



**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

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**Substance Use Subcommittee Meeting**  
**July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – 12 to 1 p.m. Via Zoom**  
**Meeting Minutes**

Approved 9.13.23

**Present:** Marley Brooks; Jacob Parker Carver; Stu Bergman; and Ron Schoneman

**Excused:** Tom Lipa

**Unexcused:** Molly Murphy

**Guests:** Briggs Seekins, Challenge; Brad Walworth, CARS; Stacy Cangelosi, ADC; Natalya Cowilich, FCS; Roy Murdough; John Stenson, OMH; and AJ Kircher, Opioid Task Force Committee member.

**Staff Present:** Harmony Ayers-Friedlander, DSC; and Karan Palazzo, LGU-Administrative Assistant, TCWH

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The meeting was called to order at 12:05 p.m. by Jacob. Introductions were made. Stu moved to approve the April and June 2023 minutes; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jacob; all were in favor.  
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**Privileges of the Floor:**

**Announcements/Correspondence:** The Ithaca Community Recovery's Block Party is September 3, 2023, from 12 – 4 p.m.

**Community Survey Outcome from the Opioid Taskforce:** Opioid Taskforce member, AJ Kircher gave an overview of the Opioid Task Force which included 13 members appointed by the legislature to give their input on how to best use the \$700,000 of Opioid Settlement funds distributed to the County to address the issue of harm from opioids in the community. A community survey was used to seek the community's input and perceptions from providers. CARS, STEP, LEAD, ADC, and emergency personnel gave presentations. The Opioid Task Force Committee (OTC) found it very helpful to hear what providers and programs were doing but most importantly it identified gaps that allowed the effective appropriation of the settlement funds based on the NYS guidance.

The community survey results were used to solicit proposals from community organizations to address the opioid crisis in Tompkins County, which will be granted to several community partners to fund new and/or innovative projects and interventions to curb harm from opioids in the community.

From the community survey issued in May 2023, 591 responses were received with 64% being concerned community members and 38% identified as directly impacted persons with substance use.

- A high percentage favored increasing access to harm-reduction materials including, Narcan, vending machines, fentanyl testing strips, and xylazine strips
- Develop and strengthen a support system in response to an overdose including post-overdose response teams/overdose fatality review teams

A variety of perspectives highlight the complexity of the issues and the need for comprehensive and multifaceted solutions with differing opinions on approaches to drug addiction ranging from the focus on law enforcement and punishment to a more compassionate and supportive approach.

Please see refer to the emailed documents of the Opioid Task Force's full community survey results and a summarized narrative.

#### Summary of Response Highlights

- Importance of harm reduction materials
- Access to resources
- Improved connections between existing agencies
- Increasing awareness and connection across agencies
- Proactive interventions
- A call for broad community outreach and education on evidence-based approaches including supervised use centers
- Treatment, rehabilitation, prevention, and education with coordination among agencies
- Support primary care providers, first responders, and those working in the field
- Addressing burnout and depression among healthcare and behavioral health workers
- Partnerships resources for overextended workers
- Decrease stigma
- Support children affected by overdose

Based on the community and agency feedback, priorities were included in the Request for Proposal (RFP) that was sent out for the use of money and 15 applications were received by the end of June when the RFP closed. The OTC will review the RFPs and make its recommendations to the legislature who will make the final approval of the funding. The RFP may be issued by the end of September.

Ron asked to keep confidentiality and stigma in mind when supporting children affected by overdose. AJ heard his concern and was able to relate personally and took every opportunity to educate people about how dangerous it is and the realities of the streets. Jake thanked AJ for all the work she's done and continued works. Jake believes we must do a better job of reaching out to the impacted family members and continue to keep this conversation in mind while protecting confidentiality. AJ spoke about a tool called "D Mapping" which gives real-time of neighborhoods where overdoses happen and also look to other counties to see what successes they are having around overdoses.

Stu brought awareness of alarming data statistics from a recent CSB meeting that nationwide eighth-grader drug use has increased by 61 % while agencies are reporting 6-month waiting lists in addition to a workforce shortage. AJ shared his concern, and data tracking should not stop at county lines and encourages a statewide dashboard (including pikes) as was done with COVID. She referred to a website called "Song for Charlie" [www.songforcharlie.org](http://www.songforcharlie.org)

Natalya believes we should be focused on prevention by having an overdose prevention site. Harmony agreed it would be beneficial in many ways in addition to other tools. Stacy shared that Ithaca has two prevention programs for kids, ADC and BOCES. ADC provides prevention programs with a curriculum that is evidence-based but has experienced many challenges getting into the schools. She asked to be included in ideas that one is looking at. ADC has a universal prevention program that is broader than an overdose prevention program but is still considered prevention. Data in Tompkins County shows that kids are mainly using marijuana and alcohol.

#### **Provider Updates:**

**St. John's Community Services** – Roy shared that SJCS purchased a 9-bed house on Albany Street with a reintegration application to be an OASAS provider. They are looking to hire a program director and be able to serve customers by October or November 2023.

**ADC** - Stacy shared that they are close to opening the stabilization level of services at the location on Triphammer but have experienced extreme challenges in hiring nurses to staff the detox level. Operation certificates are expected today, and referrals were accepted with potential admissions set for Monday.

**CARS** – Brad shared that the mobile unit will be here soon and wait for security cameras to come in. The first stop is Chenango County in the town of Norwich which has a Narcan vending machine.

**OMH** – John had nothing to add.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:54 p.m.

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**The next Substance Use Subcommittee Meeting  
will be held on September 13, 2023, from 12 – 1 pm**