

Summary Report

Granite Pathways Youth Treatment Center

December 16, 2019



New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services

This report contains the results of the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) review of the incidents that occurred in November and December 2019 at the Youth Substance Use Disorder Treatment Center (YTC) operated by Granite Pathways at 1056 North River Road in Manchester, NH. As part of its review, DHHS conducted onsite observations, extensive record reviews, interviewed Granite Pathways and DHHS staff, and gathered other collateral information. The intention was to understand and document the events that led to six youths in treatment at the center requiring transport to hospital emergency departments.

BACKGROUND

In 2017, recognizing that the State did not have an in-state residential substance use disorder (SUD) treatment center for adolescents, Governor Sununu and the NH Legislature worked to establish through law a 36-bed Youth SUD Treatment Center (YTC). The YTC was established by House Bill 517 (HB517), Chapter 156:166, Laws of 2017, Budget Trailer Bill. HB517 also revised the procedures for placement and detention of minors at the Sununu Youth Services Center (SYSC), which led to a significant reduction in the number of youths admitted to SYSC. The resulting decline in the SYSC census left a wing at in the facility unused.

HB517 directed the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to contract with an organization to operate the YTC at SYSC. In spring to summer of 2018, DHHS renovated a decommissioned wing to create the YTC program space. At the same time, DHHS issued a Response for Proposals and Granite Pathways was selected, with a contract and lease approved by the Governor and Executive Council on October 3, 2018. The 36-bed YTC opened on November 15, 2018.

The contract requires Granite Pathways to provide services to eligible clients who:

- Are aged twelve (12) to eighteen (18) years;
- Have been diagnosed with a substance use disorder; and
- Require the level of care being provided based on American Society of Addiction Medicine criteria.

The YTC is a voluntary substance misuse treatment center for youth between the ages of 12 and 18. YTC programming utilized the "7 Challenges" approach to treatment, providing individual, group and family counseling for youth in its care. Beginning on November 24, 2019, multiple incidents occurred at the YTC that required emergency response, immediate DHHS intervention, and eventually resulted in the termination of Granite Pathways' contract to operate the YTC. The following summary, based on accounts from YTC staff, youth, and reports from the Manchester Police Department, describes the results of the ongoing DHHS investigation into incidents at YTC in November and December 2019.

SUMMARY OF INCIDENTS OF NOV 22-DEC 3, 2019

Friday, November 22

The YTC census on Friday, November 22 included 10 youths receiving treatment for an SUD. Friday afternoon, one of the youths (**Resident 1**) went on a weekend home visit, returning on Sunday, November 24.

Sunday, November 24

Resident 1 returned to the YTC on Sunday afternoon. Upon returning to the program, the youth was screened by YTC staff for illicit substances, in accordance with the YTC's screening policies and procedures. The screening did not yield any illicit substances on their person or in their belongings.

Sunday evening, five youth residents attended a Narcotics Anonymous meeting offsite, under the supervision of a YTC staff member. During the meeting, two of the youths (**Resident 2** and **Resident 3**) were allowed to go together to the bathroom. After **Resident 2** and **Resident 3** returned from the bathroom, it appeared to the YTC staff member that the youths were impaired. The staff member drove the youths to the YTC, where **Resident 2** required assistance exiting the vehicle and walking into the facility.

YTC staff requested transportation for **Resident 2** to a local hospital emergency department for a suspected overdose. Medical providers at the local hospital eventually transferred **Resident 2** to a hospital in Boston for continued treatment. According to Granite Pathways, **Resident 3** did not require medical intervention at a hospital.

YTC staff searched for illicit substances present at the facility. A search of **Resident 1**'s room and belongings yielded a small amount of an illicit substance. **Resident 1** admitted to returning from the weekend home visit with illicit substances that were concealed to prevent detection during return screening, and sharing the substances with other youths.

Monday, November 25

In the early afternoon, DHHS was notified of the incident involving **Resident 2** at a previously scheduled offsite meeting between Granite Pathways and DHHS officials.

During later afternoon and early evening, a series of youth behavioral and clinical issues began to unfold and simultaneously impact program and resident management.

Resident 2 was discharged from the hospital and was re-admitted to the YTC program. Upon re-entry, **Resident 2**, as well as three other youths (**Residents 1, 3, and 4**), began to act belligerently and refused to follow staff direction. The onsite nurse notified a YTC clinician that

the youths appeared to be impaired. YTC staff requested ambulances to transport **Residents 1, 2, 3, and 4** to local emergency departments for evaluation of a potential overdose.

While YTC staff were preparing for first responders, other youths gathered for a group meeting. During this meeting, an oral dispute occurred, resulting in one youth (**Resident 5**) assaulting two other youths. YTC staff contacted the Manchester Police Department (MPD) to report the assault. YTC staff also contacted a parent of **Resident 5** to discharge the youth from the program.

When an MPD officer arrived at the YTC, **Resident 5**, the officer, and YTC staff waited for a judge to issue an arrest warrant in the YTC lobby. A YTC counselor and the parent of **Resident 5** met in a conference room next to the lobby to begin the discharge process. **Resident 5's** belongings, which included prescribed psychotropic medication, were also placed in the conference room.

Resident 5's parent departed once the arrest warrant was issued, leaving **Resident 5's** belongings unattended in the conference room. When ambulances arrived for other youths, **Resident 5** was placed in the conference room. YTC staff did not confirm who had custody of **Resident 5** prior to placing the youth in the conference room.

YTC staff were not aware that **Resident 5's** personal belongings were still in the conference room when the youth was placed there. **Resident 5** took multiple doses of the prescribed psychotropic medication in a suspected suicide attempt. An ambulance was immediately called for **Resident 5**, who was transported to a local hospital emergency department, and eventually to a Boston hospital for further treatment.

As of Monday evening, five youths (**Residents 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5**) had been transported to hospitals, and five youths remained in the program.

Tuesday, November 26

Early morning, YTC staff notified DHHS of the Monday incidents via email. A few hours later, a Granite Pathways administrator also contacted DHHS staff regarding the incidents.

On Tuesday, DHHS directed Granite Pathways to suspend further admissions to YTC.

On Tuesday morning, **Residents 1, 3, and 4** were discharged from a local hospital and transitioned to alternative settings. **Resident 2** remained at a local hospital to be assessed for a possible mental health admission. **Resident 5** remained in a Boston hospital.

Wednesday, November 27

Governor Sununu and DHHS announced the cancelation of the State's contract with Granite Pathways to operate the YTC, effective December 27, 2019.

Wednesday, November 27 – Tuesday December 3

Discharge planning began immediately to ensure the five youths remaining in the program and residing at the YTC were transitioned to facilities providing the appropriate level of care. Between November 27 and December 3, four of the five remaining youths were transitioned to alternative residential and community-based settings.

Monday and Tuesday, December 2-3

In the evening of Monday, December 2, the last remaining youth gained access to a bottle of hand sanitizer and later ingested it. YTC staff discovered the situation, assessed the youth, and sought medical guidance. The youth was subsequently transported by ambulance to a hospital emergency department for further evaluation.

Saturday, December 7

The youth was discharged from the hospital to another facility providing an appropriate level of care. At that time, no youths remained in the YTC treatment program.

FINDINGS & CONCLUSION

Based on the severity of these incidents, and Granite Pathways' non-compliance with its contractual obligations, the State's contract with Granite Pathways to operate the YTC was canceled. As Governor Sununu said in announcing the cancelation of the contract, "Placing the care of a child over to another, be it a person or an organization, is a profound leap of faith. Tragically, there has been a serious breach of trust with this organization."

The State's contract with Granite Pathways will end on December 27, 2019. All former residents of the YTC have been transitioned to other appropriate settings to continue their treatment and recovery. The Department is committed to restoring SUD treatment services to ensure that youths in New Hampshire have access to an array of services and levels of care.