



Tompkins County
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BOARD

Tompkins County Whole Health
201 East Green Street
Ithaca, New York 14850-5421

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Substance Use Subcommittee

Substance Use Subcommittee Meeting
October 11th, 2023 – 12 to 1 p.m. Via Zoom
Meeting Minutes

Minutes Approved
April 10, 2024

Present: Marley Brooks; Jacob Parker Carver; Stu Bergman; and Tom Lipa

Excused: Ron Schoneman

Unexcused:

Guests: Briggs Seekins, Challenge; Roy Murdough, St. John’s; Brad Walworth, CARS; Eric Jensen, CHS/CARS; Ashley Dickson, TC3; Susie Pedersen; Noah Valdez; Eli Baez, St. John’s; Myriah Dolson, ADC; and Brandi Remington TST BOCES

Staff Present: Rich Shaw, TCWH; Frankcheskia Pyrtle, TCWH; Zoe Lincoln, TCWH; and Karan Palazzo, LGU-Administrative Assistant, TCWH

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The meeting was called to order at 12:05 p.m. by Jacob. Introductions were made. Stu moved to approve the September 2023 minutes; 2nd by Marley; all were in favor.
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Privileges of the Floor:

Announcements/Correspondence: Brandi shared that on October 3rd, the Legislature declared October “United Kindness Month” and October is also Bully Prevention and Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The County has put together a “United in Kindness” event series with 9 organizations that are contributing to spreading a message of empathy and supporting each other in kindness. The Mental Health Association is having a student art show on October 13th.

Review of the Local Services Plan: Jake stated that today’s meeting will look at some of the specific steps/expectations and priorities for the goals and objectives that the Substance Use Subcommittee (SUS) is expected to report on by the end of 2024 in the categories of workforce and housing.

Housing - To better understand the interaction between homelessness and disability, gathering data on housing reductions and desegregating disability-related items from homeless data collection efforts.

- Goal 1/Objective 2 is to understand the scope of the workforce shortage
- Goal 1/Objective 3 is to quantify the impact of the workforce shortage on service delivery
- Goal 2/Objective 1 is to better understand the interaction between homelessness and disability
- Goal 1/Objective 3 is to gather information about housing reductions

Harmony shared that the Developmental Disabilities Subcommittee is working on a form to gather information on the workforce shortage in the mental health field. She suggested collaborating with them.

Workforce - To understand the scope of the workforce shortage.

- Solicit staff vacancy information from provider agencies to better understand the scope of the workforce shortage
- Solicit data on the reduction in services related to the workforce shortage
- Require contracted agencies to provide data annually
- Quantify the impact of the workforce shortage on service delivery

Discussion – What data is needed, who should be at the table, how do we frame the conversation and how does SUS want to go about accomplishing the objective?

Marley suggested ongoing monthly updates from the attending service providers regarding their workforce challenges, turnovers, retention, and any strategies that are working. Jake will email questions out monthly to service providers such as unfilled positions, what services are not being offered because of unfilled vacancies, what barriers are preventing specific positions from being filled, and things that contribute to turnover. Eli added that including the reason for the turnovers (financial compensation, burnout, etc.). Brandi added that counseling services experience staffing issues as well.

Zoe suggested vacancy information reporting to include what positions are filled and what are positions with a lot of turnovers to better understand the scope of the shortage.

Jake will reach out to John Stenson of OMH to attend and hopes that a regional OASAS representative will be able to attend.

Myriah shared that ADC was not able to open detox due to a lack of RNs needed 24/7 which is an OASAS regulation.

Jake emphasized the importance of conveying the severity of the workforce shortage to build a case for support and funding through data. Highlighting the severity of the workforce crisis and advocacy efforts and supporting workforce diversity will follow in 2025.

Housing

- Promote a housing-first approach that increases the availability of affordable emergency and supportive housing that best meets the needs of individuals who require intensive specialized community-based interventions for stabilization and recovery across the mental hygiene system.
 - Better understanding of the interaction between homelessness and disability,
 - Prioritize information gathering to learn more about reductions in beds due to COVID

Discussion – What data is needed, who should be at the table, how do we frame the conversation and how does SUS want to go about accomplishing the objective?

Harmony stated that the LGU identified needs for emergency housing for high-needs individuals which includes case management where resources will come from the Opioid Settlement dollars. Ross Milne was recently hired to work on the development of the emergency housing program and should be invited to an SUS meeting to provide an update. It was suggested that representatives from Lakeview, Unity House, and DSS be added to the conversation.

Jake stated that in 2025 US will be advocating for housing solutions and in 2026 will be gathering information about the housing solutions advocated (what's been implemented, what worked well, and what needs improvement).

With the annual contracts starting soon, the SUS decided that the November meeting will focus its priority on what data is needed from reporting agencies related to the workforce shortage and December's meeting will focus on housing.

Provider Updates:

St. John's Community Services – Roy shared that SJCS is now anticipating an opening in January 2024 due to house renovation work needing to be completed before opening and a postponed September meeting with the advisory committee in Albany. Tours of the house are available by reaching out to him. Eli added that an open house is scheduled for December 2023.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

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**The next Substance Use Subcommittee Meeting
will be held on November 8, 2023, from 12 – 1 pm**