

Governor Nikki Hailey:

Through the years of your being governor, you have conveyed a lot of passion and aspiration for people with mental health illnesses. Many of your speeches have been about and in concern for people suffering with Mental Illness in our State of South Carolina. In knowing your concerns, it saddens me to intricate on such troublesome conditions within the “**Lexington County Department of Mental Health Center!**” There has been, way to many years of under the table neglect with mental health clients, in Lexington County! It has been a known fact, that client through the years and to date, made complaints against Lexington County Department of Mental Health, to the Mental Health Corporate Office of Columbia, SC and absolutely no follow up with any of the issues. This come as great, great, concern and partly blame, as to why so many clients continue to fall through the cracks of neglect that eventually leads to hospitalization, continued use of controlled substance abuse, and lately; a higher suicide rate with clients seeking services through Lexington County Department Mental Health. Some of the neglect has been due to the high turnover rate with doctor, nurse, and Counselors; clients going without proper or no medication, due to having no doctor for long periods of time at the facilities of Lexington County. For some clients, going without medication for to long, in which contributes to client’s mentally unstable condition that leads to hospitalization, or suicide.

Lexington County Department of Mental Health turnover rate is so high, it’s become a norm. This is unacceptable! Over the past several years, the facility has been through countless psychiatrists and nurses. At times, the facility has been without a psychiatrist, at all, relying on nurses and nurse practitioners to act as doctors. Medicare policy, states that if a doctor is not on site, Medicare cannot be billed, but this was not the case at the Adult Center at Lexington County

Department of Mental Health. Clients were charged and Medicare was billed many times. Many times, the facility had/has brought in contract doctors that had very bad ratings, which lead to prescribing clients the wrong medications, giving incorrect diagnosis, or simply giving them medications they don't need, or shouldn't have, at all.

The Director and Manager over the adult program are Debra Lyles and Susan Harris. They both play a big part of the problems occurring at the Adult Services Facility of Lexington County Department of Mental Health. Many doctors have expressed their concerns prior to their exiting, about Debra Lyles and Susan Harris lack of knowledge and their ineffectiveness to run the facility. Again, nothing every done, to attempt to make corrections out of concern for client's dealing with mental health illnesses. At one point, Susan Harris had been the leading supervisor for all nurses, who has no nursing or medical experience. Employees has expressed their concerns as well; on many occasions to Rick Acton (Facility Director) and Sarah Main (Assistant Director), but have been treated unfairly and belittled as if their concern, or the well being of clients, as well as the mental health facility does not matter, and not worthy of expressing concern! There is always retaliation, or some sort of repercussion against employees for making any type of complaint or when defending themselves, reasonably. The working conditions have become unbearable, and employees are seeking employment elsewhere! For instance; Lexington County Department of Mental Health has lost numerous employees to the Columbia Area Mental Health Facilities, due to the working conditions with Lexington County Mental Health. Upper Management, as well Board Members such as Dr. Robert Bank, Geoffrey Mason, John Magill, and Eleanor Odom (downtown head HR) are all aware of the immense turnover, and nothing being done to retain their employees! This information can be verified by targeting Human Resource records for the year 2012, 2014, and 2016. It's unthinkable that the

Executive Director (Rick Acton), Assistant Director (Sara Main), and Center Administrator (Tammy Orr), does not focus on ways to retain workers so that client's suffering with mental illness can receive the best of care possible, especially; since clients suffering with mental illnesses are supposed to be their main priority!

CARF, Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities come every 3-4 years, to inspect and check client's records. They never talk with many employees, other than certain clinicians, and higher management. How is it possible to pass accreditation, when there has been so much mismanagement within the facility, as a whole? Apparently, members of CARF are known by several employees of Lexington County Department of Mental Health. During the renewal of accreditation, if members of CARF spoke with employees, and random clients, and not chosen clients by Lexington County upper management, just maybe, things could be different within the facility. How is this contributing to the well being of the client's? State run facilities should be inspected thoroughly! In doing thorough inspections, any mismanagement of any type, or any type of client neglect, or any issues at hand would have been indicated early on prior to this terrible snowball effect.

Human Resources have not been of benefit, especially; when it comes to private and confidential information. For instance; it is known, that employees have gone to Human Resources to express concerns about issues that have/has occurred. Information provided to Human Resource is sometimes talked about to upper management. This is an atrocious problem, so bad that employees aren't comfortable with going to the Human Resource Office, for breach of confidentiality, and fear of retaliation. So, what do you do in a situation like this? It's inconceivable that in today's world, people are working as a state employee with no voice, and no one person/group to stand against upper management based on what's right or wrong. As a

Human Resource employee, decisions made should be unprejudiced! Decisions made should not reflect that of upper management, especially; when the issue is upper management! It has come to mind to contact the local news in reference to a lot of the issues that has taken place, but wanted to start with our governor “Nikki Haley” first hand!

For years, LCCMHC has discriminated against employees and pay raises. Some employees have been employed with Lexington County Department Mental Health Center for twenty-plus years (20+), and never received a pay raise other than the cost of living raises giving to state employees, as a whole. When asked about pay raises, Rick Acton, Executive Director, always states, there is no money in the budget, but can manage to create positions within the facility, and to increase wages of those in upper management, and others as they choose. Pay raises for employees of Lexington County Community Mental Health Center has been an on going problem for many years, and has been brought to the attention of upper management, and never anything done to increase raises for employees, and more so, when comparing their yearly income. There are employees of Lexington County Department Mental Health Center, whose income is poverty, still having to depend on food stamps, and Medicaid to survive. This is unthinkable as a “STATE EMPLOYEE!”

This letter was written for many client’s who feel they have no voice, and those client’s who made complaints and felt it was of no benefit to complain, that there voice doesn’t matter! In closing, the motto “It’s A Great Day In South Carolina” hasn’t been all that great for many people living in the state of South Carolina, especially; for the mentally ill clients in Lexington County! I hope this letter shed light, and opened eyes to those unknowingly, unaware of the situations that has been ongoing for many years at Lexington County Department of Mental

Health. In being optimistic, hoping this letter will prompt an external investigation to the on going issues at Lexington County Mental Health.

cc
Katrina Shealy
Lexington County Representative