

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

**ANNUAL MEETING**

January 2, 2025

**COMMUNITY**

**SERVICES BOARD:** Victoria Brooks, Emma Fabian, Maya Hu Morabito, Stephanie Orlando, Elizabeth Smith, Charles Syms, Erica Westphal

**MENTAL HEALTH**

**DEPARTMENT:** Mark O'Brien, John Grieco, Shannon Stocker

**EXCUSED:** Terry Alford, Daniel Antonius, Joan Baizer, Sharon Cavanaugh, Kathryne Coric, Max Donatelli, Pastor George Nicholas, BJ Stasio

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**Approval of Minutes:**

- October and November CSB Minutes were not approved, due to not having quorum.

**MH Commissioner Updates:**

- A lot of work is being done on the Crisis Response system.
  - o The MH triage tool is ready for roll out to providers. There is one more meeting tomorrow, and then it will be rolled out at the Leadership Meeting next week or in February with a 30-day turnaround for providers to give input. It is not a flowchart; it is a menu, if you will, including definitions of crisis, levels of distress, and options for people, encouraging people to use options other than CPEP, which should only be used for people who really need to go there.
  - o The Lee Foundation has had consultants come in and look at the whole crisis system, which has Buffalo leadership, Erie County leadership, ECMC, Sheriff, etc. on it. They are also funding the second part of what we wanted to get going, which is a public awareness campaign. They've hired a media group who came up with a draft media plan, but it is not ready yet. They don't want to send the triage tool out to the community; it's too much information. The idea is they want the community to understand that they have options on who to call, who can come, and where to go.
- BestSelf is hoping to open their Intensive Crisis Stabilization Center by the end of February / the beginning of March. They are finding staff and finishing the building now.
- 150 apartments at DePaul's new Pan-Am facility is getting close to opening as well. That will be located at Delaware and Hertle. Their ribbon cutting should be in about 1-2 months.
- DePaul is also working on their new 80-bed SRO at the McKinley Square (former Bridgewell). They are knocking down the previous building and will build a brand new facility.
- DePaul is pulling together a 14-bed transitional housing at the border of the East Side of Buffalo and Cheektowaga.
- Weinberg Campus is closing down their skilled nursing facility and adult residence / assisted living. We are working closely with the State Office of MH and Greenwood Residence, which is part of the Weinberg Campus corporation, but is not on the Campus; it is a Community Residence for 55 and up. Their operating certificate and everything is being transferred to Transitional Services. That is really good news.
- The Renaissance Campus, people use to know it as Kids Escaping Drugs and used to be part of ADDS (Alcohol and Drug Dependency Services) and then BestSelf took it over, their occupancy has gone way down and they have some little issues with some of their OASAS

audits, and at this point, they have 5 kids left on campus, so they weren't viable, so they closed their RRSY (Residential Rehabilitation Services for Youth). The other two Part 820s are still operating. The one Part that did close down was not just a BestSelf issue, it was a state-wide issue.

- Karen Rybicki has been selected as the Department of Social Services Commissioner. She was the First Deputy Commissioner. They are now looking to fill her position. That is really good news for the MH Dept working closely with Social Services. She has been with DSS for quite a while, and she is user-friendly.
- The posting for MH Commissioner has come down; it was posted from December 4<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup>. They should start interviewing sometime this month. John will be the Interim Commissioner again until the new Commissioner starts.
- Thank you, members of the CSB, for all your time, input, and dedication. This has been a privilege and honor to serve with each and every one of you.
  - o Stephanie mentioned that everyone should have gotten the invitation for Mark's Retirement Party on Wednesday, January 29<sup>th</sup>.
  - o Stephanie thanked Mark for everything he has done for our community and the region.

### **Chairperson Update:**

- Social Care Network for the 1115 Waiver:
  - o We have a new website for WNY Integrated Care Collaborative. We are starting to just use "Integrated Care" as our name, and getting away from the acronym "WNYICC," so there is some new branding and a new logo out there. We're launching the website, trying to get all of the information up for everybody involved in the waiver and the Social Care Network. So, if you go to WNYICC.org, you will see that under the 1115 area of the website. There is information about referrals, how to get services, and how to get involved in the Network.
  - o The next Lunch and Learn is on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. That's a monthly update that the Care Collaborative does, and this month is supposed to be the launch of screening.
  - o We have the next Governance meeting on January 28<sup>th</sup>, which will be our second meeting. It will be in person in Niagara Falls at our Independent Living of Niagara County Office at 746 Portage Rd.
  - o There are also some work groups that are starting this month: Screening and Navigation Workgroup, Housing, Transportation, Food and Nutrition, and our DEAI Committee which is also doing Outreach and Communication.
- Katie Coric has resigned from the CSB because she has moved on to a new national position. We sent out the resume of another veteran representative that we think would be a great fit. We will revisit that again next meeting, but we do want to bring on somebody that can represent the veteran population. Max is still helping Stephanie learn the Chair role and getting used to some of the stuff coming in for people that are interested in becoming members and filling that need. Our Executive Committee is part of Bylaws to help find people to recruit. The goal today was to match up the County Charter, which says we have a Secretary, with our Bylaws that didn't have that. So we were thinking that adding that Secretary position, we might also have the Secretary track people that are interested in becoming members of the CSB with us, so when we have vacancies, we can review anyone who has already expressed interest and see who better rounds out our group to see who we might want to reach out to if necessary.
  - o Mark added that he thinks the Bylaws call for the CSB to have a Special Meeting to amend the Bylaws. He suggested, to make it simple, to call at the next regular meeting, call a Special Meeting, discuss it, do the vote, and then have the regular meeting. You don't have to have it a separate day.

- Stephanie said, yes, we just have to call it 5 days ahead of time, so we will call it, officially, that at our next meeting because we weren't able to do our business at our Annual Meeting, which this is, so we will have a Special Meeting in February as part of our regular meeting.

### **Subcommittee Updates:**

- MH Subcommittee (Erica):
  - Last meeting was November 18<sup>th</sup>. Minutes will be sent out.
  - Erica said they talked about:
    - Erica stepping down from Chairperson and, after further consideration, she is going to step down from both the MH Subcommittee and the CSB. She is very proud to have served in this role, and especially with this group, and she wanted to thank everyone for their support of the MH Subcommittee over the years.
    - They discussed the responsibilities of a Chairperson and membership. They are planning to do a re-commitment campaign for all the members to make sure that everyone on the Subcommittee still wants to serve throughout 2025. They also looked at bringing on new members as well.
    - Erica's last meeting as Chairperson is Monday, January 13<sup>th</sup> and they will vote in a new Chairperson at that time.
    - Erica said she will discuss with Mark and the new MH Subcommittee Chair about if she will give their updates from the January MH Subcommittee meeting at the February CSB meeting, or if the new Chair will. So, Erica's last meeting as part of the CSB will be either this meeting or in February, depending on how the new Chair feels.
    - Stephanie said it would be helpful from her seat if Erica was at the February meeting so we can update the bylaws, etc. We need the MH Chairperson on this CSB. She also said she liked the idea of the recommitment campaign. Maybe we need that for the whole CSB in general. We've been sending information out about people's terms and, with attendance the way it is, we need to get work done, so maybe we need to learn from what the MH Subcommittee is doing.
    - Stephanie thanked Erica for all of her dedication and hard work with her Chair duties. We really appreciate it.
    - The CSB has the power to approve the Chairperson for the Subcommittees, but we will need to recommend the new Chairperson to the County Executive for them to join the CSB.
    - Mark echoed Erica's praises, saying she has been very thoughtful and very insightful in her leadership in the MH Subcommittee. He thanked her for her service as well.
  - Next meeting will be January 13<sup>th</sup>.
- PASS Subcommittee (Elizabeth):
  - Last meeting was October 24<sup>th</sup>. Minutes will be sent out.
  - They left off discussing their 2025 Priorities and they will be inviting Jason Merlin from ECDOH to present some data regarding opioid overdoses in the January meeting.
  - Next meeting will be January 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- IDD Subcommittee (Max):
  - Last meeting was November 21<sup>st</sup>. Minutes will be sent out.
  - Next meeting will be January 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Next Meeting:**

- Thursday, February 6, 2025, from 9:00-10:00am. This will be a Special Meeting.
- Liz brought up that their Medication Mobile Units through PROMESA have been manufactured and they are in the process of submitting the applications to OASAS for the grant for Dunkirk's and Buffalo's programs. They are currently in collaboration with Horizon about possibly going up to their residential program. They have also had discussions with the Seneca Nation. She will provide updates as they move along.
- Dr. Tori Brooks shared that they have recruited 3 of the trainees who graduated from their resident and fellowship programs. So, as of July, CPEP will be adding at least 3 new attendings that are "homegrown."
- If anyone wants to help Stephanie reach out to some of the other CSB members and make sure that everyone is engaged and if anyone needs anything, please let her know.