



# Macon County Mental Health Task Force

**MINUTES  
JUNE 1, 2012**

Members present: Ronnie Beale, Jim Bruckner, Jane Kimsey, Andy Shields, Brian Welch, Jim Bottomley, Kathy McGaha, Mike Neidig, Paula Ledford, & Marty Wadewitz

Guests: Charles Ryer & Nancy Chastain w/Smoky Mountain Center, Ann Nandrea & Debbie Roberts w/NAMI, Duncan Sumpter & Anne Sherry w/ ACS Mobile Crisis, Tammy Keezer w/MCPH, Candice Rawlinson w/Barium Springs, Raymond Turpin & Kathryn Shields Holmes w/MCPS, Reid Smithdeal w/Meridian, Jodi Franck, Rene Corbin Plemmens & Bob McCleary w/Grand Father Home, & Colin McCandliss w/Franklin Press

Approval of minutes: Mr. Shields made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 24, 2012 meeting as submitted. It was seconded by Mr. Bottomley. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Updates**

**Sherriff's Department** – Mr. Shields reported on the most recent incident of an involuntary commitment of a 5 year old child. This child has several disorders and was placed with three therapeutic foster homes within a five day period. At the point the sheriff's office became involved the child was hiding under the bed, refusing to eat, would not put on clothes, was screaming and had basically reverted to the behavior of a 2 year old. He reported that their only mechanism is to send officers to the home and transport the child. Officers were able to get the child calmed down enough to take him out of the home to the hospital without incident. ACS Mobile Crisis found a bed in NC. The child was again transported via ambulance to a facility in Buckner, NC. Total process took over 24 hours. No traumatic incident during this 24 hour period. The parents were in Haywood County. Mr. Shields reported that so far this year his department has spent \$178,000 worth of man hours.

Another incident that involved several interventions by officers took 330 hours before they were able to find a facility that would take the child. He was a 14 year old and was combative. They received a report that this child had been back in the ER. These cases fall under the problem incidents and the facilities are not equipped to handle them.

At this time last year the sheriff's department had transported 50 individuals. This year they have already transported 85. That is a 75% increase. If rate continues to follow this pattern they will be at

225 for the year. The average process to complete an involuntary commitment is about 24 hours. The longest case took 330 hours. There are currently only ten (10) beds in the state for this type of incident. In a case of a geriatric patient they are basically waiting for someone to die for a bed to become available.

Yesterday they had 5 involuntary commitments in the ER. Three of those were transported to Haywood county.

**Legislative Update** – Mr. Beale reported that the commissioners met with our legislative representatives and Senators to discuss many items. LME Governance bill was pulled yesterday. Mental health money looks good so far in the state budget. The budget passed the house last Thursday.

**Walk in Clinic – Appalachian** – Mr. Sumpter reported that the clinic is currently funded for one full time clinician, and has access to psychiatric staff on-site and by videoconference. They don't have enough staff to provide all services that are needed for all Macon County residents. Macon County stakeholders have not referred enough Medicaid patients to ACS to support the high number of indigent clients being served. Initial numbers say that 25% of patients that they see are charity cases and they receive no credit from Smoky Mountain Center and no funding from Medicare. Patients requiring psychiatric services have increased and again, over 25% of patients that are served have no insurance or do not qualify for funding reimbursement. There are a majority of patients that are seen that have insurance that the clinic is not set up to bill and therefore cannot receive reimbursement. Macon County has a higher percentage of adults, approximately 57%, who need the psychiatric services and do not have Medicaid. Others have a payer source but the clinic is not credentialed for that provider. It takes approximately 9 months to get credentialing processed through Medicare. They were basically told that they need to reduce services or increase the Medicaid billing.

They are making referrals to other providers when the patient has insurance that they cannot bill. High staff turnover makes it hard to keep the credentialing with insurance up to date because of the nine month processing period.

**Smoky Mountain Center** – Ms. Chastain reported that they recently had the Mercer Readiness review. The policies and procedures were approved; adult guardianship will remain with the state but will be transferred to DSS next July. They are enrolling a lot of providers in their system and will be ready by July 1st for implementation of Medicaid Waiver. Providers are encouraged to complete the ALPHS MCS training. They offer level of care utilization system training every Thursday. Level of Care Utilization System (LOCUS) tool is used to determine what type of care they need. Securing Access Outreach & Recovery (SAOR) – provides a fast track for a disability patient if needed. Using the SAOR application process they have had an 85% approval rate for first time applications for social security, disability.

**Schools** – Ms. Ledford reported that children are being seen by Appalachian, Meridian, Macon Psych. There was a lot of grey areas due to this being the first year of the program and it got going a lot faster than they anticipated. Hopefully next year it will be smoother. They were able to get assessments done quickly.

## **Mental Health Providers**

**Macon Psych** – Ms. Holmes reported that at some level they are at all 11 schools. In August of 2011 they had two therapists. Starting in September 2012 they will be adding 9 more. They will also be hiring another licensed clinical psychiatrist and will be able to do psychological testing. They are also in Haywood County and Jackson County. They hope to have an intensive therapy in home team. They have a one day treatment program that was at Cartoogachee and will be opening one at Macon Middle. They have had 228 admissions and 48 discharges since August 2011. The youngest client was 5 and they continue to see them even after they graduate if needed. They have a new office location that is opening today at 674 Highlands Rd., next to Peppermint Patties. The phone is 349-0001 and the fax is 349-0029. Funding is being cut off for case management, and some of the higher level cases will be transferred to Smoky Mountain. During the summer they are encouraging their clinicians to see at least 1 family per month and if they cannot accomplish this they are being asked to document their attempts to contact the families. They are getting a large number of referrals from teachers & school principals. Medicaid patients are estimated at over 50%. They have to go through the state for funds for a small percentage of cases. They are seeing similar issues in all three counties.

**Meridian** – Mr. Smithdeal reported that they have had a staff changeover in Macon County. There is a new lead recovery educator and the transition is going well. They have seen an increase in assessments. They are working with Smoky Mountain Center on their ALPHA system used for the assessments. They have been having appointment issues with the system where they have not been able to see the appointments that have already been made. Mr. Ryer of Smoky Mountain was asked by Mr. Beale to look into this issue.

Numbers are up in the region and in Macon County also and they are increasing their resources to meet the need. Mr. Beale asked if the increase in numbers was a bad thing. If it is due to the services being available, people becoming aware of the services, and seeking those services? Mr. Smithdeal said he did not know the answer. He indicated they were watching the numbers and increasing their staff as necessary. They had a meeting with DSS this past month and they are working with them to meet the needs of the community. They are bringing physician providers in to some of the offices of DSS to provide services.

**Barium Springs** – Ms. Rawlinson reported that they are having an open house next Wednesday, June 6<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 am to 1:00pm. Their clinical focus will be treating DWI related incidents, substance abuse, and some child services. They will be accepting Medicaid. No Medicare at this time. Mr. Beale added that there is an Opiate use program that funding has been approved for and it is coming soon.

## **Community Partners**

**Grand Father Home** – Ms. Franck explained that the program started in an orphanage. Originally they were sending kids from the facility directly back to the community with no intermediate transition and they were failing. They have started to step the kids down from the facility to foster care and continue the care throughout the transition until they are returned home. They have a level 3 group

home that specializes in sexual abuse cases. They are seeing more level 3 care cases across the state and the restrictions have gotten higher to qualify for services. The children are getting to the point where they fail and need to be involuntarily committed because they are being placed in foster care instead of getting the care they need at the time they need it. They are seeing younger children and it's harder to place them. They do not deal specifically with substance abuse cases. Therapeutic Foster Homes are for children who have psychiatric diagnosis. Medicaid requirements will not allow them to be admitted into a group home environment until they have failed at both intensive home therapy and a therapeutic foster home. They also fall under the Medicaid Waiver. They are providing services for every LME. In general they try to place in county and that is usually in cooperation with a recommendation made by the DSS case worker.

**NAMI** – Ms. Nandrea reported that Talbot Realty has allowed them to use space at the Palmer St. Mall location. They are having support group meetings. They just finished a 10 week peer to peer class, and a 12 week family class. They are hoping to offer another crisis intervention team training for law enforcement officers at Tri-County Community College in Murphy in the near future. Ms. Nandrea asked Andy Shields to let her know definitely if they would be interested in attending. She also stated they would love to have the school resource officers come. The state mental health budget level looks good for extra psych beds. They are planning for an additional 234 beds around the state by 2014. Mr. Beale informed the committee that they have lobbied for 64 beds to be in our counties. Ms. Nandrea said they are working to raise the age a juvenile who commits a misdemeanor can be processed as an adult from 16 to 18.

A large number of peer support specialists just graduated. These are people who have dealt with a mental illness and are in recovery.

**ACS Mobile Crisis** – Ms. Sherry, Director of Crisis Services – reported that they are trying to keep patients out of the hospitals by working with local providers.

**NA** – Mr. Bottomley stated he is a huge supporter of peer support specialists. He is wondering where the jobs are. Meridian said they were looking to fill five positions at the current time.

Mr. Beale asked for suggestions from all providers for the next meeting. What they need or would like to see in a perfect world in order to decrease involuntary commitments.

Next meeting August 10, 8:30 @ Human Services Building A/B Classroom

Minutes recorded by Charlene Bellavance