

LUZERNE-WYOMING COUNTIES MENTAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES (MHDS)
ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

Advisory Board Meeting
Thursday, June 11, 2020
Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting

Participants: Tom O'Neill – Chairman, Councilman Stephen J. Urban, Melisa Littleton, Linda Armstrong, Craig Mark, Dave Wilson, Dr. Chelsea Graziano, Commissioner Tom Henry, Dr. Carl Charnetski, Todd Hastings. Staff: Tara Vallet – Administrator, Amy Tomkoski, Margaret Manley, Gail Stredny, Joe Kloss, Lynn Hill, John Alunni, Mike Donahue, Atty. Romilda Crocamo.

Welcome and Introductions – Mr. O'Neill opened the meeting at 3:33 p.m. by welcoming everyone to the first virtual Advisory Board meeting. A special welcome was given to newly appointed Advisory Board members: Dr. Chelsea Graziano, Clinical Psychologist; Melisa Littleton, Licensed Professional Counselor; and Luzerne County Councilman Stephen J. Urban. He also introduced other members who have been serving on the Board. He noted that Raelene Daring is not present as she awaits her re-appointment to the Advisory Board.

Role and Responsibility of Advisory Board – Mr. O'Neill reviewed the role and responsibility of the Advisory Board. He noted 13 members of the Board are allocated by a joinder of Luzerne and Wyoming Counties as mandated by the Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities Act of 1966. The role of the Advisory Board is to advise not govern, offering the necessary ranges, expertise and perspectives to the MHDS Administrative office. Mr. O'Neill thanked the MHDS office for creating and distributing a comprehensive binder of resources for the Advisory Board's reference. He noted that the Act of 1966 can be found in Tab #8 of the binder which spells out the scope, comprehensiveness, rules and responsibilities for Mental Health and Developmental Services. The composition of the Board is also detailed in the Act. The Board currently has 11 seats filled with two vacancies for consumer, family member or advocacy group representatives for mental health and developmental services. He asked that members brainstorm on individuals that can represent this group.

Approval of December 12, 2019 Advisory Board Meeting Minutes – Mr. O'Neill presented a motion to approve the minutes of the December 12, 2019 Advisory Board meeting. This was moved by Dr. Charnetski and seconded by Mr. Hastings. All were in favor with no oppositions or abstentions.

Nomination of MHDS Advisory Board Officers – Mr. O'Neill provided background regarding the nomination process for MHDS Advisory Board Officers. Originally, a slate of officers was proposed that were in line with ongoing efforts to bring new individuals to leadership positions. Veterans to the organization were contacted to recommend them for officer positions. Mr. O'Neill forwarded an email to Board members regarding the nominations. Councilman Urban raised concerns with the process and action not being in conformity with the Sunshine Law. Mr. O'Neill spoke to Ms. Vallet who obtained guidance from legal staff who noted it does not appear to be in violation of the Sunshine Law. Legal staff offered helpful options whereby a slate of candidates would be presented, additional nominations would be open to the floor, if that slate is endorsed, a ballot would be forwarded to Board members according to the By-Laws and the individuals selected would begin to serve in September.

On behalf of the Chair of the Nominating Committee, Mr. O'Neill presented the slate for the nomination of MHDS Advisory Board Officers for the term *September 24, 2020 through December 31, 2021*: Commissioner Tom Henry, Chairman; Linda Armstrong, Vice Chair; and Craig Mark, Secretary. Councilman Urban recommended that Robert's Rules of Order be followed to provide members of the public an opportunity to speak and to allow for other individuals to be nominated. For good process sake, he suggested that a motion be presented and seconded individually, rather than presenting as a whole. He explained the process used by

Luzerne County Council and the proper procedure for public meetings. He noted the importance of staying within the Sunshine Law since the Board is technically recognized by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and both Luzerne-Wyoming Counties.

- **Motion to Open Nominations for Officers of the MHDS Advisory Board:** Mr. O’Neill
All were in favor with no oppositions

- **Motion to Open Nominations for Chair of the MHDS Advisory Board**
Motion to Open Nominations: Mr. O’Neill
Nominations Open
Mr. O’Neill nominated: Commissioner Tom Henry
Second: Mr. Hastings
No other nominations
Motion to Close Nominations: Mr. O’Neill
Second: Mr. Hastings
All were in favor with no oppositions or abstentions.
Commissioner Tom Henry is nominated for Chair of the MHDS Advisory Board

- **Motion to Open Nominations for Vice-Chair of the MHDS Advisory Board**
Motion to Open Nominations: Mr. O’Neill
All were in favor with no oppositions or abstentions
Nominations Open
Mr. O’Neill nominated: Linda Armstrong
Second: Commissioner Tom Henry
No other nominations
Motion to Close Nominations: Mr. O’Neill
Second: Mr. Mark
All were in favor with no oppositions or abstentions
Linda Armstrong is nominated for Vice-Chair of the MHDS Advisory Board

- **Motion to Open Nominations for Secretary of the MHDS Advisory Board**
Motion to Open Nominations: Mr. O’Neill
Second: Councilman Urban
Nominations Open
Mr. O’Neill nominated: Craig Mark

Second: Commissioner Henry
No other nominations
Motion to Close Nominations: Mr. O’Neill
Second: Mr. Hastings
All were in favor with no oppositions or abstentions.
Craig Mark is nominated for Secretary of the MHDS Advisory Board

Mr. O’Neill noted that ballots will be mailed according to the MHDS Advisory Board By-Laws. Ms. Vallet stated that according to the By-Laws, the ballots will be forwarded to Board members three weeks prior to the next meeting. Councilman Urban recommended that consideration be given to change the By-Laws to follow Robert’s

Rules for the Election of Officers. He also noted if a Chair is changed, typically a neutral member should conduct the election of Chair. After the Chair is selected, the chair can conduct the elections of Vice Chair and Secretary or the neutral can finish the process. Mr. O'Neill thanked Councilman Urban for his guidance with Robert's Rules.

Advisory Board Education Component: Overview of MHDS Services – Presentations – Mr. O'Neill asked that Board members hold their questions until the end of the presentations. Ms. Vallet welcomed all new Advisory Board members and introduced staff who will be conducting a brief presentation which she described to be a quick MHDS 101 on each service.

- *Mental Health (MH) Services* – Tara Vallet, MHDS Administrator, highlighted the following regarding Mental Health Services:
 - Does not provide direct care to consumers, primarily an administrative office.
 - Funds and contracts with multiple community-based agencies to provide direct mental health care.
 - Responsible to assure residents of Luzerne-Wyoming Counties have a complete array of mental health services available to them if they qualify for services.
 - Partners with the Northeast Behavioral Health Care Consortium (NBHCC) and State in managing and licensing the mental health providers.
 - Comprised of three Mental Health Program Specialists.
 - An overview of the Children and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP) and CASSP Principles.
- *Administrative Entity (AE)* - Amy Tomkoski, Deputy Administrator, highlighted the following regarding the AE:
 - AE holds the contract with State Office of Developmental Programs (ODP).
 - Provides administrative functions for the three Waiver Programs: Consolidated, Community Living and Person/Family Directed Supports.
 - Conducts initial level of care evaluations for the Waiver Programs.
 - Acts as the ODP designee for technical assistance
 - Comprised of five Program Specialists and an Intake Worker
 - Does not provide direct care.
- *Fiscal Services* – Margaret Manley, Fiscal Director, highlighted the funding streams and fiscal responsibilities (please see attached).
- *System of Care (SOC)* - Joe Kloss, Project Director, highlighted the purpose, creation of Trauma-Informed Systems as well as the successes and celebrations of the System of Care (please see attached).
 - Ms. Vallet noted that this is a new initiative for Luzerne-Wyoming Counties as the fourth year of the grant ends and hopefully a second grant will be awarded.
 - Ms. Vallet re-emphasized as part of the System of Care contract, every staff person at every level of the agency must participate in a trauma 101 training. It is provided at no cost so each employee can become better trauma informed as a system. Commissioner Henry noted that these trainings are very helpful.
- *Supports Coordination Organization (SCO)* - Gail Stredny, SCO Manager, highlighted the following regarding the SCO:
 - Provides face-to-face direct care and focus on a relationship-based approach
 - Encourages consumers to take a lead role in communicating their goals and directing their services. Others can be invited with the consent of the individual.

- Provides linkage, coordination and monitoring of supports and services contracted by ODP such as Waiver services and link with community resources/services outside of ODP such as mental health, drug and alcohol, medical, housing and others.
 - Serves individuals through the lifespan from birth.
 - Provides Early Intervention services from birth through the 2nd year with a 25% delay in one area of functioning or considered at-risk such as pre-mature birth, foster placement, etc. Served over 900 infants, toddlers and families and provided over 750 assessments during the past year.
 - Serves approximately 2,200 individuals currently which includes children under the age of 8 with a developmental delay considered at risk for an intellectual disability, children or adults diagnosed prior to the age of 22 with an intellectual disability below 70 IQ or children/adults with a diagnosis of autism.
 - Comprised of 49 SCO staff.
- The below questions were asked following the presentations:
 - What is the current census at Clarks Summit State Hospital and how many Luzerne and Wyoming County residents are there? Ms. Vallet reported that the total census as of the end of May 2020 is 143 patients, 59 Luzerne County and 1 Wyoming County.
 - How are services coordinated for dual diagnosed individuals or those families that are seen by multiple agencies and serve the family as a whole unit to avoid individuals falling through the cracks? Ms. Vallet clarified that on the children's side, System of Care and CASSP promote collaboration and address any concerns/issues. Frequent team meetings and collaboration occur if a consumer, family or provider has any concerns or issues to address. It is designed more so on the children's side rather than adults due to confidentiality and reluctance by some consumers to have multiple people involved.

Ms. Vallet noted that if anyone at any time has questions, please reach out to her, especially those who are new Board members in order to better guide them through the system. Commissioner Henry thanked the Advisory Board officers and presenters for the brief refresher on services. He noted Wyoming County's appreciation for MHDS staff. Commissioner Henry also noted that Mike Donahue, Wyoming County Human Services Director, also joined the conference call at the Commissioners' office.

Update on MHDS Response During Covid-19 – Ms. Vallet reported on the Mental Health side, contracted providers continue to offer direct care, whether it be tele-health or face-to-face for children and adults. The only services that ceased operation are Partial Hospitalization Services and Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services. Most Day programs have ceased on the Developmental Services side. The State mandated that Supports Coordinators (SC's) are not permitted to offer face-to-face contact to consumers but weekly calls continue as well as community and home supports depending on the level of need. Ms. Vallet reported that the County MHDS Office spends an exorbitant amount of money on Emergency Services, which is not Medical Assistance billable. She explained that there has been a dramatic decrease in Emergency Room (ER) visits and are actually seeing a true level of crisis. It has been a great learning experience – to know that crisis providers need to increase crisis intervention. Serious planning is occurring in order to increase mobile outreach in the community and reduce visits to the ER. There has been a decrease in psychiatric involuntary emergency commitments (302 petitions). Mr. Wilson asked whether or not there has been an increase in depression or suicide. Ms. Vallet noted that although individuals are more symptomatic, suicide statistics are lower compared to last year. There has been no increase in suicides. Councilman Urban echoed his belief that Mobile Crisis in homes is more advantageous in a situation. He thanked everyone for thinking of a different strategy. Ms. Vallet noted that MHDS is constantly trying to evolve and better the service.

Mr. Donahue stated that the Wyoming County Office of Human Services has been fortunate to assist the MHDS response during this pandemic by securing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for all mental health workers who are seeing individuals face-to-face for medication checks. Wyoming County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) continues to have PPE supplies. Through community advocacy group funding, call cards were purchased so individuals can follow through and maintain contact with their peer and recovery supports. Cards will be available through the Cares and recovery advocacy groups. Block Grant funds will be utilized if need be to assure peer support continues. There is not a significant increase in suicides currently. People's needs are being met through this time and they are not being left alone. Mr. Donahue noted his appreciation for Ms. Vallet and her staff.

Mr. O'Neill thanked everyone for the presentations as everyone continues to work as teams in this complex system.

Other Business – Councilman Urban reported that he forwarded an email to Mr. O'Neill to determine consensus to change the name of the MHDS office to parallel the statutes in order to keep the terminology the same (Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities). Ms. Vallet noted when the name change occurred to drop the word "retardation," Harrisburg was contacted and counties surveyed to determine their process in changing the name of their offices. Ms. Vallet, Commissioner Henry and Mr. Wilson stated that the Board did not want to utilize the word "disability" and wanted to include Early Intervention, Autism and Intellectual Disabilities under Developmental Services. Commissioner Henry noted the new name was well received after discussions that occurred which concluded that the new name covered everything. Mr. Wilson reported that a subcommittee comprised of himself, a former Board member and MHDS staff was developed in order to create the new name. Commissioner Henry and Mr. Wilson reminded everyone that the subcommittee worked extremely hard in keeping the name positive, a name to be proud of and the desire to celebrate abilities of individuals.

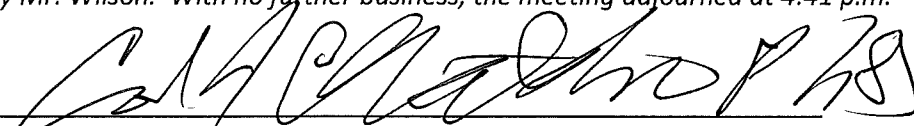
Councilman Urban noted that he will discuss the terms of the Board with County Council to insure that terms are correct. He noted that there are inconsistencies as he is only appointed for one year. He explained that terms should be staggered and also occur according to calendar year. Luzerne County Chief Solicitor Crocomo noted adjustments were made according to the statutory requirement that are in the Luzerne County Charter and Administrative Code. She offered to provide Councilman Urban the information. Councilman Urban reported that he contacted Luzerne County Clerk to Council and Councilman Perry for the matrix of the ABC Committee. Atty. Crocomo reported that her staff is also working on the terms to assure they are staggered appropriately. She will share this information with Councilman Urban.

Public Comment – Luzerne County IT staff, Jerrod Gutkowski, and Ms. Kaminski reported that no public called.

Next Meeting – Thursday, September 24. Commissioner Henry agreed to continue hosting a future Board meeting in Wyoming County.

Adjournment – Mr. O'Neill presented a motion to adjourn the meeting. This was moved by Commissioner Henry and seconded by Mr. Wilson. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:41 p.m.

Submitted by:



Carl J. Charnetski, Ph.D., Secretary

Luzerne-Wyoming Counties Mental Health and Developmental Services Advisory Board