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

March 2, 2023

COMMUNITY  
SERVICES BOARD: Terry Alford, Joan Baizer, Michele Brooks, Victoria Brooks, Sharon   
 Cavanaugh, Kathryne Coric, Max Donatelli, Maya Hu Morabito, Stephanie   
 Orlando, Dawn Skowronski, Elizabeth Smith, Charles Syms, Erica Westphal  
  
MENTAL HEALTH  
DEPARTMENT: Mark O’Brien, Tammy Comerate, Shannon Stocker   
  
EXCUSED: Daniel Antonius, BJ Stasio

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Approval of Minutes:**- February Minutes were approved

**MH Commissioner Updates:**- We had a really productive 2nd meeting with the leadership of CPEP and ECMC (we are   
 working with leadership of both). There’s been a lot of heat literally over the course of  
 decades and they have become more pronounced when ECMC became the only 9.39  
 hospital in Buffalo. ECMC should not be the front-line in crisis.

* There is representation of the County, OMH, some consumers, families, strong representation from CPEP and ECMC all the way up through their Senior Vice President of Behavioral Health and Dr. Bakhai.
* There is a commitment to:
  + Keep meeting to keep this work going
  + Form the recommended groups, like internal operations meetings (happen every other week)
  + ECMC leadership agreed to get perspectives from families, consumers, field office, ECDMH, etc. to be open and transparent (meet every other week)
  + Forming a diversion system, including public messaging and education to inform people of how to access MH services and what services are available
  + Have as much coordination and continuity as possible
  + Have a dedicated family / consumer advisory committee down the road

- Open Discussion:

* + This is a good opportunity having the right people at the table to have productive conversations. There are internal issues, community-based / more systemic factors, and short-term and long-term goals to work on.
  + It now feels like a collaborative effort instead of an “us / them” situation, like in the past. The meeting exceeded expectations. There have already been encouraging changes made in CPEP.

- Governor Hochul’s Budget includes all hospitals have to submit their letter with a plan by April to re-open beds. Part of the challenge is going to be finding staff.

- At Brylin’s request, ECDMH Assistant Commissioner, John Grieco, and Mark met with the leaders of Brylin Hospital about their long-standing issues. They had a follow up meeting that included OMH, BPC, Children’s Psychiatric Center, and ECMC. There will be some upcoming discussions that we will be facilitating that the WNY Field Office, ECMC leadership, and Brylin will be at to get those facilities talking and looking at where they can align and bridge some divides there.

- Re: the Opioid Settlement, we know a lot more than we did even last month.

* + There are funds coming down in 3 different buckets:
    - To counties and communities to make them whole, to the extent of funds that they lost during the opioid crisis, and those can be used for whatever, ie: roads, bridges, repairs, etc., not related to the opioid crisis.
    - To the counties to be used under the 10 broad guidelines set forth by the State Advisory Board, things like prevention, treatment, community messages, harm reduction, investment in the system, etc. The counties have discretion on how they use those funds but they will have to report those to OASAS.
    - Through OASAS to the LGU (ECDMH) used for abatement purposes within those 10 areas. It doesn’t mean you’re going to hit all 10 areas.
  + This is the money we have at this point. There is more settlement coming. This is going to be a dynamic, evolving plan.
  + One thing we did, that we were required to do, was get some stakeholder input. We went to the CSB’s ASA Subcommittee, the Opioid Task Force’s Treatment Subcommittee, and all the providers of treatment and prevention in the county. We did a survey (compilations will be finalized at 11am this morning). We are meeting tomorrow with those providers and the Deputy County Executive - she is chairing the overall response from the county. We will be giving providers back their responses, asking for their 1st, 2nd, and 3rd priorities and for their specific feedback of what they would do.
  + There was an initial plan approved by the legislature a couple months ago based on the information the county had at the time, which was apparently somewhat faulty. So, there was a commitment made to providers that had to be pulled back – nobody felt good about that. In this plan, that commitment is going to be honored. There will also be a $6M RFP coming out – it has not been determined what that RFP is going to look like. We hope there is going to be some additional dollars to say what are we going to do with that based on the providers’ priorities. We are being very open, transparent, and inclusive in the process to the extent we can, but we are also on a very short 4-week timeframe. We also have to submit a 1-year implementation timeframe and an attestation that we will not supplant funds.
  + These are not world-changing amounts of money. From the whole county pot, it ranges from $1.5 - 2.5M over 16 years.

**Chairperson Update:**

- Reminder, if you have not reviewed your priorities within your Subcommittee, please do so. Hopefully we can discuss at our next meeting.

- We were supposed to have Yan Liu, President of Bridges from Borders Inc., join us today, but she was not able to. Hopefully she can come to a future meeting to discuss the work they do with us refugees and immigrants, specifically focusing on the area of youth mental health.

- Please review your Bios. We would like to consider putting them on our website, so people know who is on this Board. If you have any concerns about that, please let Max know, otherwise we will put them up in the future.

- Re: the local and state-wide significant concern about the workforce crisis that still exists in several the human services, there is a big push by these services that are supported through the NYS offices to get an 8.5% cost of living adjustment because of many years of not having any adjustment.

**Subcommittee Updates:**

- MH Subcommittee (Erica):

* + Last meeting was January 9th, so we haven’t met since last month’s CSB meeting. Minutes were sent out.
  + At our next meeting, we will have Dr. Steven Silverstein presenting. He is the Clinical Director of the Intercept Program, which is a new program that the Patrick Lee Foundation is supporting.
  + We will also have Amy Rockwood from ECDMH who will cover the Local Services Plan.
  + We will also review our priorities.
  + Next meeting will be March 13th.

- ASA Subcommittee (Liz):

* + Last meeting was February 23rd. January Minutes were sent out; February’s will be sent out.
  + We had Mark speak with the group about what he just spoke about here, the Opioid Settlement, Surveys, and gauging input and feedback from the committee.
  + We also had a speaker, Angela DiRosa from the Western Problem Gambling Resource Center, come present. When Liz gets the slides, she will send them with the Minutes to the CSB members.
  + We didn’t have enough time to discuss the possible name change to be less stigmatizing.
  + Next meeting will be March 23rd.

- IDD Subcommittee (Max):

* + Last meeting was January 19th. Minutes will be sent out.
  + We have a new person, Jenna Astridge, who will be co-chairing with BJ. Jenna is taking over for Maria Torgalski, who will be starting this week as the new Director of the local Regional Office for Office for People with Disabilities.
  + The workforce crisis issue has been a real priority because that is a major concern. The DDAWNY agencies have met locally with the WNY delegation. We also met with them in Albany. We met Rebecca Seawright, the Chair of the People with Disabilities Committee, who is taking over for Tom Abinanti. BJ met with Senator John Mannion, Chair of the Senate Disabilities Committee. We met with the legislators as well as with the Governor’s office.
  + BJ and Max met with the Buffalo News Editorial Board last Friday hoping they will do some kind of a story or comment on these minimum wage and workforce crisis issues.
  + Next meeting will be March 16th.

**Veterans Administration (Katie):**

- Over the past couple of months, there’s been two newer pieces of legislation passed regarding Veterans and they have remarkably similar names.

* + The PACT Act has to do with the comprehensive toxins that a lot of people who serve in the military are exposed to (overseas or stateside). It has been made more for veterans to qualify for health benefits and even disability compensation. Combat veterans were allowed 5 years of coverage regardless of income or service connection to allow for screening and also assistance applying for Service Connection (what the VA calls disability compensation for veterans). That has been expanded to 10 years. There has also been a lot more Presumptive Conditions, which are health conditions that are connected to toxins that individuals who served in the military may be exposed to. So, veterans who were not eligible in the past or are beyond the combat window, may now be eligible. They can call the VA Hospital and ask to speak with the Veterans’ Service Center about eligibility.
  + The COMPACT Act is related to the VA paying for and providing care for veterans who have experienced an emergent suicide crisis. Some veterans already had healthcare with the VA, but also had copay or ambulance costs. This bill covers care for an emergent suicide crisis for veterans for an ER evaluation, transportation, and up to 30 days of in-patient care and 90 days of out-patient care. The biggest expansion for this bill is it covers it within the VA healthcare system and in the community. It may also cover if someone goes to their VA and uses their in-patient, but then goes to an outside agency for their out-patient care. It covers copays and visits for out-patient care for up to 90 days after.
    - Here's some info for providers about compact act: [www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/providers/info\_EmergencyCare.asp](http://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/providers/info_EmergencyCare.asp)
    - This info may be helpful to billing departments: <https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/revenue_ops/Veteran_Care_Claims.asp>

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

- No updates given.

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

- Just recently completed a Facebook Live on Caregivers. You can view it on their website: <https://letstalkstigma.org/>.

**Forensic Mental Health (Daniel):**

- No updates given.

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

- There has been some work on this, but Max has to check with Cathleen Larson from ECDMH for an update.

**CPEP (Tori):**

- Updates given above.

**NAMI Updates (Michele):**

- Shannon forwards email updates.

- Helpline continues to be overly complex, people who are at a loss for resources. This will be followed to see if we can provide more services and resources.

- One of the problems we have with resources is to send people for grief related to people who have lost people to mental illness, not necessarily suicide, but can include suicide.

- If anyone has any resources, please send them to NAMI so we can update our information.

- New location is doing really well.

- Michele will be leaving NAMI shortly, but she will stay on the CSB as a family representative until her term ends.

**Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor (Terry):**

- As we finished the beginning of the year with MLK Day of Caring, the blanket drive, and looping into our Black History Month of activities, we had a number of things going on. We have events such as these to provide some nurturing, emotional support, pride in heritage, and improve the quality of life for people, both physically and mentally. We thank you all for your participation and support.

- We are moving right into Women’s History Month this month, so we are during finalizing plans for art pop-ups featuring local women artists as well as we are working on a one-day event at the Buffalo History Museum later in the month. We are hoping that many of you can participate. Terry will send out information through Max and Shannon.

**Opiate Task Force (Mark):**

- No updates given.

**Open Discussion:**

- The PUNT Foundation is offering training and a symposium on May 19th and 20th. The training is open mostly to providers, but open to anybody, for a nominal charge, on Grief and Loss, particularly. The symposium on Saturday is for anybody who lost a family member or loved one, particularly a child, open to the public. ECDMH is co-sponsoring these. Shannon will send out the email with the fliers. Their long-term goal is to try to establish a center for grieving families and people. They work with hospice as well.

- At 7pm this evening, Karl Shallowhorn, former CSB Member, is going to be doing a  
 presentation, Mental Health Verses Live: The Journey. Shannon will forward an   
 announcement to this group. It’s $10 / ticket, which will go to the Mental Health Advocates.

**Next Meeting:**

- Thursday, April 6, 2023 @ 9:00am.