

Michigan Report to VOR

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From Jill Barker, MI State Coordinator

I do most of my reporting on Michigan throughout the year on my blog,

[The DD News Blog](https://theddnewsblog.blogspot.com) at <https://theddnewsblog.blogspot.com>

I also have a Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/ddnewsblog>

and a Twitter account at: <https://twitter.com/DDNewsblog>

Here are some selected posts from The DD News Blog pertaining to Michigan. You can find these archived in the right-hand column of the blog or follow the links that have been inserted here.

Understanding Michigan's Mental Health System including services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)

People enrolled in Michigan Medicaid, primarily as their medical health insurance, go through one of the [Medicaid Health Plans](#). Pre-Paid Inpatient Health Plans (PIHPs) are public regional administrative agencies that fund services to people with mental illness and developmental and other disabilities through local Community Mental Health agencies. They fund the social services and supports necessary to maintain people with IDD in the "community".

There are powerful forces in the state, namely the Medicaid Health Plans, which would like to take over control of the funding for all mental health services. In my opinion, this is Privatization on Steroids. The amount of money available is attractive, but the health plans are inexperienced in providing care for people with IDD and probably have no idea what they are getting into. If the PIHPs and the local Community Mental Health Agencies fail financially, the state may contract with other entities to provide the services. After years of chronic underfunding from the state, there is at least one PIHP that is in this position and others that are close to being unable to provide mandated services.

Here is a post on "[Making Sense of the Political Landscape](#)" for people with disabilities..." on Medicaid underfunding from November 26, 2018.

[Michigan's mental health system is failing many with severe autism](#)

May 16, 2019

This adds to the chorus of complaints nationwide about the lack of services and residential options for people with severe autism. People with profound IDD and complicated medical conditions face the same sort of problems with the CMH system that relies too often on hospitalization and the use of emergency room services for chronic health and severe behavioral conditions.

Home and Community Based Settings rule and people with IDD

Hoping to take advantage of relaxed guidance from CMS on “heightened scrutiny”, a newly formed family organization called “Home grown Community” is moving forward with plans for a farm-based intentional community based on the [Camphill village model](#) in Washtenaw County.

Powerful advocacy groups in Michigan oppose all forms of congregate (group) care, but congregate living is fine for people who are not disabled: March 7th, 2019, “[Group Living in Ann Arbor](#): OK for Young Professionals and Students, but not for Adults with Disabilities???”

August 12th, 2018, general observations on the settings rule: “[Regulating community services for people with disabilities](#): a promise fulfilled or a barrier to appropriate services?”

The Direct Care Workers staffing crisis 9/21/18

Washtenaw county CMH is proposing a pilot project that will try out recommendations from a legislative report on this issue, including increasing wages to \$2 above minimum wage and improving working conditions. A recent report to the WCCMH Board detailed the uncompensated costs to providers in the County that are driving many of them out of business. For instance, training for one person to work in a group home costs \$2500, but the lure of better wages and benefits from working at a local fast food establishment contributes to the rapid turnover of workers, followed by expensive recruitment and retraining of new employees.

Guardianship

From May 22nd, 2019: “[Michigan Court of Appeals Upholds Guardian's Right](#) to an Injunction to Prevent the Transfer of her Ward”

I hear from fellow guardians that they have been told that CMH no longer has to listen to guardians because under the HCBS settings rule, people with IDD get to make their own decisions. This is not true when guardianship is involved. A court-appointed guardian is authorized to make decisions where the ward has been determined to be unable to make decisions. This case demonstrates the use of the probate court in enforcing the guardian’s right to protect the ward from harm .

Michigan “Tackling water contamination” from 1/7/19

Serious drinking water contamination problems will inevitably have health consequences and contribute to disabling conditions that will need services and supports. In Ann Arbor, we have PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) and related contaminants in the Huron River. We also have a plume of groundwater contaminated with dioxane that is headed for the river, a drinking water source for Ann Arbor and downstream communities.

Replacing pipes that have been delivering lead poisoning to the citizens of Flint is underway but it will be some time before that job is complete. Why would anyone in his or her right mind allow drinking water to be contaminated when there is the slightest possibility of preventing the problem in the first place or taking care of it immediately when it is detected?