

STEBEN COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD

Mental Health Subcommittee

Tuesday, September 12, 2023

3 p.m.

Second Floor, Annex Building, Conference Room A

20 East Morris Street

Bath, New York

****MINUTES****

PRESENT:

- Cora Saxton, Wayland-Cohocton Central School
- Craig Pomplas, Steuben County Probation
- Dr. Cynthia Gee, Family Services
- Bill Caudill, Youth Bureau
- Jessica Frawley, SCCMHC
- Lynn Lewis, Director, Department of Community Services
- Kathryn Muller, DSS Commissioner - by phone

OTHERS:

- Joe Tobia, Community Member

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. PRESENTATION

The Local Services Plan will be reviewed with Committee once the State approves the plans.

Staff recruitment is an ongoing issue for SCMHC. The agency has a new Children & Youth Coordinator that will be starting beginning of October. Marisa Wizeman, she has been a therapist with us for 12 years.

Ms. Muller asked if there is a replacement lined up for her? Ms. Lewis said not yet. So we have cobbled together coverage, but it is a pretty dire situation, but we hate not to promote people from within because we are short staffed. It doesn't make sense to hire someone new for a coordinator position, when someone in-house has earned the position. We did hire a new therapist, who started last week, then 2 people resigned due to moving to Syracuse and Texas. We have currently 12 clinicians across the 3 clinics and 12 openings. Per Jessica, We do have 2 interns who just started, one is local and wants to stay. One of our strategies is to have as many interns as we can locally, with attempts to hire them on after graduation.

SCASAS program is well staffed.

For recruitment, we have been looking into: possibility of eliminating civil service exams for licensed staff, loan forgiveness programs, interns that may stay on after graduation. We post openings a multitude of places. We are flexible, we do have M-F 37.5 hour work, we do offer some remote days if their caseload allows that.

Lynn-the Deputy DCS position is currently posted.

Lynn-Clinic program updates from SCCMHC: recently able to hire a new peer for SA program; recently partnered on a grant with CASA from Allegany County for 2 peers- one in Steuben County housed in our SA program, and we will be recruiting for that soon; by October, there will be MAT services at the jail provided by CASA/Trinity; the HBCI program that serves was awarded extra funding to get another position, there will be 3 positions; the Opioid RP went out and closes next week, so we will be looking at all the requests for proposals that came in for that and hopefully taking them to committee next month or the month after to award funds.

MH clinic is trying an OA triage approach at the Corning site to allow for more client contact with the staff shortages.

Craig-then do you prioritize whose going to get the next open slot for a regular intake based on... Lynn-well we are catching up, some of the interns and current therapists are catching up on the backlog of intakes, so really the way it is going to work is like a triage, so all the clinicians are free so there are a couple doing triage and a couple doing the intakes right there, so it will be hands-on. Craig, since you have to leave soon, if you would go first.

Craig- Probation Department updates: we have our own version of staffing and recruitment issues with so few people taking the civil service exams -we had 7 candidates take the test in June. We will offer the test again, and hope for better results; there was an RFP which was put out for sex offender services that is in the process of being rewarded. Our sex offender population has not had good access to treatment for a period of time now, which is challenging and risky.

Kathy-Craig is that for adults? Craig-yes it is for adults. We still have the juvenile offender program through Family Services, it is still up and running and doing great. I'm talking specifically Adult Sex Offender Program.

Kathy- DSS updates: there are around 30 vacancies. - difficulty in staff recruitment, no one taking civil service exams; child care funding was restored which was a huge win for our county. They had initially reduced our allocation and after assertive attempts and discussion, we actually got \$10 million restored; there are some challenging cases at the emergency room right now that I think you are aware of and again just looking at the plan, I hope OMH and OPWDD do something about residential placements for these difficult youth that we are facing every day; Our homeless numbers are exploding, we are serving 122 homeless a night, and that will double in the winter months.

Dr. Gee- Family Service Society updates: I echo the sentiments regarding positions being open and recruitment, we have several positions open and really just battling wait-lists for services; we are still serving the forensic adult population but it's a very small group currently; our Domestic Violence offender education program has been up and running now for a few months and we have been able to get to the second stage with several of the clients in that program, so we are starting a group for female offenders in October; our Choice program for victims, we are just continuing to see record numbers of referrals that we cannot keep up with at the rate, but staffing has also made that difficult for us. When all the pieces of the program are in place, we think it is manageable if we have additional support, but we do need the people to provide the services; we had some impressive numbers from our partnership with United Way for behavioral health screenings for youth and teens who are not connected to counseling at all, last year-end of the year-we had served 174, screened 174 youth, we thought we would see a lot more younger ones, but 75% were from the ages of 6-18. We really didn't see many 0-5 throughout the year. We have seen that model be pretty successful with us, we just submitted a grant with Excellus to hopefully fund another more hours that we can allocate for that service; our YES services, our psychosocial rehab, is continuing to go okay. We now have a wait-list due to staff turn-over which is to be expected in that program; we have de-designated from HBCS services, we had never provided them yet, we are still just getting our feet wet with the skill building service, it hasn't been a full year, so we are just really focused on skill building at the moment.

Bill Caudill-The behavioral health screening for youth, do you do that in your office? Dr. Gee-yes we do that mainly in the Corning office. Originally how the proposal was set up was that we would be inside Guthrie Pediatrics at Centerway in Corning, screening right alongside their care service, but there is just a lot of red tape that comes with that so we are trying to get some office space there a little bit for the most part so that everybody is screened at our Corning office for now. Bill-so technically a referral is made to the primary office, whether it is a school counselor or... Dr. Gee: it can be anyone, it can be parents, we have had parents refer themselves and that is up on our website. We have the referral link there.

Bill -Youth Bureau updates: Strong Kids/Safe Kids festival we have coming up in a couple of weeks, September 23. Really targeting birth through 6th grade and their families.

Jessica -Are you still accepting applications, because I think the deadline was like September 9, for people to come. Bill-for agencies? Yes we can, if I know, we will fit them in as long as we can. The whole goal of Strong Kids/Safe Kids is providing kids and families with resources to help them grow up safe, strong, healthy, whether it is mental health, on-line safety, or assault prevention, whatever is needed. Craig- I have to ask, how did the adventure based youth leadership program turn out this summer? Bill-it went really well from the standpoint that we had some kids, a nice mall group that

we kind of learned from. Craig-you were able to organize that on very short notice. Bill-yes it was pretty much absorbed all of July and the better part of June to get ready. It was a challenge but a lot of fun.

Dr. Gee-I did want to bring one thing up. There is some data that sitting on the Board of the Children's Coalition for Behavioral Health would be useful. We met with OMH in the spring and asked them about the denial rates for kids from ER going to psychiatric placement or residential placement and they indicated that they did not keep data on that at all. They are now requesting of the Coalition that they can keep their own data. Is there a way you can get us this information? They are saying there is a disconnect obviously between a hospital that is not connected to the Office of Mental Health, them not having the reporting requirements to OMH regs, thus the difficulty for them. But when we met with the head of NYS Health Plan Association and discussed with them the problem, she is oftentimes insurance companies aren't aware that their kids are going to the ER unless they are super high flyers, frequent flyers, and she suggested that we contact the insurance companies directly when our kids are in the ER and hospital is refusing to deny them to go to a psychiatric placement, because a lot of the time it is not turning from an ER visit to an admission, so they don't get that alert as a health insurance company to have the 5 day after-care, all of that, nothing goes into motion and they find out a month or two down the road from getting the claim. She said that is a strategy to use because they would like to get involved with that and would rather see the child be served than pitching you to go to the ER every other night because we are continuing to hear from OMH that we as a state are not using residential beds adequately and/or inpatient psychiatric beds adequately. Kathy- we have been tracking that data on the 'difficult to serve children' that end up in the ERs. More often than not, we are on the phones about these cases because they always want me to take them into our custody and it's an ongoing battle, so I have lots of data. Lynn-they should really talk to the ER doctors too because they are the ones declining them. Lynn- we keep data we can share with you as well.

Mr. Tobia: What you were just talking about as far as availability of beds, I lived it as a father. We would take my son down to Corning Hospital, there was no connection to the hospital or to any services. We did it weekend after weekend after weekend. They were good, they tried, the hospital tried. I don't want to be critical of the care we got at the ER for my son, they tried. They didn't know who to call, they had no idea where to look for beds, look for the closest BSU, my son ended up going to St. Joseph's that was the closest. He went to Olean, he went to Cortland. It was crazy Vacancies, you said you had 12 vacancies. Kathy said she has 30 vacancies, Mr. Tobia-so we are talking right now in this room about 45 vacancies. Mr. Tobia-what are most of your vacancies. Lynn-Clinical, so the degrees that would fall into that, that's where most of our vacancies are. Mr. Tobia-that just blows me away, again I will go back to my experience. I don't know how the workers did it with my son and they were good, some of them were very good but they are spread so thin. You can only do so much, you know. The availability, it just blows me away, 45 vacancies, among the 7 of you. Kathy had mentioned they are averaging between 122+ homeless persons per night, did I get that right? Bill-during the summer. Kathy-yes. Mr. Tobia-where are the shelters. I know in Corning we have the old Lando building, that's the hot topic in Corning right now, but where else are there shelters for the homeless? Kathy-we have locations across the county Joe. We have them, as you said the Landos building, there are a couple of other hotels we use down in the Corning/Painted Post area. We have 3-4 locations in Bath and then we have a couple locations in Hornell that we use, but primarily hotels. We don't have shelters. Mr. Tobia-Kathy, what do you do when you run out of rooms? Kathy-we have to place them out of county. Mr. Tobia-Ok, do you have to use that much? Kathy-there are certain times, sometimes if it is a race weekend at Watkins Glen, or some big area event going on, the other time we mostly have to use them Joe is when we have an individual who has been kicked out of every facility in Steuben County, then we have to go out of Steuben County. Next meeting is December 12'.

IV. NEXT MEETING - December 12, 2023 at 3 p.m.

V. ADJOURN

Respectfully submitted by,

Dawn Champaign-via recorder
Senior Stenographer
Department of Community Services