

Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute (PPI) is located in Harrisburg, PA and provides a wide range of high-quality behavioral health services including acute inpatient care, partial hospitalization programs, outpatient programs, and an opioid treatment program. PPI is dedicated to providing clinical excellence, diverse education, research, and community collaboration in a manner that evolves to meet the changing behavioral health care needs of the region.

My name is Kim Feeman. I have worked in the healthcare industry in South Central Pennsylvania for thirty-two years. Currently, I am the Interim Chief Executive Officer at Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute (PPI). PPI has been invited by the Mental Health Commission to make recommendations addressing barriers to care for mental health services at PPI. Today I will be sharing with you three areas at PPI which can be enhanced with your support.

- I. Maximizing PPI's Current Inpatient and Outpatient Capacity
- II. Expanding PPI Services
- III. Investing in PPI Infrastructure

Implications will be provided which may include workforce, financial, regulatory, or clinical discussions.

Maximizing PPI's Current Inpatient and Outpatient Capacity Access to services at PPI has decreased over the past two years. There are three main reasons.

1. **Workforce:** Workforce challenges are the main reason for limited access to current PPI services. In our last fiscal year, Workforce challenges are the main reason for limited access to current PPI services. In our last fiscal year, we spent \$1,422,000 on wage adjustments, retention bonuses, and shift bonuses. In the current fiscal year, we have already invested \$828,000 in salary adjustments. We are at an all-time high for turnover. More so than ever, there are outside opportunities for employees. Previously, healthcare organizations competed against each other for human resources. Now we are competing with all industries. We have lost employees to companies like Fed Ex, Amazon, and other Retailers.

Financial assistance is needed in order for PPI to have the staffing to meet our current system requirements.

Funding would be used for recruitment of new staff such as:

Sign On Bonuses
Recruitment Firm Fees
Temporary Workforce

Funding would also be used for the retention of current employees including:

Retention Bonuses
Tuition Loan Forgiveness Programs
Payment for Educational Achievements and Advancements such as Certification

2. **Patient Acuity:** Acuity for patients has increased which leads to a need for more 1:1 staffing and turnover. The acuity is extremely high and negatively impacts the staff. We have had an increase of patient assaults on staff. Most recently, a physician was attacked and had to go the

ED, the ear of a nurse was bitten and required stitches, the shoulder and jaw of a social worker were broken and required surgery.

Reimbursement from payors is needed to cover the additional costs of providing a staffing ratio of 1 patient to 1 staff member (known as a 1:1).

Access to state or forensic hospitals is extremely limited. Also, a patient may not have any pending charges in order to be placed. Other placement issues can be extremely difficult for highly acute patients.

High acuity can lead to physical plant damage including wall, furniture, and fixture damage. It can also lead to more extensive damage such as flooding.

Panic Buttons

Security (Metal Detectors)

Room Alarms tied to ID Badges

3. Patient Disposition: Throughput is challenging when there is nowhere to discharge patients. Patients are often with us even if they no longer need acute inpatient care. Many patients have been with us for months.

Expanding PPI Services such as additional Inpatient Beds, Outpatient Services, and Walk-In Care Once current services are maximized, expansion can be explored. There are various factors which would impact the ability to expand.

1. Workforce: The challenges of the workforce was discussed earlier, however, expansion cannot occur unless the workforce challenges discussed earlier are met.
2. Reimbursement: Reimbursement for services needs to cover the ongoing cost of services.
3. Space: We have limited space for expansion and/or renovations.

Investment in PPI Infrastructure PPI is located in the Polyclinic Medical Center which is approximately 75 years old.

1. Physical Plant: Renovations usually require asbestos abatement which is an unwelcome expense. A more welcoming environment is also important for our patients.
2. Safety: Safety is a basic need for the workforce and patients. There are many safety upgrades that could be made to not only the physical plant but to technology, telephone systems, internal communication devices, and patient monitoring systems.

While these areas only address PPI directly, there are other areas which are worth mentioning which affect the industry as a whole.

1. Telehealth: Telehealth has a positive impact on patient care. During COVID, we saw a decrease in missed appointments. With telehealth, issues such as childcare and transportation are mitigated. However we also had employees leave for telehealth companies who could pay more and provide more flexible schedules. Also, I do not believe that all insurance companies provide coverage for telehealth. Additionally, we do not

receive the technical reimbursement for telehealth although we still have the fixed overhead. Perhaps telehealth and other mental services should be mandated coverage as is for birth control and mammograms.

2. Prison System: The prison system is in need of enhanced psychiatric staffing, better psychopharm formularies, and updated psychiatric care approaches (i.e. solitary confinement).
3. Insurance Reform: There should be equal coverage of mental and physical health as well coverage for patients without insurance.
4. Legislation: Allowances for alternative models which allow space and flexibility for bed usage.
5. Integration of Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Medical Records (HIPAA, 42 CFR Drug and Alcohol records).

As I mentioned, I have worked in the healthcare industry for a long time. Over the years, I have learned that mental health is at the core of many issues including physical, domestic, violence, education to name a few. The trauma that some people have endured is horrific. Until we get people the mental health they need, we will continue to suffer as a society.

During my first week at PPI four years ago, something happened that made me realize I was in the right place. I was walking down the hallway and passed a nicely dressed gentleman with a steady stride. I felt him stop and I turned around to ask him if he needed help. He looked at me and started crying. He said, yes, I do. I told him he was in the right place and took him to the Admissions department to assist him. I walked back to my office thinking thank goodness PPI was here for him.

Thank you for allowing PPI to address the Commission and share our challenges, ideas, and stories.