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State wants Cambridge Health Alliance to maintain detox services for residents in Somerville



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Wicked Local Somerville
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Somerville — The detox unit at the Somerville campus is scheduled to close by June 30, as part of the severe cutbacks and structural changes the Cambridge Health Alliance is facing in the recession.

After hearing much community concern at a recent public meeting, the state Department of Public Health decided that the services being discontinued should be preserved in some form for area residents who need it.

"Retaining access to substance abuse detoxification services for residents of the Cambridge/Somerville area is

critical since demand for treatment often exceeds capacity, particularly for the uninsured," said Jennifer Manley, director of media relations at the DPH. In 2008, more than 1,500 clients in the CHA catchment area received detoxification services that would need to be served outside of their community if there was no detox services. Massachusetts is still rebuilding capacity from previous reductions in substance abuse funding that forced the closure of approximately 50 percent of the publicly funded detox beds in the commonwealth."

Last year, the Somerville Hospital treated more than 1,500 people for substance abuse and provided about 30 beds for substance abuse patients. With the severe cutbacks this year, there is widespread community dismay on the closing of the hospital's much-needed inpatient substance abuse services.

Substance abuse is a serious issue in Somerville and all over the country, said state Rep. Denise Provost. "There is already a long wait to get treatment here, and it's important to get someone into detox as soon as possible after a decision to break an addiction has been made."

Provost said she has heard a lot of concern about the closing of the substance abuse services from people even outside her constituency. "I am pleased the DPH has found those services are necessary for preservation in some form," she said.

CHA is reportedly working with community partners to determine how it can collaborate on community substance abuse programs but CHA spokespersons doubt there will be big changes other than what they have already announced.

According to the CHA Web site, the Somerville Hospital campus will continue to be a thriving medical facility and will offer innovative programs such as the Women's Headache Center and a new GI Center that will attract patients from across the region. The campus will also house corporate and administration services currently at off-site locations.

By the end of this week, CHA will have to come up with a plan to preserve this service in some form for residents in Somerville and surrounding communities.

[Letter from the MA DPH regarding CHA detox services](#)



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CHA changes in Somerville

CHA East Somerville Health Center: On June 29, the practice will move/combine with the CHA Broadway Health Center.

CHA Somerville Primary Care: By the fall of 2009, practice will move/combine with the CHA Internal Medicine Associates practice at the Somerville campus to form a new Somerville Hospital primary care practice.

Inpatient Med/Surg and Intermediate Care Unit: By June 15, these services will relocate from the Somerville to the Cambridge campus.

Eye Services: By the end of 2009, the Eye Center at 65 Beacon Street will move/combine with the Eye Center at the Somerville Hospital Medical Arts Building.

Dental Services: By the fall of 2009, the Somerville dental practice will move/combine with the Cambridge dental practice at the Windsor Street Health Center.

Inpatient Adolescent Psychiatry: On June 15, the unit at the Somerville campus will relocate to the Cambridge campus.

Inpatient Geriatric Psychiatry: The Inpatient Geriatric Psych Unit at the Somerville campus will close. Services will relocate to the Whidden campus in a unit with a mix of geriatric and adult psychiatric inpatients.

Inpatient Addictions/Detox Unit: The Addictions unit at the Somerville campus will close by June 30. CHA is actively working with community partners to determine how it can collaborate on community substance abuse programs.

(Source: CHA Web site: [Somerville changes](#))

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