SALUTE HOMECARE℠

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TESTIMONY

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Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing
February 27, 2015

PUBLIC HEARING REGRDING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

OPPOSE: RESTRUCTURE RATES TO ACHIEVE MEDICATION ADMINSTRATION SAVINGS, FUNDING TO HOME HEALTH AGENCIES

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and honorable members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Tiffany Kinion, Operations Manager, Salute Homecare LLC. I have 10 years of nursing experience, with a concentration in the behavioral health sector. Prior to becoming the Director of Operations, I was a field nurse for seven years. I have been in the trenches of home care, servicing some of the most fragile and vulnerable clients with mental illness in a large urban setting.

Salute Homecare is an agency that services one of the larger urban areas in Connecticut. We service a population of fragile behavioral health clients. The recent proposed budget cuts regarding medication administration visits will pose an imminent danger to our clients, staff, and the community. The term "Medication administration" refers to a rate structure set up by the Dept of Social Services. It is not the essence of our highly specialized care of those with mental illness living in the community. Behavior health services including medication administration have kept many clients out of institutions (group homes, hospitals, prisons, etc.).

Salute has made large efforts to delegate appropriate clients towards home health aide medication administration. However, the current acuity of much of our client population NEEDS the clinical skills and expertise of a nurse to ensure safety and to be able to redirect, teach, and identify areas of concern that the physician needs to be aware of in an effort to prevent decompensation of the client.

The reality is that we have had many situations occur during medication administration visits that, without the knowledge and skill set of our nurses, may have had tragic results.

- A recent article in a local newspaper named the top five most dangerous sex offenders that are not compliant with their probation/parole requirements – One of our clients was number one on the list
- This same client had attempted to lure our nurse into an abandoned building just a month prior during a medication administration visit. The nurse failed to succumb to the clients many reasons why the site of the visit had to be changed (based on her training and experience)
- A nurse, while doing a routine med admin visit, sensed something was not right in a home and left. The next morning's headline was about an armed robbery with hostages that had taken place at the home. The nurse escaped danger by being aware and assessing her situation within seconds of arrival
- Nurse walks into home and senses that something is wrong when the client will not make eye contact and is unable to recall the nurse's name (after being able to do so for several months prior). The nurse calls 911 and prevents client from carrying out a planned suicide that day
- The nurses' immediate evaluation of the need to perform mouth checks when walking into a visit and seeing that a paranoid schizophrenic client is decompensating, knowing that they will often become non-compliant with meds during an exacerbation

What would have happened if the nurse was not there……?

This is not a plea for bleeding hearts, rather an honest look at the people who will be directly impacted by the proposed budget cuts. Our clients have significant psychological diseases, often paired with polysubstance abuse (from years of trying to self-treat their psychological issues) and medical issues. The support from the behavioral health nurses to ensure that they are compliant with their treatment plans is a cost saving effort to avoid future, more intensive treatments and/or placements. I am sure that we all can agree that there is population that needs a service. Currently, since the majority of these individuals are funded through Medicaid, I would think the dollars would be better spent keeping them in the community, not in an institution. As medical professionals, proper care is our number one goal.

We welcome any member of the legislature to come out and see firsthand what client's we service and how important a role medication administration from a nurse has been in their recovery.

Please avoid rate cuts to this fragile psychiatric population.