

**LUZERNE-WYOMING COUNTIES MENTAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES
ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE**

**ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 2018
Location: MHDS Office, Wilkes-Barre, PA**

Participants: Dave Wilson, Tom O'Neill, Carl Charnetski, Jane Walsh Waitkus, Sandy Faux. *Staff:* Tara Vallet, Adam Wiernusz. *Guests:* Lori Bennett, Chloe Newell

Approval of December 7, 2017 Meeting Minutes - *Mr. Wilson presented a motion to approve the minutes of the December 7, 2017 meeting. It was moved by Dr. Charnetski and seconded by Mr. O'Neill. All were in favor.*

Advisory Board Re-Appointments – Mr. Wilson announced that Mr. O'Neill was reappointed to the Advisory Board for a three-year term at the January 9, 2018 meeting of the Luzerne County Council. Ms. Walsh Waitkus was appointed to the Advisory Board for a one-year term at the March 13, 2018 meeting of the Luzerne County Council.

Oath of Office - Ms. Walsh Waitkus reported that County Council has enacted a new ordinance on September 26, 2017, requesting anyone appointed to Authorities, Boards or Commissions kindly take an Oath of Office signed by a Judge or District Justice. Citizens have complied and there has been great cooperation by the District Justices and Judges. The Oath requests that the appointee have the Oath administered prior to assuming the Board seat. Ms. Walsh Waitkus noted that Luzerne County Council members are thrilled when citizens volunteer their time. Board members currently serving will not be required to take the Oath since they are grandfathered in. However, once a current Board member's term expires, they are asked to take the Oath of Office once they are reappointed. The Oath is taken by newly appointed or reappointed Advisory Board members. Mr. O'Neill suggested that a Magistrate or Judge be available at the time of appointment/re-appointment. Ms. Walsh Waitkus noted this is an excellent idea since Council members do not want to inconvenience the public in any way.

Mr. Wilson noted that Advisory Board members who are Wyoming County residents are reappointed by the Wyoming County Commissioners. Dr. Charnetski also noted that the mandated ratio of Luzerne County to Wyoming County resident representation on the Advisory Board is being met with representation being slightly over the ratio which is positive.

Election of Officers Update – Mr. Wilson noted that he has served two consecutive terms as Advisory Board Chairman, and since the Advisory Board By-Laws state that officers shall serve for no more than a period of two consecutive years, he strongly encouraged the Board to nominate another Chairman.

Based on a recommendation by Dr. Charnetski, Mr. Wilson presented a motion to nominate Mr. O'Neill as Chairman. This was moved by Dr. Charnetski and seconded by Ms. Faux. All were in favor.

Dr. Charnetski thanked Mr. Wilson and Mr. O'Neill for leading the Board. It is anticipated that Mr. O'Neill will begin serving as Chairman in September.

Advisory Board Vacancies - It was recommended that discussions continue regarding officer seats as well as Board vacancies. The Advisory Board currently has vacant board seats representing the following fields:

- Physicians (2), Pediatrician and Psychiatrist preferred (formerly held by Dr. Kile and Dr. Kafrissen respectively)
- Community groups whose membership represents the economically, socially and culturally disadvantaged (formerly held by Dr. Fahmy)
- Local health and welfare planning organizations or local general hospitals (formerly held by Joe Knecht)
- Local citizens' organizations active in the field of mental health/consumer representative, at least 1 representative (formerly held by Joe Crowley)

Ms. Vallet reported that she contacted a psychiatrist which Mr. Wilson suggested in an effort to determine interest in filling the vacancy. Ms. Vallet will also contact a psychiatrist who previously served on the Advisory Board whose representation may no longer be a conflict of interest. Mr. O'Neill emphasized that since Board meetings are conducted on a quarterly basis, meetings are predictable. He also recommended that Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine's Residency program may be an option in soliciting interest to fill the vacant physician seats. Ms. Vallet will also contact the Wright Center to solicit physician interest.

Dr. Charnetski and Mr. O'Neill emphasized the benefits of recruiting a college student, preferably a freshman, to fill a vacant Board seat which would also be news worthy. Ways to reach out to universities must be discussed. Ms. Vallet noted that she would look at the pool of consumers within various committees.

Ms. Walsh Waitkus noted that the Authorities, Boards and Commissions (ABC) Committee conducts interviews for appointments to the Board once there are three-four candidates. Applicants do have an interest in serving on multiple Boards and are asked if they are willing to serve on all the Boards. She noted that she will pay special attention to the information submitted by each applicant due to the need to fill vacancies on the MHDS Advisory Board.

Mr. Wilson presented a motion to include Board Membership discussions on Advisory Board meeting agendas. It was moved by Ms. Walsh Waitkus and seconded by Mr. O'Neill. All were in favor.

Administrator's Report

- *Financial Services Update* – Mr. Wiernusz distributed and reviewed the Revenue and Expenditure Report for Fiscal Year 2017-18 through March 29. He reported that the MHDS Office is currently at the end of the third quarter and holding steady with funding. The fourth quarter advance is expected in approximately three weeks. There is an increase in expenditures in all three programs especially Intellectual Disabilities (ID). As of January 1, 2018, the Residential rates changed the methodology. Rather than facility, it is based on a consumer's level of need through their Individual Support Plan (ISP). There is an increase in expenditures with Early Intervention (EI) due to

approximately two years of increased enrollments. It was noted that there has been no word regarding the possibility of a budget impasse. It is predicted that a small amount of funding may be remaining at the end of the fiscal year. Approximately 3-5% can be carried over the amount retained. For the first time with the existence of the Human Services Block Grant, MHDS did not return money to the State. Mr. Wiernusz also noted that the Block Grant is flexible in sharing funding with other Human Services Block Grant agencies. Ms. Vallet reported that Children and Youth Services (CYS) is no longer part of the Block Grant. Last year, MHDS did share funding with CYS for their needs. All funding is being met through the Block Grant.

Dr. Charnetski commended Mr. Wiernusz's efficient, easy-to-read format of his written report.

Mr. Wilson presented a motion to accept the Financial Services report. This was moved by Ms. Walsh Waitkus and seconded by Mr. O'Neill. All were in favor.

- *Developmental Services Update* – Ms. Vallet reported that the Deputy Administrator position will oversee the Administrative Entity (AE) and possibly the Supports Coordination Organization (SCO). Regional and State Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) staff indicated that it would not be a conflict if the Deputy oversees both. Due to State Civil Service testing, the position will be posted again. Ms. Vallet also reported that the SCO must communicate to the AE rather than directly to the Regional Office.

Ms. Vallet reported that the recent ID Celebrations of Abilities in Luzerne and Wyoming Counties were both successes. Judy Kresky, Developmental Services Program Specialist, was the lead in planning the events in Luzerne and Wyoming Counties with fellow staff. Ms. Vallet noted that the Supports Coordinator (SC) award presentations to consumers were truly heartfelt. Mr. O'Neill noted that it was wonderfully coordinated, fun and inspiring. Mr. Wilson echoed the same regarding Wyoming County's celebration. Ms. Vallet noted that MHDS staff will participate in public awareness events which occur throughout the year regardless of who is sponsoring the event in an effort to continually increase presence and awareness in the community. Mr. O'Neill emphasized that participation in community events is furthering the "Everyday Lives" movement especially with the involvement of secondary students. Mr. O'Neill also commended Luzerne County Manager Dave Pedri for his support, representation and his meaningful opening remarks at the Luzerne County event.

- *Supports Coordination Organization (SCO) Update* – Ms. Vallet reported that the SCO has 2,097 open cases and the expectation is for all SC's to produce billing at 100%. If after 3 consecutive months SC's are below 85% billable productivity, a policy to begin verbal, written, suspension and termination has been implemented. Travel time and hiring of new SC's are built in to the percentage. Ms. Vallet noted that time management and documentation is a challenge for some SC's so training is provided to assist them in being successful. A rewards system is being reviewed and increased team building activities. Mr. O'Neill emphasized that recognition goes a long way. Ms. Vallet mentioned that a County newsletter was developed where individual staff are recognized for their accomplishments.

Ms. Vallet reported that the County MHDS Office will be partnering with the Ronald McDonald House to assist families together.

Ms. Vallet stated that during Union Negotiation sessions, discussions continue to be held regarding filling of vacancies. She noted that there is no longer a benefit to Civil Service status. Board members agreed that they must advocate for hiring and retaining quality workers.

Ms. Vallet mentioned that increasing of staff morale continues through the Luzerne County Office of Human Services (OHS) Culture Committee spearheaded by Lynn Hill, Head of the Luzerne County Human Services Division. Dr. Charnetski emphasized the positives of changing the culture within an organization by mentioning sports analysts' reports regarding the new coach of the Philadelphia Eagles who changed the culture of the team/organization which ultimately led them to a Super Bowl win.

The Advisory Board congratulated Ms. Vallet on her appointment as administrator.

- *Mental Health Services Update* – Board members viewed the new suicide awareness segment that will be shown during movie previews at the cinemas in Wilkes-Barre and Hazleton. Ranee Smith, Mental Health Program Specialist, has begun a suicide prevention program in Wyoming County due to their unique needs. Ms. Smith also submitted a proposal for a suicide prevention mini grant which the MHDS Office was awarded funding. Suicide awareness stickers will be created and placed in restrooms. Safety gunlocks continue to be distributed. Ms. Vallet noted that the highest rate of suicides occur with middle age adult males by gunshot.

Ms. Vallet reported that a Disaster Coordination Response Team is being created for a behavioral health team to be available during times of disaster/crisis.

With the aftermath of the Parkland School shooting, County MHDS staff continue to participate upon school requests for assistance. All school districts are aware that County MHDS staff are available if schools require assistance. Staff recently participated in a school program at Noxen Elementary as well as increased partnering with the Luzerne Intermediate Unit (LIU).

Through the System of Care Grant, various trainings and workshops are being conducted such as Trauma Trainings, Roadmap Workshop to assist families in navigating through the Human Services system and the Open Table initiative which trains church congregations or community organizations to assist and support individuals and families. Ms. Vallet asked that Board members contact her if they are interested in additional information.

A "Strike Out Stigma" RailRiders Baseball game will be held on Tuesday, April 24 at PNC Field in Moosic. The event is \$14 which includes a food voucher. The event is free for consumers and families who have registered for the event.

The annual Children's Mental Health Awareness Month Creative Art Contest has been announced. All youngsters in grades K-12, active in Mental Health services, can submit their artwork until Friday, April 27. An awards ceremony is being planned for Tuesday, May 8, 5 p.m., at the Luzerne County

Court House Rotunda. Information regarding the awards ceremony will be forwarded to Advisory Board members.

Ms. Vallet reported that the current census at Clarks Summit State Hospital (CSSH) is 174. There are 60 patients from Luzerne County residing at the state hospital with a bed cap of 88. There are no Wyoming County patients residing there with a bed cap of 3. Two patients are on the waiting list for transfer from community inpatient units.

Ms. Vallet clarified that Norristown State Hospital (NSH) is strictly a forensic unit and is closed to all civil cases. Due to the lawsuit against NSH, Luzerne-Wyoming Counties (4 beds) will be partnering with Carbon-Monroe-Pike Counties (8 beds) and Lackawanna-Susquehanna-Wayne Counties (4 beds) to create a Long Term Structured Residence (LTSR) through a grant being submitted for Mental Health Expansion and Restorative Justice. This will be conducted through an RFQ process. Ms. Vallet clarified that inmates with mental health needs are no longer transferred to the State Correctional Institute (SCI) at Waymart. SCI Retreat transfers these inmates to SCI Frackville.

Luzerne County is paying \$250,000 for Correct Care Solutions (CCS) to provide Mental Health services in the Luzerne County Correctional Facility as well as paying Northeast Counseling Services to supplement services in the jail. The Luzerne County Prison warden asked that MHDS staff assist in reviewing RFP's for Mental Health services in the jail.

Public Comments - Lori Bennett from Wyoming County Special Needs Association mentioned that the ID Celebrations were planned extremely well. She commended Sandy Tamanini for her email notifications and reminders. Ms. Bennett noted that she is still hearing positive comments from consumers in Wyoming County. Many were complimentary of the Tunkhannock High School's Jazz Band and the high school students bringing the consumers in and celebrating their abilities. The jazz band was commended for attending the entire program.

Adjournment - With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:49 p.m.

Submitted by: David G. Wilson / jk
David G. Wilson, MSW, Chairman
Luzerne-Wyoming Counties Mental Health and Developmental Services Advisory Board