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Contact: Colleen Miller
disAbility Law Center of Virginia
(804) 225-2042

Treatment Failure at Eastern State Hospital

People with mental illness at Eastern State Hospital in Williamsburg are harmed by unnecessary restraint and seclusion, according to a report released today by the disAbility Law Center of Virginia (dLCV). The report, *Treatment Failure: The State of Services at Eastern State Hospital*, urges the Commonwealth to comply with nationally accepted standards of care and to live up to its own commitment to reduce reliance on restraints in place of effective treatment.

The Commonwealth's Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services has pledged to reduce and eliminate seclusion and restraint in its psychiatric facilities. However, Eastern State Hospital routinely subjects people committed to its care to dangerous physical, mechanical, and pharmacological restraints and seclusion, the study revealed. These interventions are unsafe and unnecessarily traumatizing for both consumers and staff. According to the dLCV report, the practices are regarded as treatment failures by national experts.

The report describes the facility's inconsistent implementation of appropriate care across patient care units at the hospital. ESH has integrated some successful treatment approaches in a small pilot program on site. People served in this pilot program are safer and have better long-term outcomes. The vast majority of ESH patients, however, are hospitalized longer than necessary, at substantial cost to the Commonwealth, have higher restraint rates, and greater incidents of peer-to-peer aggression. ESH staff, likewise, have a high rate of injury at ESH, except for the pilot program, where more appropriate care is found

"It seems clear that Eastern State Hospital knows how to deliver appropriate care," said Colleen Miller, the Executive Director of the dLCV, "but for whatever reason, they simply do not do so throughout most of the hospital. That is a shameful truth."

The disAbility Law Center of Virginia is a nonprofit organization that serves as the state's designated protection and advocacy system. dLCV's mission is to fight abuse and neglect and to encourage that people with disabilities have choice, independence, and inclusion in all aspects of life.

To read the full report, visit www.dlc.org

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