



Macon County

Mental Health Task Force

April 4, 2014

Minutes

Members Present: Mr. Ronnie Beale, Jim Bruckner, Jane Kimsey, Jim Bottomley, Paula Ledford & Tammy Keezer

Absent: Major Andy Shields, Mike Neidig, Kathy McGaha, & Marty Wadewitz

Guests: Tabatha Brafford, Tara Payne & Mr. Duncan Sumpter w/ACS, Amy Seay & Steve Michaels w/Smoky Mountain Center, Corporal Scott Marion w/MC Sheriff's Office, Kevin Inabinet & Kathryn Holmes w/Macon Psych & Donita Cline w/NAMI.

Call to Order: Chairman Beale called the meeting to order at 8:45 and welcomed everyone to the meeting indicating that there would be a lot of information to cover. He discussed the new LME map that will be presented to the legislature. He also indicated there would be another budget cut of 2% to mental health.

Approval of Minutes: A motion was made by Jim Bruckner and seconded by Jim Bottomley to approve the minutes of the February 7, 2014 meeting as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Current Issues and Discussion: As of Tuesday in Raleigh at the crisis coalition committee meeting they discussed bringing any new ideas of how to keep people out of the ER. They really need a success. The wait time in the ER's has increased. The involuntary commitments have increased. The payments to vendors are considerably behind in other counties. Ms. Kimsey indicated their payments are up to date for Macon County.

Ms. Brafford indicated that for Smoky's region since November they have increased from 3 to 20 for direct commitments. They are doing some preliminary screening that keeps people out of the ER's. They created a medical clearance committee to work with the hospitals to determine what they could provide for the patients to keep them out of the ER's. They are also working on a process for medical detox to use in all the counties. The Balsam clinic has a nurse doing the preliminary intake screenings, drug screening and pregnancy testing. Mr. Beale indicated that a lot of the Hospitals are saying no to these patients.

He asked the group on the Raleigh conference call what we would do if we didn't have what we have now with the walk-in clinic and Smoky. The answer is that the jail would be overflowing. Mr. Beale indicated that once an officer takes control of the patient they become a liability to the county. Currently there is no other place for these individuals to go. There is no plan. The medical clearance is the main issue. Mr. Beale asked how many involuntary commitments were currently in the ER. Ms. Brafford said she thought there was only one there at this time. Corporal Marion asked if we had a purely involuntary that had no medical issue and was strictly a mental health issue was there anywhere else besides the ER they could be taken. Ms. Cline indicated that if an individual calls her she recommends through NAMI that instead of taking them to the ER they take them to Meridian.

Mr. Sumpter indicated that services have been constricted so much that the support is minimal. This means that by the time they see patients they are more acute. The life expectancy of the folks with mental health or medical issues is 20 years less than the average person. The medication costs to them have increased as well. Mr. Beale indicated that Dr. Marvin Schwartz told him that it would seem to him that the counties would be able to handle

these situations through DSS and the health department. Mr. Beale asked him, then where would the LME's come in and is the state going to write the checks to the counties. The new LME map includes four territories. 36 counties are now included in the region (we hope will be Smoky Mountain's) LME group. This approximates half of the state. The committee struggled to find a place to meet. Mr. Beale asked if there would be legislation put on the board? It appears that there will be. They will be given a time line for January of 2016 to have the LME plan in place. Mr. Beale will be meeting with the governor sometime this month. The governor does not have the authority to keep items out of the senate. Mr. Beale has the letter of intent and it will be made available if anyone is interested.

Mr. Beale asked if the providers were getting paid. Mr. Sumpter indicated they are absolutely not getting paid and they are losing money. They have had to apply for a hardship loan and they were only given 70% of what they have earned. Once NCTracks gets fixed they will have to pay staff to rebill some of the patients. The providers have to branch out into other fields to continue to stay in business.

Mr. Beale reported data for 2013 and reported that 24,000 miles were driven transporting involuntary commitments. There were 218 involuntary commitments in Macon County. The time for commitments is up 91% due to lack of placement options.

Mr. Inabinet reported that the schools have seen an increase in incidents. He had just learned of another child in the ER. The schools are losing money in their service. The day treatment process is the most successful it has ever been because they have gotten really good at the screening process. Ms. Ledford indicated it is interesting to see the change in ages of the children. They have had an increase in the number of younger children. The level of acuity is almost double with the younger kids. She indicated the interagency group that is meeting is probably the best it's ever been.

Corporal Marion indicated they currently have an individual that the state has deemed cured. He is on suicide watch, and refuses to take his meds but they have no other option but to keep him in the jail.

Other Business:

There has been an early intervention committee formed in order to be proactive and it is based on chronic absences of students. This has also been a positive process. There is a conference being offered that has asked for the committees to come and do a mock run through to show the state how they run the meetings between the providers and the schools. They have applied for a grant that would allow for expansion for councilors and social workers in the schools for three years to help with these students. There has been some good continuity of care from the Youth Villages. Mr. Inabinet said he could take on two more staff members.

NAMI is providing a parent and teacher conference to educate parents on the early warning signs of child mental health issues.

Crisis Emergency Department Initiative Committee - \$15,000 transportation grant came out of this committee, medical clearance communication process came out of this committee. They are not talking about any additional money but they are talking about getting local groups to communicate and work together. They have been talking about peer support specialists.

They are trying to put a process in place of how to determine which patients they treat. They have included a police force presence on the committee. Ms. Kimsey asked Ms. Brafford to bring back some ideas from their meeting on the 15th. Mr. Beale asked this committee to come back in a month with a policy to keep these patients out of the ER.

If there was money to pay a nurse to do the intake screening and other medical staff that would be the way to keep these patients out of the ER.

There is also a strong provider network that meets monthly that includes three MCO committees. There is a report of their meeting information posted on the Appalachian website if anyone is interested.

Mr. Beale asked what the average age of their clients was. Mr. Sumpter said they serve all ages. He said they have peaks and valleys for juveniles. He said they have seen a decrease in numbers but a jump in acuity. Mr. Sumpter has asked to be part of the state's crisis initiative committee.

Appalachian has an open access clinic process that is in place. Mobile has to be contacted, and it has to be managed by Appalachian. They can go to the old Smoky Mountain Center walk-in center at Thomas Heights. They can call the 1-800 Smoky Mountain phone number. They have to have an assessment before they can see a provider. They have trained a peer support counselor.

Mr. Sumpter indicated that there are three voting members on the Smoky Mountain board. There are not near enough psychiatrists in the area. In small hospitals the ER doctors are hesitant to medicate these types of patients. Telepsych is available 5 days a week which allows patients to get their meds. It's better than nothing at this time.

Jim Bottomley indicated he liked the idea of having a peer counselor available. It would seem that it would benefit a patient to have someone who knows what they are going through.

Schedule Next Meeting: June 13, 2014

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 10:17 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bellavance

These minutes were approved on October 29, 2014 with a motion by Jim Bruckner and seconded by Major Andy Shields. The motion passed unanimously.