


Tompkins County
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BOARD

Tompkins County Mental Health Center
201 East Green Street
Ithaca, New York 14850-5421

Mary Hutchens, Chair

Maria Morog, Vice Chair

Frank Kruppa, Commissioner

Harmony Ayers-Friedlander,
Deputy Commissioner/Director of Community Services

Larry Roberts, Chair,
Mental Health Subcommittee

Ellice Switzer, Chair,
Developmental Disabilities Subcommittee

Tom Lipa, Chair,
Substance Use Subcommittee

Tompkins County Community Mental Health Services Board
December 6, 2021, 5:30 p.m. Meeting Minutes
and via Zoom

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UckpJNVbpLLbEbhoDbTIEgSQ>

Present: Mary Hutchens; Sheila McEnery; Jan Lynch; Ellice Switzer; Paula Winner; Maria Morog; Mandy Caughey; Larry Roberts; Travis Winter; Stu Bergman

Excused: Khaki Wunderlich; Dr. Auguste Duplan; Sullymar Pena Vazquez; Ms. Ayers-Friedlander, Deputy Commissioner

Guests:

Staff: Mr. Kruppa, Commissioner; Karan Palazzo, LGU AA

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The meeting was called to order at 5:32 p.m. by Mary Hutchens, Chair. Motion to approve the November 2021 minutes; Jan 1st/Larry 2nd. All were in favor.

Privilege of the Floor: None
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Announcements: None

Chairs Report – Mary reported that Mr. Lipa has resigned from the CSB and the Substance Use subcommittee. She thanked him for his service and contribution over the years. His life experience, work experience and ideas have been very helpful in many discussions. Mary offered to deliver appreciation bags to the members who have not yet received them.

Commissioner’s Report:

COVID: Mr. Kruppa reported that numbers are up with much attributable to the Thanksgiving travel as there are more cases with higher education students but not the predominant driver. Data dictates that community-based spread with household transmission as the primary route. Cases outside of those mentioned are unidentifiable. TCHD continues to encourage people to get vaccinated and wear masks indoors. Mr. Kruppa reported that hospitalizations remain in the single digits as they focus on the severity of illness. He will provide more data after tomorrow’s legislature meeting.

Vaccinations: Mr. Kruppa reported that twenty-three hundred, 5 to 11 year-olds were vaccinated through the mall and almost 37% of our 5-11 year-olds have had a second dose. Large scale Moderna booster clinics are planned for the next two Saturdays at the mall for 1,200 appointments. Individuals over 18 years of age can get the booster with any of the three approved vaccines. Moderna boosters will be available in the next few days for immuno-compromised individuals as the logistics are worked out. A press release will go out and the link will be on the website to register for an appointment. Boosters will be available in early January for homebound individuals.

Deputy Commissioner’s Report: Ms. Ayers-Friedlander was not in attendance and Mr. Kruppa reported on her behalf. He said that Ms. Ayers-Friedlander is doing a great job in reviewing and updating agency/provider contracts with the goal to regularly report progress updates towards the deliverables in the contract to the CSB. Ms. Ayers-Friedlander has reorganized and helped the contracted better understand what the funding is aligned for and how to report that clearly. Ms. Ayers-Friedlander is active

in conversations around public safety and the mental health response; and actively involved with law enforcement leadership to better coordinate work together.

Commissioner's Report: Mr. Kruppa announced that Monalita Smiley was selected as the new Director of the Community Justice Center and the center's location will be in the Mental Health building on the second floor.

Tompkins County Mental Health Clinic (TCMHC): Mr. Kruppa reported that the clinic is facing huge staffing issues with retirements and departures. They are actively recruiting and working with HR to be more competitive in the market. Adjusting job titles to be less license restrictive (e.g., psychiatric social worker's new title will be a licensed clinical professional), shifting from a written exam to training and experience, creating flexibility, and redlining salaries (nurse practitioner) are just a few examples. Mr. Kruppa also reported that a scaling back on services and reducing admits/intakes might be necessary in the month of December. He said "TCMHC doesn't want to bring people into care and not be able to provide services and hopes another community partner can serve them in the interim but the TCMHC will always take crises and hospital discharges".

Mr. Kruppa reported that the community as a whole, including agencies don't have enough resources to meet the demand especially with large telehealth companies aggressively recruiting. As a licensed clinic there are requirements that must be met and can't be as flexible as telehealth companies.

Strategic Planning/Merger Activity Update: Mr. Kruppa reported that the Cross-Functional Team (CFT), tasked with establishing a new brand identity, submitted an RFP for a branding consultant. The SFT will be restarting in the next few weeks. Administratively, Jeremy Porter, Mental Health Fiscal Administrator and Brenda Grinnell Crosby, Public Health Administrator are working together to bring both departments together. Karen Johnson, the PH Administrator Coordinator was promoted to Financial Coordinator, where she will be working on state aid and budgeting of mental health business to assist Mr. Porter. The hiring of senior account clerk typists, administrative assistants and biller positions will soon complete the administrative team. The goal is to have our 2023 budget be in a joint chart of accounts which must be completed and ready to go by mid-2022 for the budget process that unfolds.

Fiscal Administrator, Mr. Jeremy Porter, is responsible for the administrative functions of the budget and the financials. He is the senior level fiscal person for the joint departments as the strategic leader for the all efforts of the billing, electronic health records, budget, state aid and contracts.

In-house Pharmacy: Mr. Kruppa reported that the RFP is under review, but due to the staffing crisis, Ms. Ayers-Friedlander and Mr. Porter's time has been taken away from it for now but will be moving forward again as the interest is very much there.

Presentation on Disability Employment Changes: Ellice Switzer's presentation included a brief overview of the executive order which addresses the issues of wages for federal contracts and subcontractors. The wage was increased to \$15/hr. and explicitly includes employers who have 14C certificates from the department of labor which would allow them to have paid sub-minimum wages to people with disabilities. It is not that impactful in Tompkins County because our primary employment provider (Challenge) did not have any federal contracts but Mozaic has many subcontract awards through Source America. The definition of the law applies to people who are performing the work of the contract which usually comes with some nuances. The question is will Challenge, (now partnered with Mozaic) become a federal subcontractor because of Mozaic. Overall it is good for everyone as it increases wages for everyone. The results remain to be seen if individuals will see less work as a result as agencies try to balance benefits and wages.

Ms. Switzer said that executive orders or legislation aimed at fixing the subminimum wage problem is doing so parallel to any effort to change the settings rules around that type of employment; in making sure that folks have opportunities for competitive integrated employment. Mr. Roberts added that with executive orders expiring with each administration he hopes parallel work is happening in congress.

Ms. Switzer responded to Ms. Black's question regarding obtaining social services with the increase. She believes it to be an individual calculation, as the county is experiencing a lack of certified benefits planners and referred to Ms. Lynch for more clarification. Ms. Lynch added that most agencies won't work with anybody who doesn't come with money attached. They come to FLIC (with no money attached) and FLIC cannot handle the volume. There have been conversations with Challenge and Workforce NY and FLIC will reach out to DSS for their input. There is a real need for certified benefit planners.

Ms. Switzer informed the board that the Department of Labor is starting a new initiative called SCION with state funding to invest in disability employment initiatives and all 33 workforce development regions across the state. This should include training more people to be certified benefits planners.

Nominating Committee Updates: Mr. Bergman reported 3 vacancies on the Substance Use Subcommittee, 2 vacancies on the Mental Health Subcommittee, 2 vacancies on the Development Disabilities Subcommittee and 2 vacancies on the Community Services Board. The two-year term of vice chair automatically transfers to chair of the CSB if there are no objections. The transfer of power to Maria Morog as chair was acknowledged and will begin January 2022.

Mr. Bergman suggested that the board discuss new wordage when recruitment begins for the vacancies. Ms. Lynch believes it would be beneficial to have individuals on the CSB and subcommittees who've experienced either substance use issues, developmental/intellectual disabilities and mental health issues. She feels this is important as the bylaws are currently under review. Mr. Bergman suggested reaching out into the community for those that fit the criteria. Ms. Switzer suggested using personal network of people. Ms. Hutchens suggested increasing support and education for new members.

At 6:50 p.m. Mr. Bergman motioned to go into executive session, seconded by Mr. Winter to discuss re-appointments and appointments.

**The Next Community Mental Health Services Board Meeting
will be January 3rd , 2022, at 5:30 pm.**