

E3SHB 1713 Ricky's Law

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Prior to 2016, individuals in Washington State with a Mental Health Disorder could be immediately detained involuntarily for treatment, where individuals with a substance use disorder required a court order to detain. The enactment of E3SHB 1713, referred to as Ricky's Law, integrated both mental health and substance use disorders into one statewide behavioral health system within Washington's Involuntary Treatment Act (ITA), changing how individuals in crisis are evaluated and detained. Ricky's Law was designed to improve outcomes for affected clients, save money, and increase efficiency by integrating the involuntary behavioral health system.

The state has now had time to evaluate barriers to implementation and review feedback from Mental Health Professionals related to placing clients into facilities. Overarching themes have emerged which support the conclusion that this legislation requires more policymaker attention to be deemed successful. Some key takes aways from program evaluation were identified as follows: (Devin Bales, 2021)

- Lack of available beds for placing individuals experiencing crisis. More flexibility is needed to accept patients of differing medical acuity.
- Gaps in stakeholder coordination including limited information exchange between providers in the Behavioral Health system. An ITA client database and centralized bed coordination are needed to improve patient outcomes.
- Lack of consistency related to medical clearance, exclusion criteria and timely communication. More consistency is needed throughout the ITA system regarding county court processes, forms required for placement, medical clearance criteria and exclusions.

As Washington continues to grapple with its behavioral health crisis, it's clear the problem of ITA and available treatment options require more policymaker attention. Although

certain aspects have gotten better since the passing of Ricky's law, subsequent legislation is needed to improve upon this very complex need. However, the solutions are not easy and could possibly overwhelm our already stressed behavioral health treatment system.

References

Devin Bales, A. E. (2021). *Designated Crisis Responders and Ricky's Law: Involuntary Treatment Investigation, Decision, and Placement*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.