

Fellow Task Force Members:

As requested by Representative Green, I am writing to share my initial thoughts on two of the areas that we are directed to provide recommendations on.

1. *“The state's long-term needs for residential habilitation center (RHC) capacity, including the benefits and disadvantages of maintaining one center in eastern Washington and one center in western Washington.”*

I strongly believe our state needs to maintain residential habilitation centers to provide individuals with developmental disabilities and their parents/guardians with this option when choosing the most appropriate setting for their loved one to live. I also believe that we should maintain at least three RHCs in our state - one in eastern Washington, one in western Washington, and one in central Washington. Along with individuals with developmental disabilities and their parents/guardians having the option to choose an RHC, I think it's important that their loved ones lives within a reasonable distance to provide them the opportunity to visit frequently. Due to the fact that Yakima Valley School (YVS) is the only RHC in central Washington, I think the legislature should remove the restrictions on YVS to not admit any new residents (with the exception of short-term respite or crisis stabilization services).

2. *“Strategies for reframing the mission of Yakima Valley School consistent with this act that consider: (i) The opportunity, where cost-effective, to provide medical services, including centers of excellence, to other clients served by the department; and (ii) The creation of a treatment team consisting of crisis stabilization and short-term respite services personnel, with the long-term goal of expanding to include the provisions of specialty services such as dental care, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and specialized nursing care to individuals with developmental disabilities residing in the surrounding community.”*

Although I believe strongly that YVS shall be maintained as an RHC, I also believe YVS has excess space and property that could be utilized to benefit the individuals with developmentally disabled living in the community throughout central Washington (and potentially throughout the state). I think this is a great opportunity to create a “center of excellence” on the grounds of YVC that can be utilized to provide medical, dental, therapies, mental health services, and community crisis stabilization services for developmentally disabled clients living in the community. I was excited to hear about the community crisis stabilization services/program at our last meeting that is being established in the Lakewood/Tacoma area, and I think central Washington would benefit greatly from having this program in Yakima, based out of YVC.

I look forward to our discussions over the next few months on how to best serve individuals with developmentally disabilities and their families in our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Norm Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light blue horizontal line.