

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

ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

THURSDAY, MAY 31, 2018

Location: MHDS Office, Wilkes-Barre, PA

Participants: Dave Wilson, Chairman; Raelene Daring, Carl Charnetski, Jane Walsh Waitkus, Sandy Faux.
Staff: Tara Vallet, Adam Wiernusz, Lynn Hill, John Alunni. *Guests:* Lori Bennett, Chloe Newell

Mr. Wilson opened the meeting. Individual introductions were made. Ms. Hill, Division Head for the Luzerne County Office of Human Services (OHS), introduced John Alunni, newly hired OHS Program Director.

Approval of March 29, 2018 Advisory Board Meeting Minutes - *Mr. Wilson presented a motion to accept the minutes of the March 29, 2018 meeting. It was moved by Dr. Charnetski and seconded by Ms. Walsh Waitkus. All were in favor.*

Election of Officers Ballot – Mr. Wilson announced the following nominations for Advisory Board Officer seats for the term September 26, 2018 through December 31, 2019: Tom O’Neill, Chairman; Raelene Daring, Vice Chairman and Dr. Carl Charnetski, Secretary. The voting ballot will be forwarded to Board members prior to September Board meeting.

Advisory Board Vacancies/Reappointments – Mr. Wilson announced that he will submit his interest to the Wyoming County Commissioners for his reappointment to the MHDS Advisory Board reappointment prior to his term expiring on December 31, 2018.

By Laws of the Advisory Board – Ms. Vallet reported that updates are required to Article 1, Section 4 of the By-Laws, in order to be in compliance with the Luzerne County Home Rule Charter. The proposed updated language is as follows: “Any vacancies occurring in the membership of the Board representing Luzerne County shall be filled by the Luzerne County Council for the unexpired period. Any vacancies occurring in the membership of the Board representing Wyoming County shall be filled by Wyoming County Commissioners for the unexpired period. The Luzerne County Council may remove any member representing Luzerne County and the Wyoming County Commissioners may remove any member representing Wyoming County during his/her period of service for cause only. The members shall serve without compensation, other than reimbursement for travel and other actual expenses in connection with called meetings of the Board.”

A motion was presented to ratify the proposed changes as noted above. This was moved by Dr. Charnetski and seconded by Mr. Wilson. All were in favor.

Dr. Charnetski noted the need to observe the proportion of Advisory Board representation for Luzerne and Wyoming Counties in accordance with the Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities (MH/ID) Act. The Board is oversubscribed with Wyoming County representation which is acceptable. The Luzerne and Wyoming County governing bodies represented by Ms. Walsh Waitkus and Commissioner Henry respectively, are included per the MH/ID Act and are voting members of the Board.

Ms. Vallet reviewed the current Advisory Board vacancies which include the following seats:

- Physicians (2), Pediatrician and Psychiatrist preferred (formerly held by Dr. Kile and Dr. Kafriksen 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).

Dr. Charnetski offered to speak with a college student from the Department of Psychology to fill a vacancy where appropriate. Ms. Walsh Waitkus noted that she did discuss the MHDS Board vacancies at a Work Session of the Luzerne County Council and reported that letters were forwarded to area colleges to solicit interest in interviewing with Luzerne County Council's ABC Committee to possibly fill vacant Board seats. Ms. Vallet is attempting to recruit a psychiatrist. She will send a follow up letter to the psychiatrist as well as two other psychiatrists who practiced in the local community. She will also reach out to Children's Service Center to solicit interest in filling the vacant Psychiatrist seat and Pediatric Associates to determine interest in filling the vacant Pediatrician seat.

Administrator's Report

- *Financial Services Update* – Mr. Wiernusz distributed and reviewed the Revenue and Expenditure Report for fiscal year 2017-2018 (through May 31, 2018). He reported that the end of the fiscal year is coming to a close. As the office continues to bill Medical Assistance through the Supports Coordination Organization (SCO), there is a slightly higher balance two months through the quarter which allows for additional funds. Next year, the County Office will be receiving one lump of money, \$500,000 from the Norristown Settlement monies, for Luzerne-Wyoming Counties to partner with Carbon-Monroe-Pike Counties and Lackawanna-Susquehanna-Wayne Counties to create a Long Term Structured Residence (LTSR). Luzerne-Wyoming Counties' portion will be 3 out of 16 beds. The funds will also be used to expand the current Mental Health Court and Community Based Competency Restoration Program. Civil cases are not being accepted at Norristown State Hospital and there continues to be a waiting list for forensic court ordered admissions.
- *Developmental Services (DS) and Supports Coordination Organization (SCO) Update* – Ms. Vallet reported that staff continue to work closely with providers regarding the Community of Practice Initiative for individuals to remain active in the community at least 25% of the day. New initiatives are being pursued such as scholarships for camp programs and adaptive equipment so that individuals with special needs (physically disabled) can utilize playgrounds.

The SCO has 2,100 open cases, averaging 10 new cases per month with billing/productivity increased to 84%. New policies were created whereby disciplinary action will be taken if productivity is not being met. Two new casework positions have been added with the increase in rate.

The Human Services Block Grant includes the Luzerne County Office of Human Services' Homelessness Initiative, MHDS and the Drug and Alcohol (D&A) Program. Children and Youth Services (CYS) and the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) are not part of the Block Grant. It was clarified that the Wyoming County Office of Human Services Executive Director communicates directly with the agency department heads. Ms. Hill also reported that Wyoming County has been identified as one of the top three opioid epidemic high risk areas. The Luzerne County Opioid Coalition is attempting to secure monies to assist. A coalition will also be starting up in Wyoming County.

- *Mental Health Services Update* – Ms. Vallet reported that the local chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) recently coordinated a showing of the movie, *The Valley*, at the F.M. Kirby. The movie told a story about a father devastated by his daughter's suicide and his seeking of answers regarding the suicide. It was well attended with informational tables also available to the public. NAMI's Annual Recovery Walk was also well attended. NAMI and County Mental Health Department staff continue to partner regarding suicide prevention awareness campaigns.

The Drop-In Center opened in Wyoming County this past Saturday. Ms. Vallet noted that the County MHDS Office is glad to see it up and running. She clarified that a clinical person can participate at the Drop-In Center as long as they do not bill.

The Burke Center continues to provide Mental Health Outpatient therapy with the loss of Community Counseling Services in Tunkhannock. There are more services available now in Wyoming County with the various providers than have been available in the past.

The prison program at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility is expanding to include a caseworker to assist inmates who are not currently active in the mental health system. The caseworker will conduct assessments and assist them in maintaining a connection in the community.

Ms. Vallet reported that the current census at Clarks Summit State Hospital (CSSH) is 172. There are 68 patients from Luzerne County residing at the state hospital with a bed cap of 82. 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.

Other Business – With the fiscal year concluding at the end of June, Dr. Charnetski requested that the ongoing concerns with lack of transportation be resolved. Ms. Vallet reported that last year, vehicles were purchased for all the mental health centers. The County MHDS Office also contracts with Luzerne County Transit Authority which is a challenge. The County Office has not received word regarding the Governor's Budget.

Ms. Vallet noted her interest in planning a presentation regarding the System of Care Open Table model for Advisory Board members and Luzerne County Council members. Ms. Hill will determine if members can be invited to the June 25 Area Agency on Aging's appreciation conference which will include a presentation of the Open Table model.

Public Comments - Ms. Bennett mentioned that the opening of the Drop In Center in Wyoming County was a huge success. The Wyoming County Chamber of Commerce assisted with advertising and ribbon cutting. The Drop-In Center is now in the process of organizing staff who can work with consumers to answer phones, greet individuals, fill snacks, etc. Within only 3 hours of opening, there were 7 consumers who walked to the Drop-In Center.

Adjournment - Mr. Wilson presented a motion to adjourn the meeting. This was moved by Ms. Walsh Waitkus and seconded by Ms. Daring. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

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