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COUNTY OF SOMERSET DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

RICHARD HALL COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

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The Honorable Glenn A. Grant, J.A.D
Administrative Office of the Courts
25 Market Street – 8th Floor
Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex
P.O. Box 023
Trenton, New Jersey 08625 – 0037

Dear Judge Grant:

I am writing in response to the Publication for Comment regarding the Future of Court Operations, Remote and In-Person Proceedings.

In my capacity as the Clinical Supervisor at Richard Hall Community Mental Health Center, Somerset IOC Program, I have seen a negative impact on the IOC clients whom we serve as a result of the remote civil commitment hearings.

The reality of being committed to IOC becomes very abstract for our clients when they do not physically present before a judge for hearings. It has become all too easy for our clients to waive their right to appear. This becomes another diminishment of the IOC system, as many aspects of services continue to be virtual/remote.

It is common for people committed to IOC to suffer from psychotic disorders including schizoaffective disorder and schizophrenia. Remote court is more difficult for them to comprehend and may trigger symptoms, such as paranoia.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask that you consider a return to in-person court for civil commitment hearings related to IOC, to the fullest degree possible with consideration to safety. It will enhance the effectiveness of IOC and assist us in our mission to keep our clients in treatment and out of the hospital.

Sincerely,

Linda Flint, LCSW
Clinical Supervisor
Richard Hall Community Mental Health Center, Somerset IOC Program

In Case of a Psychiatric Emergency
Please contact Psychiatric Emergency Screening Services
908-526-4100

- Mission Statement -

The County of Somerset is committed to excellence and innovation in public service, promoting the well-being of all residents and communities by providing effective, efficient and responsive leadership.

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