

Luzerne-Wyoming Counties Mental Health and Developmental Services
Administrator's Office

Advisory Board Meeting/Staff Recognition
Thursday, December 13, 2018

Location: Luzerne-Wyoming Counties MHDS Office, Wilkes-Barre

Participants: Tom O'Neill - Chairman, Jane Walsh Waitkus, Commissioner Tom Henry, Dave Wilson, Raelene Daring, Linda Armstrong, Dr. Carl Charnetski. *Staff:* John Alunni, Adam Wiernusz, Gail Stredny, Grace Bradshaw. *MHDS Honorees (10 years):* Mary Boylan, Martha Elmir, Kelly Kohl.

Welcome – Mr. O'Neill opened the meeting at 3:40 p.m. by welcoming everyone. A special welcome was given to the MHDS employees being honored for milestone years of service.

Staff Recognition – Mr. O'Neill noted that today's event is an important time to recognize people for their time and commitment as well as how fortunate it is to have these individuals providing many years of service. The following MHDS employees were congratulated individually for their milestone years of service with presentation of awards by Advisory Board Chairman, Tom O'Neill; Wyoming County Commissioner Chairman Tom Henry, Luzerne County Council Member, Jane Walsh Waitkus; Luzerne County Office of Human Services Program Director, John Alunni and Supports Coordination Manager, Grace Bradshaw:

Ten (10) years - Martha Elmir, Mary Boylan and Kelly Kohl

Staff also recognized but not present were:

20 years – Fran Stanishefski, 15 years – Cheryl Farkaly and 5 years – Diane Lonzetta.

Mr. O'Neill noted that there are 60-70 dedicated MHDS employees in the joinder of Luzerne-Wyoming Counties. He also noted appreciation for the long-standing working relationship with Wyoming County.

Discussion of 2019 Advisory Board Meeting Schedule – The 2019 Advisory Board meetings will be held quarterly on Thursdays beginning at **4 p.m.** rather than 3:30 p.m. The May meeting will be hosted by the Wyoming County Commissioners. Ms. Kaminski will forward the 2019 meeting schedule to the Board members.

Approval of October 15 Advisory Board Meeting Minutes – *Mr. O'Neill presented a motion to accept the minutes of the October 15 meeting. The motion was moved by Mr. Wilson and seconded by Ms. Daring. All were in favor.*

Administrator's Report – Mr. O'Neill sent Ms. Vallet's regrets for being unable to attend the today's meeting due to a family emergency. Mr. Alunni was present to provide a brief report:

- The MHDS Fiscal Director position, formerly held by Adam Wiernusz, will be posted shortly.
- A candidate has been selected for the MHDS Deputy Administrator position. Mr. Alunni indicated that he participated in the interviews of the three candidates. The candidate selected shares the same perspective with the Department and Division. The candidate will be a great asset in moving the department forward with Ms. Vallet.

- Mr. O’Neill thanked Ms. Vallet for the monthly reports forwarded to the Advisory Board. Mr. Wilson noted his appreciation for the Clarks Summit State Hospital statistics which she includes in her monthly reports. Commissioner Henry commended Ms. Vallet for being helpful with Wyoming County when called upon.
- Mr. O’Neill suggested that a Program Committee meeting of the Advisory Board can be scheduled when needed.

Other Business – Dr. Charnetski thanked and acknowledged Mr. O’Neill for accepting the Advisory Board Chairman position. Mr. Alunni thanked everyone for attending and sharing the accomplishments of staff.


Mr. O’Neill noted that discussion must continue regarding recruitment of Advisory Board members. Ms. Walsh Waitkus indicated that she encourages candidates interviewing for Board positions to consider a seat on the MHDS Advisory Board. It has been a challenge recruiting a psychiatrist to fill the required Board seat. Dr. Charnetski will reach out to Dr. Steven Kafrissen. Mr. O’Neill mentioned that Ms. Vallet has also attempted to recruit a psychiatrist. It was noted that Ms. Vallet will also be talking to the Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine’s Psychiatric Residency program. Dr. Charnetski emphasized the importance and benefits of medical students being exposed to community mental health. Recruiting psychiatrists is a challenge due to their limited availability of time, current shortage of psychiatrists in this area as well as a conflict of interest due to local psychiatrists contracted with Luzerne County through MHDS providers of service. It was noted that a Pediatrician is also needed to fill a required vacant seat on the Board. Mr. O’Neill asked that Ms. Vallet follow up with the Northeast Regional Office to determine whether or not a waiver can be provided regarding mandated Board representations in an effort to fill vacant seats. Meeting attendance through telephone conference and/or Skype will be considered.

Mr. Wilson mentioned that Ms. Walsh Waitkus and Commissioner Henry ‘s participation at the Advisory Board meetings as representatives of the governing body is beneficial and appreciated.

It was noted that Mr. Wilson was reappointed by the Wyoming County Commissioners to serve another 3-year term.

Public Comment – There was no public present for comment.

Adjournment - A motion to adjourn the meeting was presented. It was moved by Dr. Charnetski and seconded by Mr. O’Neill. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

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