# SANILAC COUNTY PUBLIC GUARDIAN

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DATE: September 6, 2013

TO: Mental Health & Wellness Commission

FROM: Sanilac County Public Guardian
Claudia Maedel

I am writing to share my concerns for individuals receiving and/or are in need of Mental Health services from the prospective of a Public Guardian proving Legal Guardian services to Mentally Ill Individuals; Developmentally Disabled Individuals; Elderly Individuals:

**Self Determination:**

Self determination should be mandated through the Medicaid manual for **ALL** services provided through our local Community Mental Health Agency. Providing individuals with a choice of service providers; available locally, empowers them and encourages their participation in services supporting their recovery.

**Training Program:**

Sanilac County Mental Health offers a wonderful training program (Creative Enterprises) for individual preparing themselves for community employment. The program consists of several different training areas requiring different skill sets. Individuals earn wages and also attend work related educational classes. Along with building work skills individuals gain: self-esteem; self-confidence; pride in earning a paycheck; purpose and structure to their day. After "graduating" from the training site individuals are referred to Michigan Vocational Rehab Services for community placement. Unfortunately, the reality is that some individuals, regardless of training, may never be employable in our communities for many different reasons that are beyond their control. There needs to be a program developed and available to individuals who have "graduated" from the work training program who are unable (for whatever reason) to obtain gainful community employment. Falling through the "system cracks" has the following negative effects on these individuals' independence and wellbeing: lack of self-

confidence; lack of self-esteem; loss of income; loss of purpose and structure to their day. Too much time on any individuals hands may result in: increase in depression; increased anxiety; loss of interest in life; diminished feeling of independence and pride; possible involvement in criminal activity.

**Psychiatric Services for Nursing Home Residents:**

Especially in our rural area it appears there is a gap between the local Community Mental Health Agency and psychiatric services for nursing home individuals. State oversight of medications can make it very difficult to place an individual with psychiatric needs in our nursing homes where psychiatric services are limited and not always available through Community Mental Health. Once admitted, it appears that there is a lack of support for these individuals and the nursing home setting that are providing care for them. An increase of resources through Community Mental Health would assure the following: individuals would receive appropriate services to provide recommendations to their primary care physician; nursing home staff would feel supported in their attempt to provide a safe, caring environment for their residents; placement would be more available for individuals requiring this level of care for medical/physical needs.

**Co-occuring and Substance Abuse Treatment:**

It appears that there is a lack of long term (greater than 30 days) residential treatment facilities for individuals with a diagnosis of mental illness and substance abuse who are Medicare and Medicaid eligible. More financial support needs to be available to provide the development and availability of choices for longer term residential treatment options for these individuals.