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SHERIFF OF HAMPDEN COUNTY
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February 11, 2025

Honorable Aaron Michlewitz
Chair, House Committee on Ways and Means
24 Beacon Street, Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

Honorable Michael Rodrigues
Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means
24 Beacon Street, Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairman Michlewitz and Chairman Rodrigues,

I am writing this letter in accordance with Chapter 28, line item 8910-1010, of the Acts of 2023, which directs me to prepare a report on the operations of a Regional Evaluation and Stabilization Unit (ESU) located inside the Hampden County Correctional Center (HCCC), and the Western Massachusetts Regional Women's Correctional Center (WMRWCC) Evaluation and Stabilization Units (ESU). These units are designed to serve mentally unstable inmates of the counties of Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire, and Worcester.

The ESU's in Hampden and Middlesex counties are regional facilities for all Sheriff's Departments to utilize. The ESU is a short term program (up to 14 days), designed to stabilize justice involved individuals in psychiatric crisis due to mental health or environmental stressors, in need of medication stabilization, increased support, or close observation to assist in managing the offender at the correctional facility and to decrease the commitments to the state psychiatric hospital. Hampden County and Middlesex County mental health services currently utilize standard definitions from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders and common criteria for ESU admission and discharge. Mental health service providers from Hampden, Middlesex, and the other counties continue to meet quarterly to collaborate on mental health services provided at the county correctional facilities.

The correctional system continues to see an increase in severity and chronicity of mental health issues in individuals detained or sentenced in the correctional institutions. Many offenders enter the correctional system destabilized due to chronic mental health symptoms, off psychotropic medication, detoxing, or situational issues. Most mental health emergencies are generated in the early part of an offender's incarceration, but some are due to ongoing chronic mental health issues that are difficult to stabilize. The Mental Health Services at HCCC and WMRWCC manage and treat individuals with chronic mental health issues with a coordinated effort between correctional and mental health staff. The mental health clinician assesses an offender's mental status and level of risk, and determines what crisis intervention or treatment/care is needed. The goal of the mental health service is to stabilize the offender to function in population, decrease psychiatric commitments, to participate in treatment/programming, maintain stabilization prior to their return to the community, and ultimately to increase public safety.

Continued increase in the use of the ESU is significant for a low number of 18A psychiatric commitments to state hospitals from the HCCC. HCCC had 6 commitments and WMRWCC had 7 commitments in fiscal year 2024. The ESU continues to have a significant impact on the state by alleviating the caseload of incarcerated offenders at the psychiatric state facilities; producing cost savings (see statistical report for details of cost savings.)

Mental health service providers in the other county correctional facilities (Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire, and Worcester) can directly refer male offenders to the HCCC ESU by calling the HCCC Mental Health Director or Clinical Supervisor to arrange for the transfer. When an ESU out-of-county offender is stabilized, the Mental Health Director or Clinical Supervisor connects with the mental health service provider at the referring facility to make recommendations and review the mental health plan, and the offender is returned to the original county and mainstreamed back into general population.

In addressing the deficiencies of mental health services (Section (E) of Chapter 38 8910-1010) for incarcerated women, the in-patient Evaluation Stabilization Program/Unit, located within a secure treatment housing unit at the WMRWCC, serves those who are either at imminent risk of harm to self or others, in psychiatric crisis, or are at-risk of clinical decompensation. The goals of the ESU program are inmate safety, stabilization, and re-integration to general population, all contributing to avoiding inmate 18A hospitalizations. The scope of ESU services includes daily observation, evaluation/risk assessment, and staff consultation. In house respites were incorporated in each of the general population living units, to assist and support the women within those units who are in need of increased support due to mental health or situational/ adjustment issues.

HCCC and WMRWCC mental health services provide ongoing mental health treatment for offenders in the ESU or in general population. These mental health services and treatments include referral and assessment for ESU admission, respite, diagnostic evaluation, risk assessment, medication clinic and referrals, symptom and medication monitoring/management, ongoing support, follow up support/treatment post discharge from the ESU, and collaboration with community providers to assist with transitioning back into the community. Identification, referral, treatment, and ongoing monitoring play critical roles in preventing suicide as well as decreasing the commitments to the state psychiatric hospital. Mental health services provided at the HCCC and WMRWCC have decreased the risk of injury to correctional staff and offenders and help to maintain and achieve state standards for mental health care for offenders and enhance public safety.

Hampden County Sheriff's Office- Main Institution

FY2024 Evaluation and Stabilization Unit Statistics

ESU Admits	354
ESU Admit DMH	74
Total Admits	428
ESU Respite	34
ESU DMH Respites	7
Total Respites	41
Amount of Bed Days	2145
Minimum Days	1
Maximum Days	30
Average Stay	5.5
18a Transfers	6
Referral by County	
Hampden	408
Middlesex	1
Berkshire	2
Franklin	14
Worcester	2
Essex	0
Norfolk	1
Hampshire	0
Total Out of County	20

Reason for Admission	
Psychosis	112
Suicidal Ideation/Plan/Intent	89
Homicidal Ideation/Plan/Intent	9
Medication Evaluation	132
Hospital Returnees	62
Mood Instability/Depression	122
Decompensated	80
Substance Induced Symptoms	28

**Hampden County Sheriff's Office- Western Massachusetts Regional Women's Correctional Facility
FY2024 Evaluation and Stabilization Statistics**

ESU Admits	187
ESU Admit DMH	47
Total Admits	234
ESU Respite	14
ESU DMH Respite s	1
Total Respites	15
Amount of Bed Days	1150
Minimum Days	1
Maximum Days	18
Average Stay	4.9
18a Transfers	7
Referral by County	
Hampden	88
Middlesex	0
Berkshire	27
Franklin	5
Worcester	11
Essex	0
Norfolk	0
Hampshire	13
Barnstable	0
Total Out of County	56

Reason for Admission	
Psychosis	58
Suicidal Ideation/Plan/Intent	67
Homicidal Ideation/Plan/Intent	6
Medication Evaluation	19
Hospital Returnees	31
Mood Instability/Depression	10
Decompensated	39
Substance Induced Symptoms	0

Sincerely,



Nicholas Cocchi
Sheriff