

September 28, 2021

Superintendent Dolly Matteucci
Oregon State Hospital
2600 Center Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Concerning Reports from an OSH staff member

Dear Superintendent Matteucci,

It has come to the attention of the Oregon State Hospital Advisory Board through good faith reporting, some concerning incidents and practices have occurred at the hospital. These reports also highlight safety concerns and fear of retaliation from staff for voicing and reporting these concerns. These reports are especially troubling because we are at a critical juncture in this country's history. Endemic racism and transphobia are no longer swept aside to be dealt with later or forgotten entirely. I believe we need to set a higher bar and expectation for our institutions and the people we charge with caring for our most vulnerable citizens here in Oregon.

First-hand accounts relayed to the Board:

"There was a black man who was moved to his own entire unit due to his violent history. He was placed on what had been a Covid unit that had no current patients. When there was a need to utilize this unit for Covid patients, they were placed in one hall and him on the other. They split the staff and this client was continuously exposed to Covid. Email reports of the concerns were not responded to. He was also denied care in the eye clinic initially due to the doctor being afraid, even though he would be accompanied by a nurse and two security guards. Throughout this, staff and the clients were put into dangerous situations. I feel as though my ethics were put in jeopardy and was genuinely concerned about my licensure in being asked to do things I deemed as illegal"

"A transgender male to female, who has had no violent issues for 3 years and was placed in a max security, ALL male unit because she wouldn't take her meds. She has struggled badly since this and has decompensated due to the strain of it. In my opinion this is unsafe and abusive. She identifies as a female and they are putting her at risk by placing her in an ALL-male unit as well as not honoring her identity. She has since had to be restrained multiple times and is assaulting people again. How could she not as she is in an unsafe and caustic environment?"

"A black woman walked into the unit one day, she was a traveling nurse, she had more education and training than everyone there and someone literally said (Oh well, I didn't think you were an RN, we see your kind around here all the time and they aren't actually nurses). This was reported to Ethics, HR and Minority development and nothing was done. The only response given was an email stating (Do you know what can of worms you're opening?)."

Again, these are first-hand accounts witnessed by a staff member. We are honoring her wishes to remain anonymous, but as you can see, these are extremely concerning. We want to address these in a multitude of ways. First and foremost, there needs to be a more substantial commitment to education and implementation of Diversity Equity Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) Initiatives. We are requesting to be kept apprised of improvements and implementation of said initiatives during our bi-monthly meetings.

Safety is paramount to the success of not only the patients but the staff of the OSH. When there are reports of clients being put into unsafe situations, whether related to Covid exposure or to their physical safety on a unit, and staff feels that their reports are not taken seriously, it is distressing. We recommend a review of policy 7.008, Section 7: Patient Rights, Subject: Patient Abuse or Mistreatment Allegation Reporting. Referencing Section II, A of the policy, "Every patient at OSH deserves safe, respectful and dignified treatment. To that end, all staff must conduct themselves in such manner that protects patients from abuse". Part of that protection is the ability of staff to report these incidents without fear of reprisal and with the understanding that they will be investigated promptly and thoroughly.

Board members are requesting a response to the following questions:

*What is the timeline for a response to allegations?

*Who is responsible for follow-up and ensuring that necessary changes are made?

We ask that you take these statements with the same gravity and seriousness that we, as members of the Oregon State Hospital Advisory Board, have and work towards a resolution that moves the hospital forward in a positive manner. Thank you in advance for your careful consideration of these matters. Board members welcome any questions you may have for us.

Sincerely,

Members of the Oregon State Hospital Advisory Board

Cc : Oregon Senator Peter Courtney
Oregon Senator Kate Lieber
Oregon Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward
Oregon Senator Deb Patterson
Oregon Senator Sara Gelser
Oregon Senator Ron Wyden
Oregon Representative Rob Nosse
Oregon Representative Tawna Sanchez
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