

December 15, 2017

To the Directors of DHS, IME, and the Health Policy Oversight Committee members:

I am writing to you as a family member of persons who have experienced serious mental illnesses. I have also worked in the field of human services for nearly 30 years, currently as a referral coordinator. I am gravely concerned about what is happening right now in the State of Iowa regarding the treatment of persons with mental illness. As a referral coordinator I receive calls from persons needing services from all over.

These referrals come from family members, agencies, clinics/hospitals, schools, homeless shelters, Department of Corrections, DHS, MCOs, substance use treatment centers, and concerned community members. These referrals are for people who are needing and are eligible to receive support for accessing services and community resources.

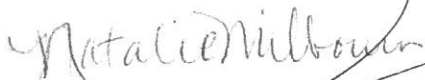
Today, my imminent concerns are regarding the potential changes to the integrity and structure of the Integrated Health Homes (IHH), a Medicaid funded program. These changes will have a profound impact on the lives of members that receive this service. Based on Iowa Code, IHHs were set up in 2013 with the intent that an individual on Iowa Medicaid with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) or Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED) is eligible. The reason for the development of IHH was to support those individuals and impact the change in life expectancy (nationally individuals with SMI/SED die 25 years younger than those without, due to poor participation and compliance with their chronic healthcare issues).

From the Iowa Association of Counties, I am relaying these imminent issues:

United Healthcare has communicated to the IHHs that only those Medicaid members that involved in Habilitation, Children's Mental Health (CMH) waiver or Behavioral Health Intervention Service (BHIS) will be eligible for IHH effective December 1. They verbally communicated that information to IHHs on December 7. This is a change in the State's definition of eligibility, a change in the fundamental structure and rate methodology, and a change in United's own practice. United's announcement fundamentally changes the structure and integrity of the program and those served by the MCOs. Furthermore, there has been no formal communication, and it is presumably been back-dated. Clients have NOT been notified of this change and are expected to rely upon an Accountable Care Organization and their Primary Care Provider to now coordinate their care. These entities have neither received notification of this change nor are equipped to provide this level of support.

I ask that you take time to consider the impact of these decisions to persons with mental illness. Thank you for your time and attention to these important issues.

Respectfully submitted,



Natalie Milbourn