

## Budget cut could kill agency that helps Greystone patients with addictions

By MINHAJ HASSAN • STAFF WRITER • April 2, 2010

A long-running nonprofit agency that provides substance abuse treatment for patients at Greystone Park State Psychiatric Hospital could close because its funding is getting cut out of the state budget.

New Views, which has operated since 1985, is expected to lose \$848,000 in funding from the state's Division of Mental Health.

"In effect, that (the loss in state funds) would cut the agency," New Views Executive Director Marcia Brands said.

Spokespersons for Gov. Christie could not be reached for comment on Friday.

Since its inception, the program has treated an average of 275 Greystone patients each year. The agency has about 20 employees -- 13 full-time and seven part-time. More than half the staff is comprised of counselors. Its programs take place in the first floor of the Greystone facility, where patients engage in group therapy, self-awareness and role-playing, among other exercises to help them in their recovery. New Views also trains providers who treat the patients after they are released from Greystone.

Brands, along with other nonprofit agencies such as Community Hope, the Mental Health Association of Morris County, NewBridge Services Inc. and Morristown Memorial Hospital, have called on state senators to restore the funds. Brands said that shutting down the agency could put the patients at risk by not providing the tools needed to overcome their addictions.

"Without the services of New Views, the clients are only getting half of their co-occurring, chronic illness treated," Brands said in a statement. She said more than 55 percent of Greystone patients have a substance abuse disorder in addition to mental illness.

"By ignoring treatment for their substance use disorder, the patients are prone to rapidly resume their alcohol and drug use and abuse when they return to the community," she said.

State Sen. Anthony Bucco, R-Boonton, could not be reached for comment, but Brands said he has expressed his support.

Brands said she will meet with state Sen. Joe Pennacchio, R-Montville, in hopes of taking the agency's request to restore the funds into consideration.

Pennacchio, who serves on the state Senate Budget Committee, said in a phone interview that while he sympathizes with the various nonprofit agencies, and other entities that are expected to lose state funds, the dire state budget situation makes it very difficult to dole out money.

He said a constructive dialogue could take place on finding alternatives to state funding.

"The state has some really serious fiscal issues," he said. "Tell me where we can find the money. The governor is facing an \$11 billion budget deficit."

Brands said that New Views helps save the state money because its counselors aren't under (the purview) of the Civil Service Commission, whose salaries tend to be much higher.

"Eight hundred and forty eight thousand dollars is a drop in the bucket compared to what it will cost for the state to run it," she said. "It's not good business."