



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

ELIZABETH HERTEL
DIRECTOR

April 30, 2025

The Honorable Michael Webber
Michigan Senate
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Senator Webber:

Thank you for your March 27, 2025, letter regarding Walter P. Reuther Psychiatric Hospital (WRPH). Please see below for responses to the issues raised in your letter:

#1: The unannounced shooter drill at the Hawthorn Center in December 2022 and work rules. Department employees are required to read and familiarize themselves with your work rules. I am requesting the most recent version of these rules. Have the rules been updated to prohibit this practice? Have they been updated to make sure violations of workplace safety rules are handled immediately and employees who violate them are disciplined?

Response: The State Hospital Administration developed a standardized policy for the hospitals that outlines the processes for active intruder incidents (see attachment). This policy ensures that no active drills will take place.

#2: Unanswered recipient rights complaints. I continue to hear from patients and parents that their recipient rights complaints are going unanswered. How many complaints have been filed at the Hawthorn Center and Walter P. Reuther Psychiatric Hospital since 2020? How many recipient rights officers have been employed at these facilities? Have there been any vacancies in these positions at these facilities during that time? If so, how many and for how long?

Response: There were 938 complaints received by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Office of Recipient Rights (ORR) for Hawthorn Center/Walter Reuther Psychiatric Hospital (WRPH) children from October 1, 2019, to September 30, 2024. Of the complaints filed, 28 complaints were not opened by the ORR as the complaint either did not involve an allegation of a chapter 7 rights violation under PA 258 of 1974 or was outside the ORR's jurisdiction.

There were 1,429 complaints received by ORR for WRPB adults from October 1, 2019, to September 30, 2024. Of the complaints filed, 235 complaints were not opened by ORR as the complaint either did not involve an allegation of a chapter 7 rights violation under PA 258 of 1974 or was outside the hospital ORR's jurisdiction.

All complaints received by ORR are recorded and notification is sent to the complainant, even if no investigation of the rights complaint is warranted per sec. 776.

Regarding staffing, since FY 2020: There was one rights advisor assigned to Hawthorn Center from October 1, 2019, to August 21, 2022. On August 21, 2022, a second rights advisor was assigned to Hawthorn Center. One position was vacant from January 21, 2024, to April 18, 2024. Coverage was provided by the rights specialist and previous rights advisor during transition.

For WRPB adults, since FY 2020 two rights advisors have been assigned, with one position vacant from July 9, 2023, to September 3, 2023, and March 17, 2024, to June 23, 2024.

#3: Office of Recipient Rights access to video footage. *Your department is required to ensure that recipient rights officers have unimpeded access to information to perform their investigatory duties. I continue to hear from patients and family members that video camera recording systems are often not working properly, malfunctioning or completely offline, which has led to inconsistent evidence gathering. What is the current operational status of video camera recording capabilities at the Walter P. Reuther Psychiatric Hospital? Are the cameras working properly? What is the current operational status of video camera recording capabilities at the Caro Center, Center for Forensic Psychiatry and Kalamazoo Psychiatric Center?*

Response: The camera systems for each hospital are robust and in working order. They are checked daily and when there is a problem, the vendor is contacted to make repairs, which is handled by the Department of Technology, Management, and Budget (DTMB). It should be noted that while these cameras are stated to be in patient care areas, there are areas where cameras are not allowed where staff and patients still interact, such as patient rooms, bathrooms, and shower rooms.

The director of the MDHHS ORR has stated that ORR has unimpeded access to all information for investigative and monitoring purposes, including access to video.

Walter Reuther Psychiatric Hospital

There are approximately 300 cameras at WRPB in any location where patients may go. There are additional cameras in non-patient areas. As of April 21, 2025, all cameras are working except for three on the third floor where a few child patients recently pulled them off the ceiling. Replacements have been ordered. The area still has coverage from the 52 other cameras in the unit.

Kalamazoo Psychiatric Hospital

There are 215 cameras located in the patient care areas. As of April 21, 2025, 213 of them are working. Replacements have been ordered for the two that are not working.

Caro Psychiatric Hospital

There are 114 total cameras in patient care areas; this does not include the Specialty Suite bathroom cam. There are 98 cameras covering units, downtown, neighborhoods, and courtyards, and 16 cameras covering courtrooms, clinic, and passages to the clinic and courtrooms. As of April 21, 2025, all 114 cameras in patient care areas are currently working.

Center for Forensic Psychiatry

There are 237 Patient Care Cameras. As of April 21, 2025, all cameras are currently working except for one that is in the outside yard. A replacement has been ordered, and the area has coverage by the other cameras.

#4: Continued education concerns, including lack of educational staffing at Walter P. Reuther Psychiatric Hospital. *Have there been any vacancies of educational teachers or instruction staff at this facility since minors were moved to the facility? If so, how many and for how long?*

Response: The staffing levels for educational and instructional personnel have remained stable since the minors were relocated to the facility. Recent changes in staff include:

- 2 teacher retirements
- 1 teacher death
- 2 teacher resignations

Despite these staffing transitions, educational programming has continued without disruption due to the following factors:

- A relatively low student census, which has allowed for the moving of all elementary children into one classroom, so all students continue to receive education services.
- The availability of Edgenuity, an accredited, Michigan Department of Education-approved virtual learning platform. Edgenuity offers a variety of digital curriculum and virtual instruction options for K-12 students, enabling them to learn at their own pace with personalized instruction. The platform provides educational content across core, elective, credit recovery, technical, and career subjects and is accessible via a secure, closed intranet server.

Efforts to address teacher vacancies are currently underway. As the 2024-2025 school year nears its conclusion, public school staff members have been applying for the open positions. To date, two of the open vacancies have been filled, and interviews are ongoing for the remaining positions.

#5: The lawsuit over patient abuse and lack of staff accountability, surrounding an incident involving a 10-year-old resident at Walter P. Reuther Psychiatric Hospital. Can you confirm that all employees involved in this incident are no longer employed at Walter Reuther? What measures have been put in place to make sure this type of incident does not happen again? Have work rules been updated to improve employee accountability?

Response: The matter was thoroughly investigated, and disciplinary action was taken to address all work rule violations that occurred. Scheduled programming is in place to provide active treatment.

#6: New state psychiatric hospital to be built at existing Hawthorn Center location in Northville Township. What operational and staff changes will be implemented to better manage this new facility? When will the new facility undergo its accreditation process?

Response: Due to the increase in beds there will need to be a corresponding increase in direct care and clinical staff. The FY26 Executive Budget provides \$15.2 million to begin operating the new state psychiatric hospital in Northville, bringing 264 new beds online and increasing capacity by 54 beds (32 adult beds and 22 pediatric beds). This investment includes operational support and hiring staff to provide services at the new facility. The operational processes will be based on the resources and the environment available in the new hospital and will also correspond with department policies, the mental health code, Joint Commission standards, and federal regulations. There is a 6-month window from the time we move to the new facility to when the Joint Commission will visit for their accreditation review.

I hope this information is helpful. Please let me know if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Hertel

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Enclosure