

**STEBEN COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE**

Tuesday, March 28, 2023

3:00 p.m.

*2nd Floor, Annex Building, Conference Room C
Bath, New York*

****MINUTES****

PRESENT: Dr. Henry Chapman, Director of Community Services
Lynn Lewis, Assistant Director of Community Services
Matt Mehlenbacher, ARC Allegany/Steuben
Lillian Fazi, Capabilities, Inc.
Jeannie Wheeler, Bath Central School District
Erin Warr, Pathways, Inc.

OTHERS: Auralee Jefferds, Adult Clinic Coordinator
Christina Lyon, Director for Vocational Services, ARC Allegany/Steuben

I. CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Chapman called the meeting to order at 3:045 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: APPROVING THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S) MADE BY MS. WARR, SECONDED BY MR. MEHLENBACHER AND DULY CARRIED.

III. GENERAL BUSINESS

A. *Retirement Update* – Dr. Chapman stated his retirement date is May 8, 2023. The County has advertised the position, accepted applications and will begin interviewing candidates. He noted that Ms. Lewis has submitted her application. He will be taking some leave time between now and May 8, 2023, and during those times Ms. Lewis, in her capacity as Assistant Director, will be handling things and will continue to do so until a replacement is in place. He asked that committees please include Ms. Lewis on any email correspondence so she is aware of any pending issues. Dr. Chapman noted it was a difficult decision to retire, but with ongoing health issues, he felt it was best to do so. He thanked all present for their support during his 28 plus years of working in his various positions in the Department of Community Services.

IV. PRESENTATIONS

A. *Pathways* – Ms. Warr provided on update on their residential program. She noted they have seven licensed locations. They have received approval to add a room to an ICF which will be temporarily closed while that is being accomplished. The three residents in that home will be temporarily related with the option to return once the renovations are complete. Staff will be relocated to other facilities and will also return upon completion of the renovation. An addition home has received approval to add on two rooms, but it will not be necessary to relocation residents or staff due to the layout of the home.

Ms. Warr stated staffing is going except in the RCF where they are having difficult with oversight staff retention. Dr. Chapman asked how many staff vacancies do you have currently? Ms. Warr replied they have 12 vacancies. She noted they have two day-hab units; one in Chemung County, that serves 70 and they are back to pre-COVID attendance numbers. The other day-hab; in Steuben County, serves 80 currently and has not returned to pre-COVID capacity of 105. The community-hab program currently services 36 and pre-COVID they served 50. They are struggling with staffing. They have two employment units with 30 people currently working in a variety of employment possibilities. Dr. Chapman

asked are you participating in tele-health services? Ms. Warr replied none of the OPW services are available via tele-health. Dr. Chapman asked is the decrease in number of participants due to health issues? Ms. Warr replied yes; a combination of their own health issues and concern of others having medical problems.

Dr. Chapman asked do you have any plans for expansion next year? Ms. Warr replied they want to expand the employment services and OPW/DD would like us to focus on that area. Dr. Chapman asked are there any resources to help grow that service? Ms. Warr replied they need locations that would allow for both paid and unpaid work experience. She noted that not everyone wants to be a cleaner; they have dreams like everyone else and would like to do other things. Some of their current placements include Wegmans and TJ Max, among others. Dr. Chapman asked what approach has Pathways used in the past to attract businesses? Ms. Warr replied they search out different employers to see if they have an interest in working with us to provide services. Dr. Chapman stated he was looking for some ideas to include in the local plan that would promote that. Ms. Warr stated this is a broad area to work in and they can work with other agencies to discuss their goals.

B. *ARC Allegany/Steuben* – Mr. Mehlenbacher provided an overview of their programs. They have three homes that want to decertify due to lack of staff; one is in Wayland and the other two are in Hornell. We will start discussions with OPW/DD on that process. Staffing continues to be an issue. He noted that he is not sure of the vacancy rate, but overnight staffing is a problem. Steuben County has two day-hab program sites in Hornell and Bath. They have crisis and pre-crisis services and family support contact. If someone is starting to demonstrate difficulties in their home with family, we can go in and help provide crisis support. Our community-hab program services roughly 50 people in Steuben County. Staff do home visits and also take clients out into the community. This seems to be the place where a lot of our veteran staff have landed and they love it and they stay in Steuben County. This is an autonomous group that works well together. The family support contracts are similar to the community-hab program in that they provide similar services with training and independence, socialization and family support.

Mr. Mehlenbacher stated respite services are provided in-home. He noted that OPW/DD is really struggling to provide that services because we cannot afford to have veteran staff provide that service because we lose money. We really need to have an entry level person provide that service and not everyone is comfortable having a stranger come into their home to provide respite services to their family member. Right now we are not accepting any new people into that program; we are just working with those we have. On the other side, we offer recreational respite and that seems to be flourishing and doing very well, especially since the struggles during COVID and not being able to get to together. We have been doing a lot with this program and people are starting to come back in. This is a structured activity and we have to plan to have enough staff for a particular event, such as going to Darien Lake. Dr. Chapman asked are these mostly field trips? Mr. Mehlenbacher replied yes.

Mr. Mehlenbacher introduced Christina Lyons who is the Director for Vocational Services for ARC. She supervises the employment services for Steuben County since our merger. Ms. Lyons provided a hand-out, which is on file in the Department of Community Services. Ms. Lyons stated the first year after our merger, the ARC Project Search at Ira Davenport Hospital did not reopen, mostly due to COVID> She spent a lot of time and effort developing opportunities with the local school districts to provide unique opportunities for their students who might not fit the mold for traditional programming. Initially they had worked with Bath and Canisteo-Greenwood and they have now expanded to Hammondsport and Arkport. We do direct contracts with the district per student. If there are students who need employment, we develop their internship and they have a job coach with them the entire time from our agency and that has worked really well, especially when we talk about transitioning to adult services because we are already connected with them and can make sure they are connected and linked properly.

This year Project Search did reopen, so we are really pleased with that. We have three students in this program this year and are looking for new applications for next year. We have a pre-employment transition services contract with ACCES VR. This year we are at our highest enrollment of 75; that is 75 students between Allegany, Chemung and Steuben counties that we are serving regularly. Since our merger, we have really focused on looking at individuals in Steuben County who have expressed a desire to work. We make sure that we are getting them linked with services; whether that be with our community pre-voc programs or ACCES VR. We have really been pushing our employment training program

through OPW/DD. We have taken that enrollment from 1 to 20 in the span of a year and a half. We are pleased with that and see this program continuing to grow in the future.

Ms. Lyons stated we were awarded a grant from OMH to certify two additional benefits advisors; we got our certification in February and we now have six certified benefits advisors available to do that for anyone with a disability. We are actually looking at expanding the benefits advisor services and opening it up to people with maybe a mental health diagnosis or an alcohol and substance abuse diagnosis. Ms. Lyons stated she did want to bring some of that County funding from last year from the transitional employment program to the assisted competitive employment program so that all of our marketing materials are pitching that service out for Steuben County.

Mr. Mehlenbacher stated that he wanted to talk about some of the obstacles they face. One of those obstacles are that families do not want or will not let their son or daughter or other family member work because they are afraid that they are going to lose their benefits or services. Some of those people have been guided toward Ms. Lyons and her team to meet with them to help them better understand the restrictions, etc. The rules have changed a lot and so have the services. We help them to understand the value of working versus relying on the services. Dr. Chapman asked are any of the families' fears supported in term of losing benefits? Ms. Lyons noted in her 18 years, she has had one case where she did the benefits analysis and she found the recipient would not be better off going to work. We will be honest with people; we run the numbers and walk them through everything. There are so many incentives for them to go to work; they just have to see it, we have to put it in writing and let them soak it in. Ms. Jefferds commented it would be great if you could reach out to mental health patients because they often say they are not working because they are afraid of losing benefits.

Dr. Chapman asked what types of jobs are available at the schools? Ms. Lyons replied the jobs are not in the district; they are community-based employment and they work with grocery stores, Microtel, Public Works, etc. We determine the individual's interest first and then develop a site to work with them. She noted the internships are not as flexible and Project Search has had three internships. Dr. Chapman asked are those internships within the hospitals? Ms. Lyons replied yes and those had been in food service and cleaning, but then there were COVID restrictions.

Dr. Chapman asked you crisis services, were those done in the home and what was the volume of use? Mr. Mehlenbacher replied he was not sure of the volume. They have one staff person that oversees the program. Dr. Chapman asked if it was overall successful wanting people in the home and Mr. Mehlenbacher replied it was and they also provide education and community resources. He noted their Workshop program has closed which was contained in that program due to few new referrals and kids from school in transition. Dr. Chapman asked how many individuals were involved in pre-voc? Mr. Mehlenbacher replied around 30 and they have 175 total between all the programs. He noted some individuals have transferred out of that program and are in day hab. Dr. Chapman commented that was a good shift. He asked if there were any thoughts agency wide with the merger for opportunities for new programs? Mr. Mehlenbacher replied they are still researching new programs and working on how to repurpose those homes perhaps with apartments and rooms. Dr. Chapman asked are there any events coming up that clients can participate in? Mr. Mehlenbacher replied there are specific Special Olympics programs with different sports and a wide variety of activities, but was not sure on the number of participants. Dr. Chapman commented he had two brothers that participated in Special Olympics in Erie and Niagara Counties and they enjoyed it.

V. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting has been scheduled for June 13, 2023.

VI. LOCAL PLAN

Dr. Chapman stated last year, due to a change in format, the Local Service Plan was due in October. The plan does not carry over; it just lists goals and objectives. We have not received the new format yet. He noted he had sent out the list of goals and objectives from last year's plan. He will add the new information from today's meeting.

MOTION: TO ADJOURN MADE BY MR. MEHLENBACHER, SECONDED BY MRS. WHEELER AND DULY CARRIED.

Respectfully Submitted by

Dawn Champaign
Senior Stenographer
Department of Community Services