

From the Chairman:

On April 24, 2015 Governor Branstad signed into law some amendments to Iowa Code Section 229.19 which deals with the appointment of mental health advocates. On February 16, 2016, you may have noticed that the Fayette County Board of Supervisors approved the hiring of a Mental Health Advocate. I had someone ask me why the County needed a Mental Health Advocate and just what did they do. So I thought that this might make for an article to write about. I hope this is of interest to you.

Before the amendment a Mental Health Advocate was appointed by the Chief Judge of a Judicial District. As of July 1, 2015 and with the amendments in place a Mental Health Advocate is now appointed by the County Board of Supervisors and is considered a county employee. Is this a new position for the County? Yes, however when the new rules took effect there was an individual that was appointed by the Chief Judge and that person became the County Mental Health Advocate, according to the laws of the amendment. However, that person has moved on and the County needed to have someone in place so that is why you saw the hiring of the Mental Health Advocate on the Supervisor's agenda.

An Advocate's primary responsibility is to represent the interest of an individual who has had an involuntary commitment by the Court. The Advocate can review and file reports, orders and applications on an individual behalf, communicate with the medical personal and attend hospitalization hearing to name a few of the duties. The Advocate does not start these duties until the Attorney assigned to represent the individual in court is released from those duties by the Judge and until that happens the Attorney is the Mental Health Advocate for an individual.

An Advocate must be familiar with Iowa Supreme Court decisions on mental health and involuntary commitments. Be familiar with mental health treatment resources within the area and above all this, the Advocate must keep a high standard of confidentiality with each case. Also at times the Advocate must assist the Court in finding an individual for whatever reason they doesn't show up for an appointment.

Fayette County along with Clayton County shares an Advocate to perform the above duties. You can find more information on the Mental Health Advocate in Iowa Code 229. Thanks to Carol Kuene, Fayette County Social Services Coordinator, for helping with this article.

You can contact me at: jtellin@co.fayette.ia.us

On a personal note: I would like to thank everyone (the Secondary Roads/Engineers Department employees, the County Engineer, the Committee and the Supervisors) involved with the Proposed New Maintenance Facility for Fayette County. Thanks to all the citizens who took the time to vote, weather you vote for or against, you exercised your right as a citizen of this county to voice your opinion. I am however, somewhat disappointed in the number of individuals that stated they knew nothing about the vote, as many informational meetings were held at incorporated towns and the local newspapers did an outstanding job with the articles. The Supervisors have had a suggestion that we look into creating a Facebook page for those who chose not to subscribe to one of the official newspapers of Fayette County, which are the Oelwein Daily Register, the Fayette County Union and the Elgin Echo, and maybe that is something we should do. If you have access to a computer you can bring up the Fayette County website at: fayettcountyiowa.org and keep up on agenda items and the minutes. Please accept my invitation to attend a Supervisors meeting. Thanks.

Have a glorious and blessed Easter.