

General Distribution Email Sent April 2, 2010

Dear Friends of the Oregon State Hospital,

I want to update you on two important developments at the Oregon State Hospital.

The first is that Superintendent Roy Orr has resigned from the hospital. His resignation is effective April 16, 2010. Effective today Nena Strickland, current deputy superintendent, will be the interim superintendent.

Superintendent Orr has been at the state hospital since February of 2008. During that time there have been marked improvements and modernizations at the state hospital. Chief among those are the improvements between staff and managers, and bringing more transparency and accountability to the work we do to care for patients. Other improvements include new policies that reduced seclusion and restraint of patients in the hospital, improvements in security practices and relations with law enforcement, the hiring of a chief medical officer and chief of nursing, and eliminating a chronic nursing staffing shortage. Other improvements include opening the patient cottages on hospital grounds and launching the electronic health records project to bring the hospital into the modern era.

This transition will mean no interruption in care or in improvement progress at the hospital, and the contributions of all OSH staff to that effort remain critical to our success. I have full faith in Nena Strickland to keep the momentum going and provide strong leadership over the next several weeks; I appreciate her willingness to step into this new role. Meanwhile, the Department of Human Services / Oregon Health Authority will immediately launch an aggressive national search for a new superintendent for the state hospital.

The second piece of news is about the completion of an Office of Investigations and Training (OIT) investigation into the death of a patient at the Salem state hospital.

As you know, OIT has been conducting an investigation into the death of a patient last October at the Salem state hospital. That investigation is final and is being released today.

The original scope of the investigation was regarding the events of the day the patient died, however OIT expanded the investigation to include the totality of the patient's care because, as the report states, "serious and significant concerns were identified regarding the overall care and treatment provided for the chronic medical conditions that ultimately resulted in death."

After five months and interviews with 39 witnesses connected to this case, the report concluded that while it was inconclusive as to whether the patient was neglected on the day of his death, his overall care was negligent and the state hospital failed to provide adequate care and treatment. We agree with the findings of the OIT investigation.

This patient's death was a terrible tragedy that cannot be repeated. OSH either has made or will make all of the recommended actions and changes from the investigation, and will report back within the required timelines as those actions are completed.

I have attached the report, which is the same that I gave to the family of our patient earlier

today, with protected health information redacted. Also attached are the state hospital response, commitment to making all the recommended improvements and a public statement that hasn't been released yet. All this news is being released publicly later this afternoon, and I wanted you to have it before it hits the press.

Many of the findings of this report are troubling and they may be disturbing to read. But they also paint, I believe, an honest picture of the work ahead of us. We must renew our commitment and the seriousness with which we take responsibility to care for patients at the state hospital. We must be rigorous and swift in our improvements and we must not rest until the hospital is a refuge of safety and recovery. It's time for the next step forward to create a culture of care and excellence at the Oregon State Hospital.

Our patients deserve nothing less.

To assist with swift improvements in care, the state hospital will hire a compliance officer to ensure that all policies and procedures for patient care and safety are followed, and that staff has the training and understanding to implement those policies. We will also bring in expertise from outside the hospital to help speed the culture change we have all been working for over the past two years.

With the new Salem state hospital beginning to house patients next year, now is the time to move more aggressively toward achieving a culture of excellent patient care. We have to build a new hospital inside and out. Culture change means modernizing treatments, care and attitudes about our patients. To do that we will have both the expectation of excellence and the tools to help staff do it.

Richard Harris, head of the Addictions and Mental Health Division, and I will keep you apprised on the recruitment of a new superintendent and the status of response to the OIT recommendations. And I also want affirm to you our commitment to doing whatever it takes so Oregon State Hospital is a place of safety, recovery, transparency and accountability.

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