848
Lincoln, NE 68509-4848

Re: Notification pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. §71-810 of relocation of Regional Center services

Dear Mr. O'Donnell and Governor Ricketts:

Neb. Rev. Stat. §71-810 requires the Department of Health and Human Services to notify the Governor and the Legislature of reportable changes in Regional Center services. Notice of the intent to relocate the Hastings Juvenile Chemical Dependency Program (HJCDP) to the Whitehall Campus in Lincoln, Nebraska was given to members of the legislature on July 16, 2020. The substance use treatment program provides residential treatment for adolescent males from the ages of 13 to 18 years. The average length of stay is approximately 3-4 months, and utilizes evidenced based practices including motivational interviewing, various cognitive behavioral therapy approaches, contingency management, medication assisted treatment and Brief Strategic Family Therapy.

The Juvenile Chemical Dependency Program currently has eight patients. Whitehall is a psychiatric residential treatment facility licensed and accredited as part of the Lincoln Regional Center. A separate cottage on the Whitehall campus will be designated for the Juvenile Chemical Dependency Program with capacity for eight adolescent males from the ages of 13 to 18 years.

Because the program is being relocated and not discontinued, DHHS will not see an overall reduction in personnel or expenditures.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding this information. A copy of the July 16, 2020 notice is attached for your reference.

Respectfully,

Dannette R. Smith, MSW
Chief Executive Officer
Department of Health and Human Services



July 16, 2020

Dear legislative partners:

This week I announced a transition affecting our residential youth programs, effective October 2020. My team and I are pleased to share the YRTC Initial Transition Plan outlining a number of changes taking place at our youth facilities in the next few months.

As you know, last summer DHHS faced a challenging and dangerous situation at our Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center (YRTC) in Geneva. I made the difficult decision to move the female youth away from Geneva. The majority of the females in the YRTC program have been in programming at our Kearney facility since August 2019. As DHHS stated previously, this was a *temporary* solution to a complex problem. Stakeholders widely agreed that males and females needed to be treated on separate, secure, adequately staffed campuses. The change I announced yesterday achieves that goal.

Key components of the transition include the following:

1. Effective October 2020, **YRTC females will relocate to new facilities on the campus of the Hastings Regional Center.** These new facilities and the staff resources in Hastings are well suited to meet the needs of females committed to DHHS. Low- to moderate-need females will receive a full range of treatment and programming in Hastings. (As needed, high-need females will continue to be treated from the YRTC facility in Lincoln.)
2. Effective October 2020, the **residential program in Geneva will close.** The YRTC program in Geneva has suffered from facility and staffing challenges. Despite our success in establishing a female re-entry program earlier this year, staffing continues to be a challenge. (The DHHS benefits eligibility review positions in Geneva will remain.)
3. The male youth substance youth disorder (**SUD**) **program currently in Hastings will transition to the Whitehall campus in Lincoln.** This program now serves fewer than 10 young men from an outdated building. Moving the males to Lincoln allows the Hastings campus to focus entirely on serving our female youth. It also better utilizes the large Whitehall campus, which currently serves fewer than 10 males in another, separate behavioral health program. (See attachment for more details.)
4. The **Missouri Youth Services Institute will begin a one-year consultative engagement** in August 2020. MYSI will work with our YRTC system to elevate programming, clinical services and educational offerings. Our mutual goal is to transform the YRTC culture and champion a true treatment model for our youth.

The attached Initial Transition Plan offers more details. More comprehensive planning begins immediately to ensure successful implementation of these changes. I look forward to sharing more with you, and engaging with our stakeholders, over the next few months.

Please do not hesitate to contact my office should you have questions or need additional information, 402-471-9433. I can also be reached at dannette.smith@nebraska.gov. Thank you for your commitment to serving Nebraskans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dannette R. Smith".

Dannette R. Smith, MSW
Chief Executive Officer
Department of Health and Human Services