

COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES

POLICY: MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE

Date Drafted: September 25, 2012

Board Adopted:

PURPOSE

County Social Services recommends legislation to replace mental health advocates with case managers or service coordinators.

LEGAL

229.19 Advocates — duties — compensation — state and county liability.

1. *a.* In each county with a population of three hundred thousand or more inhabitants the board of supervisors shall appoint an individual who has demonstrated by prior activities an informed concern for the welfare and rehabilitation of persons with mental illness, and who is not an officer or employee of the department of human services nor of any agency or facility providing care or treatment to persons with mental illness, to act as an advocate representing the interests of patients involuntarily hospitalized by the court, in any matter relating to the patients' hospitalization or treatment under [section 229.14](#) or [229.15](#). In each county with a population of under three hundred thousand inhabitants, the chief judge of the judicial district encompassing the county shall appoint the advocate.

POLICY

The policy is to encourage legislation that replaces the mental health advocate position with court ordered targeted case managers for individuals enrolled in the state medical program and service coordinators for Non-Medicaid individuals involuntarily committed to mental health or substance abuse treatment.

PROCEDURE

County Social Services has identified believes that the region needs an integrated service coordination program for disabled and aging individuals to access assistance. Targeted case managers, service coordinators and option counselors linked and dispersed geographically across the region will ensure effective access and coordination of treatment and support services.

Converting advocates to service coordinators will reduce client confusion and provide greater contact and consistency.

County Social Services

Individuals under civil commitment have several agencies to advocate for their rights:

Disability Rights Ombudsman's Office Dept. of Inspection & Appeals

Court Appointed Attorney

BUDGET

County Social Services spent nearly \$200,000 last year for Mental Health Advocates. Current advocates could be absorbed into service coordination giving us great service capacity with no additional investment.

OUTCOMES

Regions will track all residents under commitment to ensure they get access to the treatment and supports needed.

It will eliminate confusion and duplication of roles.

The service coordinators will have clear job descriptions and accountability to the courts and service system.

Better coordination should produce shorter periods of commitment.