

Illinois Mental Health Planning and Advisory Council

Candidate Statement

Thane A. Dykstra, Ph.D.

I appreciate this opportunity to provide a candidate statement for the position of Secretary for the Illinois Mental Health Planning and Advisory Council. I became a licensed clinical psychologist because of my passion for serving people with mental illness. As a child I had the privilege of spending time on the units of a state operated mental health facility and with the people my father served both on the grounds of the facility and in our home and community.

When I came to Trinity Services in 1995, I started as the clinical director in our Behavioral Health network. The program had been developed after assuming a grant from the Will County Health Department to serve people with serious mental illness in 24-hour supervised residential settings. I saw firsthand that with the right supports and services a person has the capacity to recover from a mental illness.

I have also observed how the lack of funding, services, and resources in the mental health system has impacted the rate of incarceration for people with mental illness. Although great strides have been made in employment initiatives and specialized funding and housing for people with mental illness, there is a great need for continued development and implementation of supports. Serving as the Secretary of IMHPAC would provide an opportunity to contribute to the mental health services planning efforts

As my roles have changed and my career has progressed over the past 23 years at Trinity Services, I've become more interested in impacting broader system issues. In my current role as the CEO, I hope to use my experience and training to influence the system for people that don't often have a voice for themselves. As the director of the Behavioral Health Program for 21 of those years, I took great pride in developing programs that promoted recovery. New and progressive programs were launched for people with a serious mental illness and for those dually diagnosed with a mental illness and an intellectual/developmental disability. I have a working knowledge of community service delivery in both the ID/DD and MH systems. Within Illinois state agencies, I've had the opportunity to serve on steering committees and work groups for the Department of Human Services - the Division of Mental Health, Division of Developmental Disabilities, and the Department of Children and Family Services. I was appointed by the Governor to the states Quality Care Board, an advisory committee for the DHS Office of Inspector General. I have not missed a meeting in the 10 years that I've had the privilege of serving in this capacity.

Interpersonally, people have described my leadership and decision making skills to be based on understanding all the information, and taking into consideration the effect of those decisions on all who are impacted. I am proud that Trinity is known as an agency that is committed to serving people with challenging behaviors that other service providers have declined because they were viewed as "complex" or "difficult" to support.

I appreciate this opportunity to be considered for the Secretary position.

Sincerely,

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