



**Tompkins County**  
**COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BOARD**

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

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Stu Bergman, Chair,  
Substance Use Subcommittee

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**Substance Use Subcommittee Meeting**  
**March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 12:00 pm**    **Via Zoom**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Approved 4.12.23**

**Present:** Stu Bergman; Tom Lipa; Marley Brooks; and Jacob Parker Carver

**Excused:** Ron Schoneman

**Unexcused:** Molly Murphy

**Guests:** Briggs Seekins, Challenge; Scott Sherwood, IRC; John Stenson, OMH; Jennifer Maine, ADC; and Penny Green, CARS; Samantha Stevenson, REACH Medical

**Staff Present:** Karan Palazzo, LGU-Administrative Assistant, TCMH

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The meeting was called to order at 12:03 p.m. by Stu. Introductions were made. Tom moved to approve the January and February 2023 minutes, seconded by Marley.  
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**Privileges of the Floor:** Stu shared that a dispensary to sell marijuana legally opened on the Commons.

**Announcements/Correspondence:**

**REACH Medical Presentation:** Samantha Stevenson, Director of Operations at REACH excitedly moved to Ithaca in 2018 to help with the opening of REACH as she shared their mission of prescribing evidence-based buprenorphine/suboxone. COVID brought new regulatory changes which included telehealth being recognized as an acceptable and reimbursable service, tearing down many barriers. REACH was able to expand services to those struggling with opioid use disorder, and not able to access medications in rural areas of the State.

Although NYS is pushing for the continuation of telehealth medicine, the Federal government is looking to pass a law for individuals to be seen for a physical exam within 30 days creating barriers for those in rural areas of NY who don't have reliable transportation or stable housing.

REACH employs 51 people with an annual budget of \$5 million. They have an 80% Medicaid population, a 20% insured population, and grants and funding initiatives to fill in the gaps. REACH has been strategic with growth to access funding without compromising quality care. They currently serve 5600 individuals with 1800 being Tompkins County residents. All 5600 patients are at a different place within their own experience of drug use with many being abstinent. REACH provides individualized care and lets the patient lead their lives and make their own choices with REACH providing them medication to keep them safe, which is part of the low threshold evidence-based model. REACH has always practiced harm reduction with an internal team-based approach, protecting and decreasing chaos for staff.

**Integrated Services:**

- Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD)
- Primary Care
- PrEP, PEP & HIV Treatment
- Hepatitis C Testing & Treatment
- Same-day services are available
- Outreach Street Medicine
- NARCAN Distribution and Training
- Case management for established patients
- Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) a program that takes people out of the criminal justice system who commit low-level crimes rooted in poverty, mental health, or substance use.
- Ithaca Wellness Recovery Court assistance
- Mobile Medical Unit in the next few months
- Outreach Team visits the encampments, contracted hotels, St. John's Loaves and Fishes and mixed-income housing

They will onboard a full-time psych medication manager in the next few weeks.

Behavioral health counseling is provided but voluntary on the patients' terms with REACH as it was found it could retraumatize one. Different iterations of integrated behavioral health were tried in a primary care setting versus an addiction medicine setting and the on-demand works best for our populations.

49:33 Otter AI

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

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**The next Substance Use Subcommittee Meeting  
will be held on April 11, 2023, from 12 – 1 pm**