

SB 426 -- COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH LIAISONS

SPONSOR: Parson (Franklin)

COMMITTEE ACTIONS: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Health and Mental Health Policy by a vote of 9 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Select Committee on Social Services by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill changes the law regarding information and records compiled, obtained, prepared, or maintained by a residential facility, specified mental health program, specialized service, or any mental health facility or program that allows an individual to be civilly detained pursuant to Chapter 632, RSMo, while providing services to the voluntary or involuntary patient. The bill permits facilities, programs, and services to disclose information and records, upon request, to individuals designated by the department as community mental health liaisons for the purpose of coordination of care and services. Designated community mental health liaisons are added to the list of individuals that must be provided, upon request, records and files maintained in a court proceeding under Chapter 632.

PROponents: Supporters say that community mental health liaisons serve specific geographic areas of the state and assist law enforcement and courts with individuals who are having a mental health crisis. The bill adds liaisons to the individuals who can receive information about individuals who have been civilly involuntarily retained, meaning they are a harm to themselves or others and are refusing treatment. The goal is to stop the cycle of having a crisis, getting temporary treatment, getting released, not following up with or continuing treatment, and having another mental health crisis. The liaisons have cut in half the time it takes to deal with an individual experiencing a mental health crisis. The bill is about continuity of care. When individuals are hospitalized because they are a danger to themselves or others they are later discharged with a discharge plan but are not likely to comply, thus the cycle continues. The job of the liaison is to get the individual services, which is really hard to do if the liaison cannot access a person's medical records or judicial records.

Testifying for the bill were Senator Parson and Richard Gowdy, Missouri Department of Mental Health.

OPponents: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.