



To: Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly

Hearing: Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) Budget

Date: Friday, March 6, 2015 at 4:30 PM in ROOM 2C of the LOB, 300 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT.

**WHY PRESERVE DMHAS FUNDING
AND SAVE THE GATEKEEPER PROGRAM BUDGET LINE ITEM?**

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT THE GATEKEEPERS STATEWIDE PROGRAM?

- Since 2010, Gatekeeper has been the “ultimate” diversion program for avoiding premature or unnecessary hospitalizations and/or institutionalization by identifying CT senior resident (age 60+) in need of medical, social or mental health services;
- Gatekeeper regional staff is mobile, quick to respond and provide thorough follow-up in order to mitigate and stabilize high risk situations;
- Gatekeepers regional staff is “specialized” staff in the aging and mental health services arenas;
- Gatekeepers regional programs are a FREE “connection service” and have the capacity to provide the needed and available resources to successfully link older adults to the necessary programs and services they need to thrive in the community;
- Gatekeeper is so much more than just an information & referral program in that to the extent possible and permitted by clients, we can provide “hands-on” assistance with benefits application processes;
- Statewide, Gatekeeper is a confidential, low cost, low tech and low bureaucratic assessment and advocacy program that fills a particular gap in CT’s spectrum of aging & mental health services;
- Without Gatekeeper, the State system will be overburdened with more at-risk client referrals that, if unable to respond in a timely manner and provide the necessary “hands-on” follow up, will very likely end up further overburdening hospital emergency rooms and local emergency response professionals.
- Since 2011 the Gatekeeper Program has received 665 referrals statewide, with 203 just in 2014 as our program continues to build momentum in the community;
- Of the 665 Gatekeeper referrals, the most at-risk older adult clients were in turn referred to Protective Services for the Elderly (9.3%) and the CT Home Care Program for Elders (17.6%).

We therefore ask that DMHAS funding levels be retained as much as possible and, in particular, that Gatekeeper, as a most important and necessary community front-line program, is saved as a DMHAS budget line item. Otherwise, again, many of the older adults referred to us will end up overtaxing emergency rooms and face unnecessary or premature institutionalization at a far higher cost to Connecticut’s taxpayers.

In addition, jobs will definitely be lost by DMHAS Gatekeeper Program subcontractors who include CRT Senior Services of Hartford, United Services of CT, St. Luke’s Community Services and the Mental Health Association of CT.

Thank you for your consideration,

Eric S. Rodko, LMSW, Executive Director
St. Luke’s Community Services, Gatekeeper Program

www.gatekeeperct.net

*St. Luke’s Community Services is a 501c3 Charitable Organization established in 1865
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