



FINAL REPORT

Subacute Mental Health Care Services Interim Study Committee

Tuesday, January 6, 2026

MEMBERS

Senator Kara Warme, Co-chairperson
Senator Mark Costello
Senator Janet Petersen
Senator Art Staed
Senator Scott Webster

Representative Gary M. Mohr, Co-chairperson
Representative Austin Harris
Representative Craig P. Johnson
Representative Angel Ramirez
Representative Elizabeth Wilson

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Subacute Mental Health Care Services Interim Study Committee

I. Authorization and Appointment

Pursuant to Senate File 659 (2025 Iowa Acts, chapter 159, section 41), the Legislative Council established the Subacute Mental Health Care (SMHC) Services Interim Study Committee to meet during the 2025 legislative interim. The charge was to review, study, and make recommendations related to SMHC services. The study committee was also required to submit a report to the General Assembly.

II. Study Committee Proceedings

The study committee met on January 6, 2026, to review the topics, discuss findings, and make recommendations relating to SMHC services.

III. January 6, 2026, Meeting

A. Presentation by Mary Neubauer

The study committee heard a presentation by Mary Neubauer concerning the story of her son's struggle with finding and receiving SMHC services. Ms. Neubauer stated that her son did not have access to adequate SMHC services in Iowa, so they needed to leave the state to find services that could help. Ms. Neubauer explained how issues relating to SMHC service administration in Iowa and insurance made the process of seeking SMHC services quite frustrating; specifically, that she was told patients need to be discharged from SMHC services after 10 days of care and that receiving payment from insurance took a protracted fight. She also questioned whether her son's outcome would have been different if Iowa had more developed SMHC services.

The committee members asked Ms. Neubauer questions relating to insurance coverage for her son's care and the 10-day limit on SMHC services. Representative Mohr commented on his meeting with local law enforcement to discuss the need to address individuals that appear to be committing crimes after the individuals stop taking medications.



B. Presentations by DIAL and HHS

Representatives from the Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing (DIAL) discussed the 10-day limit to SMHC services that Ms. Neubauer brought up during her presentation. DIAL stated that the perceived 10-day limit does not actually exist, but rather, is a misinterpretation of the Code. SMHC patients are permitted to stay longer than 10 days.

Representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) stated that the framework for SMHC services exists, but SMHC services and beds are not being used as efficiently as they could be, and that a request for information is underway to understand why services and beds are not being used as efficiently as possible. HHS believes that possible reasons include the perceived 10-day limit on SMHC services by SMHC providers, economic issues, and the fact that certain rules for SMHC facilities and staff are more stringent than those of acute care facilities and staff.

The study committee members asked HHS several questions prior to discussing the topics which the study committee was charged to review.

C. Committee Discussion

The study committee discussed the topics the legislative council charged the study committee to review.

- What mental health services should be available at a subacute level of care?
- HHS stated that SMHC services are well-defined in rules and that licensure for services is not a limiting factor.
- What is the most cost-effective structure for delivering SMHC services?
- Representative Mohr remarked that the state should not be focused on cost-effectiveness at this time, and should instead focus on what the ideal SMHC system should look like.
- What mental health care providers could best provide SMHC services?



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- Representative Mohr inquired if Iowa has adequate training available to prepare people in the numbers Iowa needs to have effective SMHC services. Senator Warme suggested that allowing Iowa State University and other universities to duplicate training available at the University of Iowa may help remedy the issue.
- What should be the requirements for committing an individual for SMHC services or to an SMHC facility?
- The study committee appeared to be in agreement that it was too early to determine what requirements, if any, could help alleviate SMHC usage issues. HHS believed that commitment requirements were not a limiting factor in SMHC usage.
- What changes to current commitment processes are necessary to allow SMHC commitments?
- The study committee believed this question could not be answered at this time as the study committee could not make a determination of what SMHC commitment requirements would be proper.
- What should be the requirements for an individual's discharge from an SMHC facility or from SMHC services?
- The study committee believed it was not proper to address this question at this time.

The discussion ended with remarks from Representative Mohr and Representative Warme. Representative Mohr stated the study committee did not have a clear path today, but the committee was a necessary first step to move the issue of developing SMHC services forward during session. Senator Warme stated she believes the state should look into raising reimbursement rates for SMHC services and removing regulatory barriers. Senator Warme further stated she will work with HHS and DIAL to find possible solutions for improving SMHC services.

The committee adjourned without a formal vote on recommendations to the general assembly.



IV. Materials Filed With the Legislative Services Agency

Materials were distributed at or in connection with the meeting and are filed with the Legislative Services Agency. The materials may be accessed from the “Committee Documents” link on the study committee’s internet site accessible at the following address:

www.legis.iowa.gov/committees/meetings/documents?committee=42785&ga=ALL

1. Adopted Rules
2. Subacute Mental Health Care Services Interim Committee Background 2025