



## Lenawee joining Washtenaw County in program realignment

By Dennis Pelham

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[ADRIAN, Mich.](#) —

Lenawee County officials are acting ahead of an expected shake-up in Michigan's system of delivering substance abuse treatment services.

The county commission on Wednesday capped off a reorganization study begun last fall by voting to join with the Washtenaw County Health Organization. The county is leaving the Mid South Substance Abuse Commission that is expected to be broken up by new federal and state health laws and funding systems.

"I would just like to commend the county commission for addressing the coordinating agency issue in a deliberate way," said Roger Myers, director of the Lenawee County Community Mental Health Authority. Some counties are in for a long and difficult process to realign their substance abuse and mental health programs, he said, while Lenawee County has taken a leadership position in the state.

Commissioner Ralph Tillotson, R-Adrian Twp., joined in recommending the move to make Washtenaw County Health Organization this county's coordinating agency during a committee session on Tuesday. Last month the move was recommended by a committee of human service agency representatives that was assigned to review options.

"This alignment will allow for the effective and efficient integration of substance abuse and mental health into a behavioral health system that is no longer fragmented. This integration will enhance local control, ensure access to care for all individuals and in particular will reduce barriers to care for individuals who have both substance use and mental health issues," said a letter from committee chairman Tim Kelly, director of the Lenawee County office of the Michigan Department of Human Services.

The transition to the Washtenaw County Health Organization is to take place over the next six months before the start of the state's next fiscal year on Oct. 1.