



**JUNEAU COUNTY**  
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Respectfully submitted to the Special Committee on Legal Interventions for Persons with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias.

It is a statutory responsibility as County Departments of Human Services to intervene in emergency/crisis involving either Chapter 51 Emergency Detention and/or Chapter 55 Emergency Protective Placements.

The Supreme Court decision to no longer allow Chapter 51 Emergency Detentions to be used for persons with dementia or Alzheimer's disease has created some challenges for counties.

I have discussed this issue at length with other county Human Service directors, crisis staff, nursing home administrators, the Juneau County Corporation Council, and Adult Services Social Workers, along with Dr. Terrence Norton, a psychiatrist who specializes in working with geriatric patients at Southwest Health Center in Platteville, Wisconsin. In all of these discussions there was a constant theme, no one wants persons with dementia or Alzheimer's placed long term in a psychiatric inpatient units. All agreed that someone with a diagnosis of Alzheimer's or dementia should not, during emergency or crisis, be placed in a community based group home or family home. To my knowledge most of these facilities do not have medical, or even nursing, immediately available. According to Dr. Norton, "these patients need 24-hour nursing care during these emergent/crisis times." He goes on to say that they need staff that are skilled in managing problematic behaviors and medical staff who can evaluate the person's physical status as well.

This is a complex issue and yet, I've tried to provide a simple answer to what we all know is a growing problem.

At present, Chapter 55 does not allow authorized county staff to place someone in a specialized geriatric psychiatric unit for acute care. Chapter 55 does allow placement at nursing homes, yet most do not have the staff or geriatric psychiatry available to be effective with the person in crisis. Southwest Health Care Center is a small geriatric psychiatric unit located in Platteville, Wisconsin that specializes in caring for the elderly with a high percentage of their patients having dementia or Alzheimer's. My experience with Dr. Terrance Norton and his staff has been excellent. If Chapter 55 would allow individuals to be placed in a specialized geriatric psych unit for acute care only, we would be able to use these types of resources to deal with the emergent crisis situation for these people. There are nursing homes who I believe could replicate the Southwest Health Care Center program. I know that there are nursing homes out there who are interested in doing this but they need adequate funding and certification to proceed.

I would encourage this committee to look at developing more programs similar to Southwest Health Care Center and find funding for nursing homes and/or hospitals to develop acute care for persons with Alzheimer's and dementia.

In most cases once a person is treated in acute care they can return to their previous living situation in a short period of time. For the long term needs of this population, I would suggest looking to develop more specialized Adult Family Homes. Ideally two to four facilities where staff have the training and skills to provide individualized care for these people.

I have witnessed very challenging behaviors due to dementia and/or Alzheimer's effectively managed in a Family Home atmosphere with trained and supported staff. I would recommend the committee to look to develop more of these homes for this population.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my input to this very important issue.

Sincerely,



Scott Ethun  
Director