

## **Santa Clarita Valley Overview - Barbara Wilson, LCSW, Community Member**

Comments to Mental Health Commission Town Hall Meeting January 24, 2019

Thank you to the Mental Health Commission for coming to SPA 2, the Best SPA, and a special thank you to Commissioner Cooperberg for paving the way for the Commission to come out of downtown-first to the Antelope Valley and now to the Santa Clarita Valley.

My name is Barbara B Wilson. I have resided here in Santa Clarita since 1979

I am a somewhat retired licensed clinical social worker. I have a small private practice, *mentalhealthhookup*, that serves families who have an adult family member with Serious Mental Illness. I'm happy to announce today that we have officially become a Non-Profit Organization.

Today I want to focus my comments on Available Options for Families whose lives have been touched by an Adult Child with Serious Mental Illness.

Imagine a 72-year-old mother, living alone with her adult son of perhaps 45 years of age. Every night as she goes upstairs to bed, despite her small stature, she struggles and pushes her dresser over to where it blocks the door into her bedroom.

When I inquired of her, "Help me to understand why you do that." She patiently answered, "It's not because it will stop him from hurting me if he's not in his right mind. But the noise of moving the dresser will wake me up so that I can call 911 and maybe they'll get here in time to see him upset and finally take him to the hospital."

Her other adult children are angry at her because she refuses to put him out. She explains that he will go homeless unless she has him live with her. What if there were another option that she could tap so that she could choose a "Door Number 3"

There's another mother whose Adult son, age 50, resides here in SCV with his mother because she sees no other option—either homeless or stay with her. He refuses to take his medications, stays up nearly all night playing the television or his music blasting. He accuses her of stealing money from him (she's his Representative Payee), accuses her of poisoning his food and often throws meals that she prepares for them against the wall in anger. What if there was another option?

Adult Residential Facilities are that Door Number 3. Here in the Santa Clarita Valley we have Adult Residential Facilities for Regional Center clients and for the Elderly. They have the exact same license for adults and a similar license for the elderly issued by the State Department of Community Care Licensing. Yet there is not a single Licensed ARF a.k.a. Board & Care home for Adults with Serious Mental Illness in our community.

The rate of reimbursement for those other Board & Cares begin at \$2500 per month for a shared room up to \$5000 per month vs Board & Care Homes that accept Adults with Serious Mental Illness get \$1059 per month. That is approximately \$35.00 per day. Is it possible that the low rate is related to our lack of available housing in SCV?

Today I call on the Members of the Santa Clarita City Council to draft a letter to our state representatives: Assembly member Christy Smith and State Senator Scott Wilk asking them to sponsor legislation to declare an Emergency because we are losing Licensed Adult Residential Facilities. We are in a Crisis re: safe, licensed housing with medication supervision, meals, and 24-hr staffing. Only the State Legislature can institute a raise for this valuable resource.

Failure to save these existing facilities, and grow more facilities, will result in increased homelessness, public safety issues, and/or incarceration All of which will cost more taxpayer dollars than simply increasing the per diem rate paid to these providers.

Finally, we need to have facilities located HERE in our valley. These are Santa Clarita's kids. They should be able to continue to reside here, even if they become disabled with a brain disease. Not everyone wants to leave the area. But we have no other options if parents want their Adult Children to get better.

- **ACTION** – Ask mental health commission to draft letters to state legislature to increase rates so that adult residential facilities are available in Santa Clarita for the families who do not wish to relocate to other areas.