

Could RIST Services be Coming to NC?

Within the NC DHHS Behavioral Health Strategic Plan, there is goal to build community-based services with a particular focus on creating “step-down” services from inpatient care. Mark Benton, NC DHHS Deputy Secretary for Health Services, noted to the Joint Legislative Oversight Behavioral Health Subcommittee on February 27th that NC DHHS is looking at the RIST model in New Jersey to create a step-down from inpatient treatment. The NC DHHS Strategic Plan states, “Although intensive, DHHS anticipates that these step-down services would cost less than the amount currently spent on the patients awaiting discharge in the state’s psychiatric hospitals. This would require some upfront investment, but DHHS believes that the combination of step-down services and increasing community-based service capacity would create a positive feedback loop.”

The service is called Residential Intensive Support Program (RIST). It is described as “an intensive residential support program designed to address the needs of individuals who may require intensive but varying degrees of residential support in the transition from hospitals to community living.”

Services can include: housing assistance, developing a wellness plan, living skills, 24 hour rapid response from staff, support to ensure MH/SA and medical service engagement, etc. The goals of the service are to provide the supports necessary for an individual to achieve independent community living, prevent future hospitalizations and enhance quality of life, including work, education, and natural supports.