



Tompkins County
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BOARD

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

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Substance Use Subcommittee

Substance Use Subcommittee Meeting
April 12th, 2023, 12:00 pm **Via Zoom**
Meeting Minutes

Approved 7.11.23

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; Penny Green, CARS; and Samantha Stevenson, REACH Medical

Staff Present: Karan Palazzo, LGU-Administrative Assistant, TCWH

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The meeting was called to order at 12:05 pm by Stu. Introductions were made. Tom moved to approve the March 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 including telehealth which was recognized as an acceptable and reimbursable service, tearing down many barriers. REACH expanded services to rural areas of the State to those struggling with opioid use disorder, and not able to access medications.

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 which will create 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, and a 20% insured population, with 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) is 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 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. 35% of the population and 65% engage when they need it. REACH provides crisis intervention and crisis management.

REACH’s model and approach change based on the data being released and research done through a grant from PEW Charitable Trusts Community Opioid Response Evaluation initiative. They currently partner with Cornell to develop evaluation tools to study REACH services and their impact on the community. REACH received 100% patient satisfaction on a July 2022 survey. REACH serves 53 counties with Tompkins, Clinton, and Broome in the top three respectively.

The top three drugs treated are opioids, alcohol, marijuana, and heroin. Other substances are being introduced into street drugs and Narcan is administered to reverse the opioid effects but doesn’t reverse the tranquilizing effects of the substance Xylazine where oxygen and monitoring were introduced. Fentanyl strips are useful in setting where people do not know their drug of choice is tainted.

Connecting to services immediately after Narcan: The street-made fentanyl is so strong and so volatile in inconsistencies that it clings to receptors for up to 19 days. REACH is brainstorming on how to help make a rapid transition after Narcan and noted that Buprenorphine has not been effective based on the recent results.

Marley and Jake complimented REACH’s ability to modify services to meet the needs of the clients.

Samantha expressed her gratefulness for the LEAD grant initiative which helped house 25 chronically homeless people into housing in 11 months.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:10 p.m.

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**The next Substance Use Subcommittee Meeting
will be held on June 14, 2023, from 12 – 1 pm**