



Tompkins County
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BOARD

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

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Sheila McEnery, Vice Chair

Frank Kruppa, Commissioner

Harmony Ayers-Friedlander
Deputy Commissioner/DCS

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James Beaumont and Jeff Boles, Co-Chairs
Developmental Disabilities Subcommittee

Jacob Parker Carver, Chair
Substance Use Subcommittee

Substance Use Subcommittee Meeting
March 13, 2024 – 12 to 1 p.m. Via Zoom
Meeting Minutes

Minutes Approved
April 10, 2024

Present: Jacob Parker Carver; Marley Brooks; Ron Schoneman; and Tom Lipa

Excused: Noah Valdez; and Stu Bergman

Unexcused:

Guests: Briggs Seekins, Challenge; Eli Baez, St. John’s; Jessica Janssen, CARS; Brad Walworth, CARS; Brandi Remington, TST BOCES; Scott Sherwood, ICR; and AJ Kircher

Staff Present: Frank Kruppa, Commissioner; Harmony Ayers-Friedlander, Deputy Commissioner; Rich Shaw, TCWH; Shannon Alvord, CWH; 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. A quorum was not met and the October 11, 2023, November 8, 2023, December 13, 2023, and January 10, 2024, minutes could not be approved.
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Privileges of the Floor: None

Announcements/Correspondence: None

Alcohol and Drug Council Update: Frank reported that as of February 26, 2024, the Alcohol and Drug Council, a local nonprofit agency, was forced to suspend all services. He commended the agency for its work in transitioning interested clients to new care with the transition’s completion expected by the end of the week.

The County is preparing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for new vendors to provide prevention, outpatient, detox/stabilization services previously offered by ADC. The Community Services Board (CSB), and the Substance Use Subcommittee will be involved in reviewing RFP responses.

Frank said that the County was aware of ADC’s financial struggles and both the County and State provided additional funding to support their efforts but were not aware of the full extent of their internal workings. Unfortunately, many nonprofits in this sector are not sustainable because of the nature of the system of evolution and cited CARS which is now affiliated with Cayuga Health Systems providing the infrastructure of larger organizations needed to be sustainable.

Frank acknowledged the recent attention around the overdose deaths and will be reporting on the data soon. In light of ADC’s closure, he believes there is potential for a reset and rethink of services to create a more holistic and effective product for the community through the RFP for the services. He hopes to bring mental health, substance use, and crisis stabilization ideology together using existing resources that were intended in the development of ADC’s Detox/Stabilization Center.

The need for a Detox/Stabilization Center in the community was welcomed and supported by OASAS and the County. Frank cited factors such as the pandemic, and workforce changes for nurses which strongly impacted ADC's ability to succeed and its ultimate closure. ADC will submit a 2024 consolidated fiscal report (CFR) which will give insight into the financial struggles.

Many expressed their feelings on the sudden closure of ADC. There was frustration with the transitioning of clients from ADC to other providers. Frank acknowledged the rapidly evolving situation and the challenges and sensitivity of notifying the clients but was not able to make it public before notifying the staff of the closure. Choices of licensed providers for services were offered to clients and it was not easy to deliver the news and clients have a choice of where they want to be treated.

Ron, a clinician shared his personal experience of loss to substance use and feels there's urgency needed in this situation. Frank acknowledges his pain and confirms that the County is committed to moving quickly to find a solution despite the challenges they face.

Jessica Janssen, Executive Director at CARS provided her email address for clients who struggle to get enrolled with CARS. She said that CARS is accepting ADC clients, and an abbreviated enrollment process was created for ADC clients. In addition, CARS has opened new programs and hired more staff to take on additional clients from ADC including nurses and counselors.

Eli humbly shared her personal experience emphasizing the importance of assuming the best of the community partners and acknowledging the resilience of individuals in recovery.

Brandi shared her concerns about ensuring success for the next group of OASAS service providers. It is important to message the community for help when needed. Frank said the County is committed to the success of all providers and the RFP process will help the chosen entity to a sustainable path to avoid setbacks.

Jake shared that as the Substance Use Subcommittee looks into the issues of housing and workforce shortages in our community, they plan to incorporate lessons learned from the ADC closure into the workforce shortage data collection plan. They will get assistance from Data Analyst, Samantha Fletcher of OMH and Cornell University

Frank suggests to keep asking questions about learning from the ADC experience and providing feedback as the RFP unfolds.

Provider Updates:

TST BOCES - Brandi encouraged everyone to attend the May meeting where she will make a presentation on youth substance use and mental health.

ICR – Scott announced Game Night is on April 20th; 5/18 Day will celebrate the women of ICR on May 18th; looking for an organization to partner on a team to support a safe friendly, recovery space for teenagers.

St. John's Community Services – Eli shared that they are looking to hire staff for the Serenity House and anticipate an open house shortly.

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

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**The next Substance Use Subcommittee Meeting
will be held on Wednesday, April 10, 2024, from 12 – 1 pm**