
LEGAL UPDATE

Legal Services Division



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SUBACUTE MENTAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES INTERIM STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING — JANUARY 6, 2026

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Co-Chairpersons: Senator Kara Warne; Representative Gary M. Mohr

Overview. The Legislative Council approved the appointment of a Subacute Mental Health Care (SMHC) Services Interim Study Committee during the 2025-2026 legislative interim. The study committee included 10 voting members who were required to review the following topics: the mental health services that should be available at a subacute level; the most effective structure for delivering SMHC services; the mental health providers that could best provide SMHC services; the requirements for committing an individual for SMHC services or to an SMHC facility; the Iowa Code changes necessary to allow SMHC commitments; and the requirements to discharge a person from SMHC services or from an SMHC facility.

Meeting. The study committee heard from Mary Neubauer as a guest speaker and listened to Ms. Neubauer's story of how her family navigated Iowa's lack of SMHC when trying to find help for her son, and Ms. Neubauer's suggestions to improve SMHC services in this state. The study committee then heard a brief overview from representatives of the Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing (DIAL) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) about the departments' roles in providing SMHC services. After the study committee had the opportunity to ask the representatives from DIAL and HHS questions, the study committee next discussed the ways to improve SMHC in the state.

The study committee identified three possible ways to improve SMHC in the State: revise the Iowa Code to clarify that state law does not require SMHC providers to discharge patients after 10 days; remove the 15-bed limit for SMHC facilities; and revise the Iowa Code so that the requirements to employ an individual at an SMHC facility are no more stringent than the requirements to employ an individual at a hospital that provides acute mental health care. The study committee adjourned without voting on findings and recommendations.

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