**ERIE COUNTY MENTAL HYGIENE COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD  
MINUTES**

February 2, 2023

COMMUNITY

SERVICES BOARD: Daniel Antonius, Joan Baizer, Michele Brooks, Victoria Brooks, Kathryne Coric, Max Donatelli, Stephanie Orlando, Dawn Skowronski, Elizabeth Smith, BJ Stasio, Charles Syms, Erica Westphal

GUEST: Melinda DuBois, Mental Health Advocates

MENTAL HEALTH

DEPARTMENT: Mark O’Brien, Tammy Comerate, Shannon Stocker

EXCUSED: Terry Alford, Sharon Cavanaugh, Maya Hu Morabito,

**Approval of Minutes:**  
 - Introductions  
 - January Minutes were approved

**MH Commissioner Updates:**

* Governor Hochul’s Opening Address for the Budget yesterday included a ton of emphasis on housing, particularly for special needs populations and mental health. She is proposing raising the rates for Article 31 Clinic Satellites in schools compared to normal clinics. She is raising the APG (Ambulatory Patient Groupings), the mandated Medicaid state rate. She is also proposing that commercial payors match the APG. She is talking about 1,000 in-patient beds statewide (150 state-operated, 100 to NY City area, 50 to the rest of the state, plus 850 to reopen in Article 28 facilities) being restored to the system, after being cut year after year in the state system. It would mandate the Article 28 hospitals to submit a plan for their in-patient beds that are off line, to either open them in the next couple of weeks or submit a plan in the next couple of weeks to open them by April 23rd.
* The Kirsten Vincent Center is looking to open in April. They just got $900k in capital funding from OMH. They are looking to have their occupancy certificate within the next couple of weeks, then there will be a ribbon cutting. This is a new model including a living room model (the Renewal Center), an intensive crisis respite (BestSelf at 960 Niagara St.), a long-term crisis respite (Recovery Options in Jamestown), and a psychiatric urgent care (Spectrum) all under the same roof.
* OMH Commissioner Ann Sullivan, Deputy Commissioner Moira Tashjian, and Associate Commissioner Christopher Smith as well as Governor Hochul’s Deputy Secretary Jihoon Kim were in town last week. Mark accompanied them to BFNC and to BestSelf.
* The RPC (Regional Planning Collaborative) met yesterday with about 45 people on the call. They are going strong, but still plan to stand down when the Health Equity Regional Organization (HERO) 1115 Waiver is approved.
  + HealtheLink merged with the Population Health Collaborative and has applied to be the HERO under the 1115 Waiver.
  + The HERO, assuming the Medicaid Waiver is approved, will be like the RPC on steroids, with a lot of planning dollars.
  + Mark convened a meeting with all 8 Counties’ Regional DCS’s (Director of Community Services) to meet with HealtheLink so they could talk about involvement of DCS’s and the needs of the Counties. It was a very productive meeting and they are doing a lot of groundwork behind the scenes.
* All the DCS’s met with OASAS about Opioid Settlement Funds. The County put together a plan for what it thought they were getting in terms of Opioid Settlement Funds as being a litigant to the whole thing. That was wildly wrong; they are not getting anywhere near what they thought.
  + The AG (Attorney General) is pulling a whole bunch of its part of the settlement that was going through OASAS and they are funding it through the LGU (Local Government Unit); that means us. We won’t have the figures until next Monday. Our region is not the 8 County WNY Region. It is the 5 County Economic Development Zone – Erie, Niagara, Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, and Alleghany. Within that Zone, each County will be given an apportionment based on population, the number of overdoses, the number of suicides, and the percentage of minority population. The CSB will be one of the stakeholders able to weigh in on this in an advisory capacity.
  + The State Advisory Board met about the Opioid Settlement. There are 10 allowable areas for expenditures. Shannon will send a link about this to the CSB and ASA Subcommittee. This is only one piece of this. The ultimate decision will be the Counties and DCS’s. Mark will also be asking providers directly for input.
    - The 10 categories for planning purposes can be found in the Opioid Settlement Fund Advisory Board’s November 2022 Report (starting on page 12) found here:  
      [https://oasas.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/11/osfab\_yearly\_report\_110122.pdf](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fsecure-web.cisco.com%2F1Xo918wzgadJB-O5hsy_X4rCDGAqKS-oAoxGrWEP3PYeT0UDHsJHigyIbiiXigRs92KcskAO2mP6WmAJPnowTogGM3jYgzojBCppM0WVW9o6DX1QTvJh_Lz5HjAO4LgA4gNpzwj3o4VVt6Fueaw_I0LI5CN7gPAe2ixs5Q0NXkK9xrmBCmsj_VQGjSC-_CYm7Q1T4Mjl0etmd1hinjEdoBTh4RTQsVSOfRvXSGvcUHL-2eQbSDB6HAgfUKPkyNFyp4Ibp6uwvvm6vedhTUG91KLjhJfcwBoR8qtv1j9lel7dusdTTbIG1wNegTXtxVcqL%2Fhttps%253A%252F%252Foasas.ny.gov%252Fsystem%252Ffiles%252Fdocuments%252F2022%252F11%252Fosfab_yearly_report_110122.pdf&data=05%7C01%7CShannon.Stocker%40erie.gov%7C4774c24866154e344c1a08db05290d85%7Cba76c84884764c11bf095ee1f55ca222%7C0%7C0%7C638109446104338100%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=c3nkxGlJxc%2FTwRYRLdVNW564FxNNNZ87wb0%2Bx2MMXnc%3D&reserved=0)
  + We need to have a plan formulated in 4 weeks, but we don’t know how much for how long yet. The Advisory Committee had percentages in there, but we are not constrained by that. Services can be prevention, treatment, public education, etc.
  + Over the next 2-3 weeks max, through the ASA Subcommittee, even if they are not scheduled to meet, we are going to need them to meet, then they can make their recommendations. Anyone else on the CSB can make recommendations.
* Maria Torgalski is now going to be the OPWDD Regional Director.
* CPEP:
  + We did a lot of work behind the scenes. ECMC, CPEP, OMH, ECDMH, providers, and everyone came together in a problem-solving mode. CPEP can’t be everything to everybody. There were very powerful testimonies from people about their family’s experiences at CPEP including long waits, lack of dignity, lack of empathy, etc.

**Melinda DuBois (Guest) speaking about the CPEP Meeting:**

* The CPEP meeting was really good. Melinda wanted to speak at this CSB because she knows there were discussions that took place in this meeting as well as in the MH Subcommittee and she would like to take the opportunity for us to help inform the next steps of what they do with their CPEP working group. They are calling this first meeting a kind of Steering Committee that will help guide the rest of the work, which could include a lot of work.
* There is an opportunity to have some separate working groups to really talk about how we can, as a community, support our crisis response and CPEP. There is also an opportunity to have a family advisory committee that regularly meets; Michele Brooks and Maria Clark, Director at CPEP, had talked about this pre-COVID and we are going to try to get this activated. There is also an opportunity to pull together the crisis stabilization work that is being done, so we invited WNIL, BestSelf, Crisis Services, Recovery Options, and Endeavor to discuss the diversion piece of it, so we can make sure people are appropriately responded to in the community and that CPEP is a last resort.
* We also discussed putting together peer-lead groups where we really have the opportunity for individuals and families to talk about their experiences in the past year. We had 7 either parents, family members, or people who had been to CPEP really talking about their experiences so we can lift that up and honor their experiences. Several of them also testified at the Attorney General’s Hearing.
* Melinda wants to get feedback from folks to make sure they are headed in the right direction and see if there are any other suggestions or missing pieces.
  + Max brought up the Police Department, the Sheriff’s Office, First Responders, and the 9-1-1 representatives because they definitely are many times the front line. Melinda said they have discussed these people as well as Ambulance workers.
* Next week, at the Library, NYAPRS (New York Association Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services) is pulling some folks together to talk about responding to crises in the community. Melinda will be attending to gather more thoughts. Mark is speaking at that meeting. Mark said they are looking at the 9-1-1 Diversion and the Crisis Diversion is bringing in law enforcement at the work group level.
* Mark said our hopeful goal is to come out with 4 Subgroups along these lines:
  + Public Education Campaign – not only how to access mental health resources, but what is CPEP, what is it about and what is it not about. It is not supposed to be the front line, the be all, end all.
  + Family and Peer Advisory Subgroup
  + Diversion Committee – going to be mostly external, pulling together all the things that are either in place or coming on line this year.
  + Internal ECMC and CPEP to make improvements, but we are looking for some external transparency and involvement in those processes.
* Melinda is happy to go to the MH Subcommittee’s next meeting to get a sense of what’s going on there and discuss further.
* Tori Brooks stated that the limitations related to the Office of MH regulatory stuff, really feels limiting and wondered what Melinda thinks about the involvement of OMH in this process or if we want to do our thing then tell them what we need.
  + Michele Brooks said she would say it is absolutely necessary for OMH to hear first-hand. The Field Representative, Chris Marcello, was there as well as the Director of Licensing, Nicole Slootsky.
  + Stephanie Orlando added that in addition to being in the meetings, when there is a set of recommendations, there are places to take them. She served the maximum term possible on the Behavioral Health Services Council for OMH and OASAS. They have a public comment period that is really not utilized enough and she is positive that some of the current council members would very much welcome a public comment and discussion around the regulations. They have a Regulations Committee and review all changes to regulations and advise the Commissioners who actually make the changes.
  + Mark added that the OMH Commissioner herself is aware of what’s going on, they’ve had direct conversations with her. If there are regulatory barriers, you want OMH at the table, working as a partner, to see what can be done.
  + Max stated that one of the sticking points is the Nurses’ Union. They were in the paper and had some very significant issues. He hopes they have a representative dealing separately with the Administration.
  + Melinda said they did not have anyone at this meeting representing the nurses but it is helpful to hear all of this. We really need to amplify that there are restrictions that prevent CPEP from doing things that they could be doing to help the situation. Their hands are tied, which was brought up at the meeting. The CPEP staff and ECMC’s restrictions are huge factors in making any significant change. She loves the idea of going through the processes that exist in order to make sure that people are aware. Also, people going to Commissioner Sullivan is important so she is aware of it. There are so many forces at play here that we have to be able to address all of them. We were saying at the meeting that we would love CPEP to be one of the best in the whole state and with the work we are doing and with the community’s involvement and CPEP and ECMC’s willingness to change, we have the opportunity to do that, but it is going to take a lot of people and a lot of commitment to the process.
  + Max brought up that we have a representative from the Veterans Administration, Katie Coric. Katie described that they do have crisis care at the VA and she doesn’t know if people are aware of that. Melinda will make people aware.
  + Melinda talked about folks from the IDD world and their involvement in the process. She has had some initial discussions with Sam Mattle (Founder and Executive Director, Center for Self-Advocacy) about some of the missing components there and how to make sure we are responding to everyone in our community. Max added that BJ Stasio is another good resource and that the IDD Subcommittee has talked about that whole issue a number of times. BJ said all the “O”s should sit together to discuss how to serve people who are dually diagnosed. Mark brought up that we have not discussed in this meeting yet that there are ongoing efforts, what we’re calling the “System Spanner” efforts. John Grieco is taking a big lead in that. We are working with OPWDD, OMH, and OASAS to do exactly what BJ is talking about - to bridge these gaps, not necessarily tied to the CPEP efforts, but generally speaking, including them appearing at CPEP.

**Chairperson Update:**

* Annual Meeting for election of officers
  + Max would like to nominate BJ Stasio for Vice Chair of the CSB.
  + Is anyone else interested in an officer position? (No response.) Each of the Subcommittee Directors is on the Executive Board of the CSB.
  + Stephanie Orlando seconded BJ for Vice Chair.
  + No one opposed to BJ becoming Vice Chair.
  + Max can only be Chair for 4 full year terms and he has done 2 already; there are term limits.
  + Is anyone else interested in Chairing? (No response.)
  + BJ lead the meeting asking if Max should be voted in as Chair.
  + Dawn Skowronski seconded Max for Chair.
  + No one opposed to Max continuing as Chair.
* Subcommittee Reports were sent out and there are some significant issues that are going on, but we don’t have time to talk about them.

**Subcommittee Updates:**

* IDD Subcommittee (Max):
  + Last meeting was January 19th. Minutes will be sent out.
  + The Governor’s Budget was sent out and there was definitely a real concern about the workforce crisis, particularly in human services, not just IDD. What Max has seen and read so far, there was only a 2.5% increase; we’ve been looking for an 8.5% increase statewide. We have had meetings with Legislators; we met last Friday; BJ, DDAWNY (Developmental Disability Alliance of WNY), and Max were part of that. Max feels that the Governor understands a lot of these issues; she has put 10% into education and she has put a lot into mental health. BJ and Max will be going to Albany for a rally on February 13th to highlight all these issues. We have a NYS OPWDD Commissioner there, Kerri Neifeld, who understands these issues because the State-run organizations also have issues with keeping and attracting new staff members.
  + We have a new person, Jenna Aldridge, recommended by Maria Torgalski to be the Co-Chair with BJ for the IDD Subcommittee.
  + There were some real concerns raised about a new ADM (Administrative Memorandum) on housing that is requiring people to get yearly leases as opposed to having monthly leases. Some of the providers said that that is going to be a real problem.
  + Next meeting will be March 16th.
* ASA Subcommittee (Liz):
  + Last meeting was January 26th. Minutes will be sent out.
  + We focused on the workforce issues and also regulatory guidance that also limits the workforce as well, more so on OASAS’s end because of their program staffing requirements, audits, and getting sited for workforce issues.
  + We are planning to talk at our next meeting about the Substance Abuse Committee name due to the “Abuse” piece since OASAS has taken measures to change the language and reduce the stigma of the word “abuse.”
  + We talked about integrating substance use and the gambling components that are coming up. We invited Angela DiRosa from the Western Problem Gambling Resource Center to come present at our next meeting about what they are about and to see if we want to incorporate that into the Alcohol and Substance Abuse Committee.
    - Mark added that at the State-level, problem gambling is under the auspices of OASAS now.
    - If the name changes, we will need approval through the By-Laws
  + Next meeting will be February 23rd.
* MH Subcommittee (Erica):
  + Last meeting was January 9th. Emails were sent out.
  + We had a couple speakers come in:
    - Captain Amber Beyer who was from the Behavioral Health Initiative who gave us a lot of great information and a direct line to her and her staff for any concerns or future ideas for some of the programs.
      * Lieutenant Klopp, who has been named to step in for Captain Beyer, and Jenna Colern from Endeavor convened a meeting of the Erie County Threat Assessment last week that Mark O’Brien attended.
      * Crisis Services has been involved since the very beginning, so Tracie Bussi is an excellent person and they have done presentations as well.
    - Shannon Higbee presented on the Kirsten Vincent Respite Center.
  + Next meeting will be March 13th.

**NAMI Updates (Michele):**

* New location - NAMI Buffalo & Erie County, 737 Delaware Ave., Suite 217, Buffalo NY  14209. 716-226-6264 (same office / Helpline number).

**CPEP:**

* Updates given above.

**Building Careers in Human Services (Max):**

* No updates given.

**Opiate Task Force (Mark):**

* No updates given.

**Forensic Mental Health (Daniel):**

* No updates given.

**Anti-Stigma Coalition (Max):**

* No updates given.

**SANYS (Self-Advocates of NY State) (BJ):**

* No updates given.

**Veterans Administration (Katie):**

* No updates given

**Next Meeting:**

* Thursday, March 2, 2023 @ 9:00am