



Virginia Joint Commission  
on Health Care



## Commonwealth's Efforts to Recruit and Retain Psychiatrists

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## Background

- Senator Houck and Delegate Hamilton requested, that as part of its 2008 Workplan, JCHC report on:
  - ▶ the availability of psychiatrists in Virginia, their role in emergency custody orders (ECOs), temporary detention orders (TDOs) and involuntary commitment hearings, and
  - ▶ methods to increase the recruitment and retention of psychiatrists including, but not limited to, the expansion of financial incentives, scholarships and fellowships at the Commonwealth's schools of psychiatry.



## Role of Psychiatrist in Involuntary Civil Commitment Process

- As indicated in our presentation to the BHC Subcommittee in August, psychiatrists play a much bigger role in the involuntary commitment process.
  - ▶ If an individual is committed to outpatient treatment (rather than to an inpatient treatment facility), then psychiatrists play a major role in the treatment plan, than in ECOs and TDOs.
  - ▶ Mandatory Outpatient Treatment (MOT) requires:
    - Ordered treatment must be deliverable on outpatient basis by Community Services Board (CSB) or designated provider
      - ▶ Services must be available in community, and
      - ▶ Providers of services must agree to deliver the services.



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## Shortage of Psychiatrists in Virginia

- As of December 2005, the American Medical Association (AMA) reported:
  - ▶ 1,261 psychiatrists in Virginia, or 2.6 per 10,000 people statewide
  - ▶ 216 child psychiatrists, or 1/10,000.
    - The Psychiatric Association of Virginia estimates this number to be much smaller.
  - ▶ 7 localities accounted for the half of the solo or primary practice psychiatrists:
    - Fairfax County, Henrico County, Albemarle County, City of Richmond, City of Virginia Beach, City of Charlottesville and City of Norfolk
  - ▶ 47 localities did not have any psychiatrists
  - ▶ 87 localities did not have any child psychiatrists.

\*Source JLARC report, "Availability and Cost of Licensed Psychiatric Services in Virginia." Senate Document No. 19 (2007)



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## Effects of Shortage of Psychiatrists

- Shortage affects the availability of services:
  - ▶ “On the inpatient side:
    - additional psychiatric beds cannot be opened unless there are psychiatrists available and willing to staff them.
  - ▶ On the outpatient side:
    - the shortage affects licensed hospitals because individuals in need of services cannot find them in the community and turn to Emergency Departments.”
    - Mandatory Outpatient Treatment (MOT) cannot be utilized unless psychiatrists in the community are available and willing to provide services.
  - ▶ As indicated in the Inspector General’s 2007 report, shortages result in long waits before seeing CSB psychiatrist:
    - On average, an adult would have to wait 24 days to see a psychiatrist and a child would have to wait 30 days.
    - For consumers receiving emergency services, the wait time decreased to 14 days for adults and 16 days for children.

\*Source JLARC report, “Availability and Cost of Licensed Psychiatric Services in Virginia.” Senate Document No. 19 (2007)



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## Causes of Shortage of Psychiatrists

- Reimbursement Issues
  - ▶ Medicaid reimbursement rates are lower than the rates paid by Medicare and private insurance.
- Geographic concerns
  - ▶ Shortage is not consistent statewide – difficulty attracting psychiatrists to rural areas.



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## Efforts to Address the Shortage of Psychiatrists

- Use of other mental health professionals to address unmet need.
- Virginia Department of Health Initiatives
  - ▶ Designation of Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas
  - ▶ J-1 Visa Waiver Program
  - ▶ National Interest Waiver Program
  - ▶ Loan Repayment Programs
- Virginia DMHMRSAS Initiatives
  - ▶ Telepsychiatry
- 4 Child psychiatry fellowships and 4 child psychology internships established
  - ▶ One unfilled internship was eliminated to help address the current budget issues.



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## Internet Address

Visit the Joint Commission on Health Care website:  
<http://jchc.state.va.us>

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