



Tompkins County
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BOARD

Tompkins County Whole Health
201 East Green Street
Ithaca, New York 14850-5635

Ellice Switzer, Chair

Jan Lynch, Vice Chair

Frank Kruppa; Commissioner

Harmony Ayers-Friedlander,
Deputy Commissioner/Director of Community Services

Larry Roberts, Chair,
Mental Health Subcommittee

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

Stu Bergman, Chair,
Substance Use Subcommittee

Mental Health Subcommittee
Via Zoom
January 17, 2023, @ 1:00 pm
Meeting Minutes

Approved 4.18.23

Present: Larry Roberts; Beth McGee; Mary Hutchens; Jessica Conner, Tracy Decker, Mary Orsaio; Jan Lynch; and Dan Doyle

Excused: Ed Bergman

Guests Present: Helen Kaplan, ADC; Briggs Seekins, Challenge; Judi Magee, Unity House; Kristen Wilson, Unity House

Staff Present: Harmony Ayers-Friedlander, DCS; Rich Shaw, TCWH; and Karan Palazzo, LGU AA

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 pm by Larry. Introductions were made. Mary motioned to approve the December 2022 minutes, 2nd by Beth; all were in favor.

Privilege of the Floor & Announcements:

Deputy Commissioner's Report: Harmony reported:

Integrating and Improving Services:

- Officially "Tompkins County Whole Health"
- Mental Health services will soon be available at Brown Road
- Expanding Public Health services for families and children; flu and COVID vaccines offered at Green Street.
- The clinic served 1800 people; clinic hours have expanded; 50% of clients return for in-person services
- Walk In Same Day Intake Appointments Through Open Access
- Easy referral form

Staffing

- Staff working from home 50%
- 4-day work weeks, expanded hours, and flexible schedules
- Increased clinical training
- Need for a part-time psychiatric position
- Licensure categories for therapists expanded
- Peers have been hired
- The Mobile Crisis Team will be transitioning to a co-response model with both the Sheriff's Department and Ithaca Police Department
- Our PROS has the most people working than any other PROS program in NYS and was able to hire two PEERS

Four Training Goal Areas:

- Implementing Zero Suicide Model
- Treating Co-Occurring Disorders
- Contracting with Coordinated Care Services Inc. (CCSI) to help implement and provide ongoing training to improve services which are directed toward supervisory staff to enhance a cultural change around trauma-informed care
- Dr. Jerel Ezell, Assistant Director of Cornell's Center for Cultural Humanity will support in his area of specialty in equity inclusion in understanding deaths of despair, suicide deaths, and opioid overdose deaths, and how to really measure that. He will analyze how we can improve on diversity, and equity inclusion, and provide recommendations on how to address the needs of our staff, expand our work, and the diversity of our workforce, and expand access by creating a place where everybody in our community feels welcome to come. His work will be combined with CCSI's work.

Harmony was happy to report that TCWH be audited in three years which is the best you can do for an audit. There were only minor areas to address. NYS was so impressed with TCWH's various engagement letters that they will be models for other clinics around NYS. TCWH is looking into how to support children and families during the summer months at sites that don't have to have a satellite clinic.

Helen added that although the Detox and Stabilization center is not open as yet it will be another avenue for law enforcement and mental health to access versus the emergency room or jail for those needing substance use services with the mental health component.

Harmony stated that the trauma-informed care model will enhance and improve relationships with partners and streamline access to care. ADC's Detox and Stabilization Center will be invaluable to the community, especially with a cooccurring thought process to address people's mental health needs.

Discussion of Governor Hochul's Mental Health Proposals (MHANYS and NYAPRS): Larry referred to the documents shared via email.

Larry opened the floor for discussion. Larry believes the governor and the legislature will need more information and education about peer support and its importance in the treatment, recovery, and available ancillary recovery services.

Concerns of re-opening beds in State Psychiatric Centers - Larry opened the floor for discussion. Harmony did not have any more information than what was in the article but does know there are challenges of getting people a forensic bed in a timely manner. She believes there is a lot more work to be done at the community level of care to meet community needs.

Jan was concerned that there was a connection between crime and mental health coming at the government level.

Larry is interested in enhancing or expanding slots for ACT team personnel; and how it will come down for various levels of disability-related housing, particularly for people with disabilities at risk for psychiatric homelessness. He questions the process of allocating the monies. It is important to note that the governor addressed mental health.

Harmony will have data on the various data requested from their Quality Assurance & Improvement.

Jan believes that the workforce recruitment and retention goal is focused primarily on the direct care workforce and supporting the professional workforce to provide direct service to people in residential mental health or for individuals with developmental disabilities. Harmony added that many agencies provide internships for social workers. Most agencies in attendance confirmed providing internships.

Cross-Subcommittee Round Table Planning on Workforce: Larry began with the idea to have a joint meeting between the subcommittees about strategies for improving recruitment and understanding better reasons why people are not coming into the profession. The new Director of the Workforce Development Board will be present at a CSB meeting on the strategies for developing a healthy workforce.

Harmony said the plan should include agencies to give data on turnovers, and the number of vacancies and tie that information together to a real loss of services to the community. In order to advocate effectively a demonstration of the loss

of services that came about due to the workforce shortage and not being able to support the people the many services needed should be validated with data. It would be beneficial if agencies shared their numbers. Direct support provider positions make up a significant bulk of the workforce in the community. Historically there has not been an emphasis on building and creating these jobs and supporting employers around recruitment and retention. She noted that some agencies may be reluctant to provide data due to sensitivity.

Larry is most concerned with the low wages for direct service positions and the interest in them. Jessica believes communicating the reason for needing this information and what will be done with the information while being consistent with what they (agencies) need. Mary suggested agencies provide ranges vs. numbers.

Judi of Unity House shared that they are experiencing a huge staffing crisis in Cayuga County but not Tompkins County. Jessica shared that REACH has a need for at least 20 more mental health therapists for children and adolescents.

Briggs shared that the problem is not with recruitment but with low wages. Tracy shared that Lakeview is extremely understaffed. They have increased pay rates and implemented sign-on bonuses but still had to freeze programs due to not having the staffing capacity to support the programs.

Beth feels that increased salaries still do not meet a threshold that makes it worthwhile for people to do these jobs. She has concerns with PEERS being part of Civil Service and feels reevaluating the kind of work that different levels of people do. She feels the whole system may need revamping.

In conclusion, Larry said there is clearly work to be done and asked for volunteers to work on the Cross Subcommittee Roundtable and encouraged volunteers to email him as well. The CSB will continue to discuss housing and homelessness issues.

The meeting adjourned @ 2:22 pm