

**Luzerne-Wyoming Counties Mental Health and Developmental Services  
Advisory Board Meeting  
Monday, October 15, 2018**

*Location: Wyoming County Court House, Tunkhannock, PA*

*Participants:* Dave Wilson, Tom O'Neill, Commissioner Tom Henry, Raelene Daring, Linda Armstrong, Craig Mark/  
*Staff:* Tara Vallet – Administrator; John Alunni - Program Director, Luzerne County Office of Human Services; Mike Donahue, Executive Director, Wyoming County Office of Human Services.  
*Guests:* Lori Bennett, Chloe Newell.

**Welcome** – Mr. Wilson welcomed everyone. Individual introductions were made by all.

**Election of Officers** – Mr. Wilson reported that six out of eight ballots were received to elect the following officers to serve a term beginning now through December 31, 2019:

Tom O'Neill, Chairperson  
Raelene Daring, Vice Chairperson  
Dr. Carl Charnetski, Secretary

Mr. Wilson stated that it was great serving as Chairperson for the past four years. He mentioned that he will be renewing his term as a Board member before the end of this year. Mr. O'Neill thanked the Wyoming County Commissioners for their hospitality in hosting the Advisory Board meeting and stated that he is looking forward to serving his term.

Commissioner Henry thanked Mr. Wilson for serving as Chairperson and Mr. O'Neill for his willingness to serve as the new Chairperson.

**Approval of May 31, 2018 Advisory Board Meeting Minutes** – *Mr. O'Neill presented a motion to accept the minutes of the May 31 Advisory Board meeting. This was moved by Mr. Wilson and seconded by Commissioner Henry. All were in favor.*

**Advisory Board Appointments** – Mr. O'Neill welcomed newly appointed Advisory Board members, Linda Armstrong and Craig Mark. He noted that the Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities (MHID) Act of 1966 mandates that the MHDS Advisory Board have representation of specific fields. Mr. O'Neill stated that he looks forward to new Board members joining and participating.

**Advisory Board Vacancies** – Ms. Vallet will be discussing with the Regional Office whether or not it is possible to waive the requirements for Advisory Board representation in order to solicit additional interest in membership, i.e. Physician's Assistant or Psychiatric resident from the Medical School to fulfill the Physician seats. Ms. Vallet did reach out to a psychiatrist from the Tri-County area and will possibly reach out to Dr. Kafritsen. Representation from the Health and Welfare Planning seat is also vacant as well as a mental health consumer representative. Ms. Vallet will solicit interest at Wednesday's Consumer Support Program (CSP) Committee meeting. Mr. O'Neill encouraged Board members to brainstorm about how to reach out to those in the community in order to recommend potential Board candidates to Luzerne County Council and the Wyoming County Commissioners. Advisory Board meetings will continue with the 3:30 p.m. meeting schedule on a quarterly basis.

**Interest in Re-Appointment to the Board** – Advisory Board members, Todd Hastings, Dr. Carl Charnetski and Dave Wilson’s Board terms will expire on December 31, 2018. All three have agreed to continue to serve. All will submit applications for reappointment to the Board.

**By-Laws of Advisory Board** – Ms. Vallet noted that *Section IV, Vacancies*, is the only section in the By-Laws recommended for editing. *Mr. O’Neill presented a motion to approve the revised By-Laws of the Advisory Board. This was moved by Ms. Daring and seconded by Mr. Wilson. All were in favor.*

**Administrators Report**

- *Financial Update* – Ms. Vallet announced that Adam Wiernusz, former MHDS Financial Director, has accepted a position with the Luzerne County Office of Human Services. Although he is temporarily assisting the MHDS Office with fiscal duties, the County MHDS Office will continue to temporarily rely on his expertise. He will also participate in the selection process for a new fiscal director. Mr. O’Neill, on behalf of the Advisory Board, requested that Ms. Vallet extend congratulations to Mr. Wiernusz on his promotion.

Ms. Vallet reviewed and distributed the Income and Expenditure report. Revenues include the Human Services Block Grant, Medical Assistance (MA) revenue, multiple grants and miscellaneous income. Ms. Vallet reported that the Supports Coordination Organization (SCO) has been operating with the rate increase for the past year. There is a policy in place that Supports Coordinators (SC’s) must generate a specific productivity rate. Productivity has improved significantly which provides an opportunity to increase services. *Mr. O’Neill presented a motion to approve the Financial Update. This was moved by Commissioner Henry and seconded by Ms. Daring. All were in favor.*

- *Developmental Services Update* –Ms. Vallet distributed a three-month report for July through September which she can email if the Board prefers.

Ms. Vallet reported that through the Employment Coalition, MHDS employment providers will be highlighted each month with public relations (PR) in the newspapers as a way to recognize consumers who are working.

Early Intervention (EI) staff was part of a roundtable with the State Secretary.

Civil Service is in the process of re-posting the MHDS Deputy Administrator position externally since the incorrect Experience and Training (E&T) questionnaire was provided to candidates. Being without a Deputy Administrator, Luzerne-Wyoming Counties is down one vote on the Northeast Behavioral Health Care Consortium (NBHCC) Board of Directors. Mr. O’Neill also questioned how the MHDS office is planning effectively for staff that are planning to retire.

Ms. Vallet distributed various flyers regarding upcoming community awareness events. She continues to encourage MHDS staff to be visible in the community. Mr. O’Neil also encouraged the Advisory Board to be visible and make connections within the community.

Ms. Armstrong noted that through her agency, Dress for Success, she sees those in poverty, the unemployed and homeless. She looks forward to obtaining a list of resources she can access for those in need that come to her agency.

Commissioner Henry noted the excitement of consumers who are participating in Keystone Community Resources.

- *Supports Coordination Organization (SCO) Update* - Ms. Vallet reported that there are 2,100 individuals currently enrolled in SCO. Productivity has increased from approximately 60% to 80%. The SCO and Administrative Entity (AE) staff are planning events to assure the office is a visible participant in the community. Plans are being organized for the ID Celebration of Abilities to occur in March in both Luzerne and Wyoming Counties to recognize individuals served.

There are four vacancies in the SCO. Civil Service regulations do slow the process down. However, there were three resignations in a short amount of time.

- *Mental Health Update* - Ms. Vallet reported that two Community Residential Rehabilitation (CRR) homes have been understaffed. She will be meeting with the provider regarding these violations. Mr. O'Neill noted the importance of having a back-up plan. Mr. Alunni mentioned that the similar concerns are present in the Drug and Alcohol System.

Discussion regarding the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) was held. Recent newspaper reports indicate that they will not contract with Geisinger Health System.

Mr. Donahue noted that education on dual diagnosis (Mental Health/Substance Abuse) is increasing. A grant was awarded to conduct a series of three educational forums at the Dietrich Theater in Tunkhannock regarding dual diagnosis. He also noted that Stop Coalition has received recognition in the newspapers for their efforts regarding opioid epidemic. Noting that Wyoming County had 18 overdose deaths recently, he mentioned that the system is at a point where involuntary commitments are necessary.

Ms. Vallet reported that Luzerne-Wyoming Counties' crisis providers have been requested to improve services. It was noted that individuals must be seen by crisis staff prior to being admitted to First Hospital. Northeast Counseling Services has reduced inpatient admissions dramatically with in-home crisis services. Since CCS operates First Hospital, there is no incentive to avoid hospitalization. Mr. Donahue noted that Wyoming County also needs to improve outreach.

Ms. Vallet noted that the MHDS Office funds the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team through Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) funding.

All Blended Case Management services at Community Counseling Services (CCS) have transitioned to Children's Service Center (CSC).

Ms. Vallet reported that referrals to Clarks Summit State Hospital (CSSH) have decreased. There are currently zero referrals. The census at CSSH is 170 with 68 patients from Luzerne County and 1 from

Wyoming County. Only individuals with civil commitments are referred to Norristown State Hospital (NSH). The long term structured residence (LTSR) is being created with the NSH settlement monies. This will be similar to a Residential Treatment Facility (RTF) with a special waiver for extended stay and will allow for it to be a locked facility. Community Care Behavioral Health (CCBH) distributed a Request for Information (RFI) for this service.

Ms. Vallet reported that Mental Health Court will be expanded and a Competency Based Program developed for both counties. Dr. Bill Anzalone, Mental Health Court Coordinator, will be meeting with Wyoming County to discuss Wyoming County Mental Health Court start up.

Luzerne-Wyoming Counties received the Bronze Award for Excellence in Community Communications and Outreach (ECCO) from SAMHSA's (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) Caring for Every Child's Mental Health Campaign recognizing Luzerne-Wyoming Counties' 2017 Children's Creative Mental Health Art Contest. This contest occurs each May in recognition of Children's Mental Health Awareness Month.

Mr. O'Neill requested that Ms. Vallet keep the Advisory Board updated by emailing Board members monthly updates with a blurb included about the CRR update. Mr. Donahue requested that the report be forwarded to him as well. Mr. O'Neill suggested that Program Committee meetings can be scheduled to discuss specific issues and concerns.

**Other Business** – Mr. Mark commended the Community Expo that was recently held at the Woodlands. Thanks to the Expo, he noted that he was able to access services to assist someone in need.

**Public Comments** – Lori Bennett from Wyoming County Special Needs Association (WCSNA) announced that a Holiday Gathering is planned for December 4, 4 p.m.-7 p.m. for consumers, families and employees. She extended the invite to everyone. Ms. Vallet asked that she forward the information to her to share with the MHDS distribution list.

**Adjournment** – With no further business the meeting adjourned at 4:49 p.m.

Submitted by: Tom O'Neill  
Tom O'Neill, Chairman  
Luzerne-Wyoming Counties Mental Health and Developmental Services Advisory Board