RSA: 126-A:13
Health and Human Services Oversight Committee Meeting Minutes
June 23, 2017 @ 11 AM
Room 205, LOB

Members Present: Representatives Kotowski and McMahon, and Senators Fuller Clark and Reagan

Absent: Representatives MacKay, LeBrun and Byron and Senator Bradley

Guests: John Williams, DHHS; Lori Key, Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center; Anne Diefendorf, Foundation for Healthy Communities

(1) The meeting was called to order at 11:01 AM. Lacking a quorum, approval of the May 12, 2017 meeting minutes was deferred until the next meeting in September.

(2) Lori Key and Ann Diefendorf presented the committee with the NH Health Care Quality Assurance Commission's Annual Report and discussed efforts over the last year to reduce healthcare related adverse events. The Commission has focused on focused on foundational issues and promoting stronger cultures of safety in medical settings by through reliable application of best practices in areas such as handwashing, patient falls, preventable infections and pressure injuries.

Representative Kotowski asked if every hospital had a health safety officer. Lori Key responded that every hospital has an equivalent position, although there are a variety of titles for it.

Representative Kotowski asked what the Commission had discovered that might require legislative attention. Lori Key responded that workplace safety was a major concern, partially due to issues related to the opioid crisis, but also for other reasons related to frustrated families and patients and patients with behavioral health problems. Ann Diefendorf added that workers in healthcare have a higher injury rate than any other industry and cited the easy accessibility of healthcare workspaces, the high anxiety environment, especially in emergency rooms, and the holding of mental health patients there. Lori Key added that a safe workforce is more engaged and attentive, which raises the quality of care across many performance metrics.

Senator Fuller Clark asked what role the Legislature can play in finding solutions. Ann Diefendorf explained that there was a difficulty around a worker who has been assaulted pressing charges, rather than the hospital or organization pressing charges, and suggested that assaults on healthcare workers be designated differently in the law. She also commented that last year's legislation creating different parameters for security guards in hospitals has helped.

Senator Reagan asked if assaults were the main concern, or if injuries of other kinds were also a problem. Lori Key said injuries were a problem as well. There are a higher number of obese patients, leading to lifting injuries and other injuries that occur moving them. Also, needle stick injuries because more medications are being delivered intravenously. There are many problems and no easy solutions.

Ann Diefendorf added that the Commission is focusing on collecting quantitative data in those areas, and that should provide better actionable information to the Legislature in the future.

Representative McMahon asked if there was any data on whether the new prescription drug monitoring for opioids was working. Ann Diefendorf said that there was some initial data showing numbers going down, as well as anecdotal evidence that prescribing practices are changing.

Representative McMahon asked what problems could be addressed in the present in order to create substantive improvements. Was it a question of more resources, or different policies? Lori Key said that more resources would help.

Representative McMahon suggested that a product called a hovermat would be useful for moving obese patients without injuries. What kind of financial incentives or other incentives would be necessary to get hospitals to use those if they aren't already? Lori Key responded that purchasing tools and training were both part of the solution. There are many reasons why work as it's designed is different than work as it is done, and the Commission is studying how to deal with those issues.

Senator Fuller Clark asked if there are special OSHA rules for hospitals. Ann Diefendorf replied that there were special mandatory reporting requirements.

(3) John Williams apologized that the Commissioner of DHHS could not be present for the meeting due to his duties, but would be available for the September meeting. He presented the Committee with the DHHS June, 2017 Dashboard Report and the Commissioners letter of June 13th, 2017 updating the Committee on the current state of the Developmental Disability Wait List.

The meeting adjourned at 11:27 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

D.C. Bates,
House Committee Research

*Testimonies and supporting documents are available for review in the Committee File