Tompkins County COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BOARD

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

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Mental Health Subcommittee Meeting Via Zoom February 18, 2025 @ 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. Meeting Minutes

Minutes Approved April 15, 2025

<u>Present</u>: Larry Roberts; Jessica Conner; Tracy Decker **Excused**: Mary Hutchens; Ben Komor; and Susan Tabrizi

Unexcused

<u>Guests Present</u>: Tiffany Bloss, Suicide Prevention & Crisis Service; Joe LaCourt, SOS; Amy Jacot, TC Workforce; **Staff Present**: Harmony Ayers-Friedlander, DCS; Hilary Reilly, TCWH Clinic Director; and Karan Palazzo, LGU AA

The meeting was called to order at 1:04 pm. Introductions were made. A quorum was not met, and January 2025 minutes could not be approved.

<u>Privilege of the Floor & Announcements:</u> Larry proudly announced that Tiffany Bloss of the Suicide Prevention Coalition (SPC) and the Suicide Prevention & Crisis Service/988 has recently received funding from the County for a part-time coordinator position at the SPC

<u>Suicide Prevention Coalition and Suicide Prevention & Crisis Service/988 (SPCS):</u> Tiffany was pleased that SPC received county approval to hire a part-time coordinator. Austin DiOrio, who is participating in a training session will be the SPC coordinator and will facilitate the meetings. The coalition is being revamped and aims to increase community engagement and improve educational materials distribution.

A membership committee was established in January to create an application process for both supporters and active members. The current membership list includes around 170 people, and the committee aims to ensure everyone is engaged. Coalition meetings will increase from every other month to once a month to facilitate the strategic planning process. Workgroups will meet for 45 minutes, followed by a full coalition meeting for the next 45 minutes. She believes meeting like this will make goals and objectives more attainable.

The SPCS website has been updated with the latest information about SPC activities. An email address for inquiries will be available once the membership application is approved. The coalition has been training new staff to manage the increasing volume of calls effectively. The website also provides a wide range of resources and training opportunities to promote suicide prevention awareness.

Suicide Prevention & Crisis Service Update - Tiffany reported a significant rise in phone calls and risk levels, indicating that more people are considering suicide. Nine new staff members are starting soon, and four others will graduate from the seven-week training program. As more staff are added, the volume of calls continues to grow. The 988 Center is the backup location to ensure that all calls are answered. The coalition responds 24/7 to various lines, including a local hotline, a WARM Line, and an LGBTQ peer support line.

The LGBTQ peer support line has experienced a significant increase in volume, with 70% of the staff identifying as part of the LGBTQ community. The warm line, known as ISPA, provides social connections to combat loneliness, particularly among older populations. It is primarily staffed by volunteers, including students from local schools. Currently, the warm line averages around 3,800 connections each month, showing a marked increase compared to 2024, when it ended with 2,500 connections per month, totaling 30,000 for the year.

Additionally, the website https://ithacacrisis.org was recently revamped and launched in October. It offers a wide range of resources and training opportunities. In 2024, the coalition trained nearly 600 new individuals in suicide prevention awareness. The website also includes information on educational opportunities and resources for crisis situations. The coalition continues to expand its staff and services to meet the growing demand.

Survivor Support Group and National Conferences -The suicide loss support group meets monthly and has a robust attendance, with some members traveling over an hour to attend. The group provides a space for grieving individuals to connect and start the healing process. The coalition has been invited to speak at multiple national and regional conferences. The coalition is grateful for the community's support and continues to strive to meet the growing needs.

<u>Introductions and Tompkins County Mental Health Clinic Updates:</u> The newly hired clinic director at Tompkins County Whole Health Mental Health Services, Hilary Reilly introduced herself and provided a brief clinic update.

- > A satellite clinic was opened at the public mental health building on Brown Road, serving both children and adult clients.
- > The clinic aims to provide easier access for clients and will continue to expand its services.
- > The clinic is currently utilizing the afternoon and evening time slots for appointments.

Chair's Update - Larry welcomed Hilary and thanked her for her update, noting that she has only been with us for a short time. He discussed the open commissioner position, currently held by Jeremy Porter in an interim capacity. The hiring process will involve interviews with various boards and staff, and it will require approval from the legislature.

The new Commissioner will oversee a diverse range of services, including mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disabilities. This individual will collaborate with deputies and the Community Services Board to plan and advocate for these essential services. The organizational structure includes various commissioners and advisory groups to ensure comprehensive support across mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disabilities.

Amy Jacot from Tompkins County Workforce Development expressed her interest in joining the Mental Health subcommittee.

Larry asked that participants reach out with topics of concern to discuss at future meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 1:40 pm.

The Next Meeting is Tuesday, March 18, 2024 @ 1 pm