

Co-chairs Nosse and Beyer, members of the committee –

For the record, my name is Randy Roddey. My wife and I own a 16-bed residential treatment facility located in Enterprise.

Pioneer Guest Home is licensed to provide residential services to adults with mental health disorders.

We are contracted with the Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness which provides case management, therapy and psychiatry services.

We're also contracted with Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization to provide Med Transport services for the 16 individuals residing in our program.

All clients, to some level or another, suffer from high acuity chronic mental illness requiring monitoring, intervention, re-direction of paranoid thought, positive reassurance, and engagement.

- 2 are under the Psychiatric Security Review Board, one of whom moves on to independent living on March 20th,
- 1 is working with Legal Aide in an effort to increase visitation with her child,
- 4 have hypertension,
- 1 is a disabled Vietnam war veteran,
- 2 have COPD,
- 4 have diabetes, and
- 2 have traumatic brain injury

We have 16 employees. It can take 3 to 6 months for our employees to complete training necessary to ensure an understanding of mental illness and success in our employ. Training consists of:

- Pre-service – 2 days
- Med administration and other nursing delegation – 12 days
- Med transport training – 3 days
- CPR, 1st Aide, AED – 1 day
- Professional communication – 1 day
- Mental Health 1st Aide – 1 day

Our biggest challenge is staff turn-over. Over the past two years we lost 12 of 16 employees, most were direct care staff billets that turned over two and three times. Seven went to other jobs paying higher wages and providing better benefits packages, five of whom went to work at short-term, long-term, and memory-care facilities.

At a recent exit interview, an employee regrettably stated, "Randy, this is the best job I ever had, but the care center made me an offer I can't refuse - \$18/hour and a better benefits package."

Let me give you an example of how excessive turn-over affects us.

Last November we lost two employees, two were on vacation, and we were in the process of on-boarding a new one. One of our clients began acting out and was placed on suicide watch. County mental health provided psych-sitters as did we, to do wrap-around services for 24 hours a day for six continual days. County mental health was unable to locate a respite bed for her. While this was happening, other residents began to experience escalating behavioral. Everything that could go wrong, did go wrong.

The program suffered. It operated under-staffed for 24 hours a day. We cancelled medical and dental appointments and client activities just to keep meals on the table, do laundry, pass meds and bare minimum housekeeping. A one-year employee would be overwhelmed with the crisis mode the program was in. It takes a stable and experienced staff to see a week, such as that, through to successful completion.

As you can imagine, not everyone has the temperament or heart to care for and assist those with mental health issues. It takes a special kind of person. When we find them, we'd like to retain them.

Competition is keen amongst employers and I wish to reiterate the importance of stability associated with a well-trained and experienced staff.