



Macon County Mental Health Task Force

February 12, 2015

Minutes

Members Present: Commissioner Ronnie Beale, Tammy Keezer, Kathy McGaha, Jim Bruckner, & Paula Ledford

Absent: Mike Neidig, Jane Kimsey, Major Andy Shields & Marty Wadewitz

Guests: Francis Venticinque, Debbie Roberts & Donita Cline w/NAMI, Duncan Sumpter, Tabatha Brafford & Tara Payne w/ACS, Amy Seay, Nancy Chastain & Amy Barnes w/Smoky Mountain Center, Scott Marion w/Macon County Sheriff's office, Lisa Hilliard w/DSS, Candace Burton w/Barium Springs and Jim Hardy w/Mission Health

Mr. Beale opened the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Mr. Beale met with Senators Tommy Tucker and Bill Bryson to discuss the legislative budget. He also met with Nelson Dollar, appropriation chair in the house. He is a big proponent of LME's. There probably will not be a budget shift this year. He attended a legislative meeting with approximately 50 legislatures. The Medicaid Reform Committee has already been meeting. Dr. Cummings & Dr. Hensley are the top two people in charge of Medicaid. We have asked for pilot programs in our area and there is now a state wide task force. Mr. Beale has asked Dave Richards to put together an advisory council. Wednesday, April 22nd the secretary will be here in Macon County to attend our next meeting and it will have to be at 2:00 in the afternoon. If anyone has a need for a face to face conversation with any one of these individuals, please communicate that through Ms. Bellavance.

The issues with younger children have increased. The goal is to have beds available so they don't have to be held at the ER. They are pushing for beds at Balsam Center. They are pushing the whole person care not just the mental health aspect. Mr. Beale will be in Washington on the 20th to discuss the Medicaid Waiver in order to treat the medical condition as well as the mental health issue. They are educating our senator, Jim Davis, on the County Government Health Facility process so he can be a more productive advocate. He is learning and will continue to push for these needs to be met.

We have asked for a comprehensive jail program to be created. Duncan Sumpter said they are having success with some of these individuals. They provide free consultation to the jail staff to help direct the medication piece. They have seen some of these individuals go straight from prison into a comprehensive maintenance program.

Mr. Black has been appointed by both the senate and the house to get with DSS to see how we can become more affective. Ms. Kimsey is in Raleigh this week and probably will be having this conversation. Mr. Sumpter asked if the legislature would be making a decision to compete for the mental health dollars. The house is against this but the senate is willing to discuss alternatives. The schools have become a huge issue

throughout the state due to the expense. It is still a struggle for providers to get paid for their services. We have lost another pediatrician for mental health services due to his inability to get paid. Macon County is ahead of the curve because we have individuals who know the system and are willing to work together to be proactive for these individuals.

Mr. Beale showed a map of the proposed hospital beds in all regions of the state. The smaller hospitals may be absorbed by other larger ones like the Mission system.

Ms. Johansen contacted Mr. Beale asking for him to mention the unintentional drug overdose problem within our area. Macon County has overdose numbers that are higher than other territories but no response mechanism to help these individuals. Ms. Johansen is offering free overdose kits indicating that they also offer free training for lay people describing how to administer this medication. Ms. Brafford indicated there is a very good article on the internet regarding a person who was found in a public place and had overdosed and someone used this kit to save her life. Corporal Marion indicated this would be ideal in the event of an overdose of someone who has been picked up by law enforcement and taken all the drugs they have in order to avoid incarceration. Mr. Beale indicated we have had two recent overdose deaths.

Mr. Bruckner stated that we have a Project Lazarus grant through the Health Department's Healthy Carolinians Program and the County Substance Abuse Task Force. The taskforce is chaired by Tony Corbin from the Macon County Sheriff's Office and they have looked into the use of these kits. It is my understanding that the taskforce elected not to sponsor the distribution of Naloxone using these grant funds due to concerns expressed by EMS and certain medical providers in the community. The main concerns had to do primarily with logistics related to safe storage and dispensation methods. Mr. Beale said he will put her in touch with the press to get the information out about the kits and education classes they are offering.

Approval of Minutes: – Commissioner Beale asked the committee members if they had any comments, etc. on the previous meeting notes. A motion was made by Paula Ledford and seconded by Duncan Sumpter to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

Current Issues and Discussion:

Mr. Sumpter indicated that with respect to Macon County we have asked Smoky Mountain to equip the Balsam Center to accept crisis patients. They are hoping to be a partner in reducing emergency hospitalizations. They cannot currently accept these patients without 24/7 security. This is one of the pilot projects that Mr. Beale has been asking legislatures to support. They have suggested some creative ways to make this happen. The ability for Balsam to go into the ER to provide mental health service will be ending March 1st. They are working with the hospitals to try to coordinate the handoff from the ER to their facility. Facility based crisis beds are available currently through Mission in Buncombe County and they have asked that there be a designation on the Medicaid form to have facility based crisis as a choice for individuals. Mr. Sumpter indicated that when Angel has a patient who is breaking their commitment they are calling Balsam and asking them to come and start a dialogue to coordinate care for the individual after they are released. Mr. Sumpter noted that they will be sponsoring a peer support training course in our area.

Currently when a physician sees an individual in the ER they are using Tele-Psych for the assessment to determine the mental health need and begin the process of looking for a bed for that individual. This usually decreases the number of involuntary commitments and increases the voluntary commitments. This is primarily due to the availability of the mental health services beds. It is difficult currently for the medical facility to send them directly to Balsam because they have to have a full clearance for both the medical and mental health aspects. Balsam is not the first stop for the mental health assessment. Buncombe County is moving toward having one of their facilities given the availability to do these assessments.

Ms. Brafford indicated that currently their numbers are between 35 to 40% for voluntary commitments. The numbers for January at the walk in center were higher than ever. The main issue becomes transportation, and when the hospital can take some responsibility and possibly use the family to arrange the transportation it helps.

Ms. Brafford asked if there had been any discussion regarding a replacement for Mr. Bottomley as the Alcoholics Anonymous representative. She indicated they have already started to see patients coming straight from the ER to their doorstep. The ER is discharging them and telling them to follow up with Appalachian. There needs to be a better process in place for this transitional patient. These individuals need a contact for detox support. There needs to be a specific appointment time for the discharge of these patients. If they come in for medical reasons and the ER doctor doesn't make the mental health provider connection, it impedes the process. This connection needs to be made. Mr. Hartye with Mission will work with Balsam and Appalachian to coordinate this handoff. Mr. Hartye indicated that approximately two years ago they made available 50 new beds.

The first tele-psych event in Macon County happened with a young lady and Mr. Beale was there in the ER. The ER doctor did not hesitate to get this individual connected through tele-psych. She was transferred to a facility in Wilmington, NC.

Barium Springs has now become a home for children with the merger of Grandfather home and have been very busy. Last year they had approximately 150 people who were accessing the peer group support program. The recent merger has been a great success. She indicated substance abuse has escalated and she stated they are learning about new drugs that are available to these youth. The Reclaiming Futures committee has had a positive result in identifying the individuals who are drug abusers. Ms. Burton was asked if she was getting the financial support she needed. She indicated that the intensive care portion of service is getting reimbursed promptly. There are not a large number of these that are Medicaid.

Corporal Marion indicated that they had a collaborative meeting with a number of providers to discuss how the inmates with mental illness diagnosis can get treatment. This is to initiate a peer specialist to coordinate care and facilitate a network of communication between the providers prior to the release of the individuals. NAMI is a big part of getting the care coordinators into the jail. There are also individuals connected to AA that are participating in these meetings. The efforts of the group are focused on creating a personal comprehensive care system for each individual's needs. This is completely voluntary for the patient. The committee has generally been focusing on treatments that use volunteers. Mr. Sumpter indicated they would be interested in attending the meetings so they will be included in dialogue. They discussed how they can bridge the gap between the provider and the patient. Corporal Marion is asking for recommendations from the providers to channel the therapeutic needs of these individuals. The bottom line is to make sure the volunteers don't get pushed out.

There are new records being set for children being turned over by their parents to the state. Mr. Beale indicated that the percentage of children with mental illness diagnosis in the juvenile system is at 67%. Ms. Hilliard from DSS maintains that this continues to be an issue. They see instances where therapeutic foster families are not equipped to take care of the children that need the therapeutic home.

Ms. Roberts spoke for NAMI and noted how even after being gone and coming back to the table she is still seeing people who can't get the help they need for mental illness. It is frustrating to see that this is still such a problem.

Ms. Ledford said that the schools are status quo. Not much new to report. Service with Macon Psych is going well.

Other Business: - Mr. Beale reiterated the fact that Macon County is now a Tier 1 county. This is based on the poverty level and it is the first time we have been a Tier 1 county. Mr. Beale has been appointed to the National Association of Counties Health and Human Services committee as the mental health representative.

The suicide rate for the young men coming back from active service in Iran and Iraq is the highest it's ever been. Mr. Beale has been in touch with the VA in Asheville. They have been doing a good job getting these individuals connected to the proper providers and support systems for mental health services. Corporal Marion indicated they have several veterans in custody at this time.

Schedule Next Meeting: – April 22, 2015 – Macon Bank Corporate Center, 1 Center Ct., Franklin, NC @ 2:00 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bellavance

These minutes were approved on April 22, 2015 with a motion by Major Andy Shields and seconded by Kathy McGaha. The motion passed unanimously.