



Macon County Mental Health Task Force

September 23, 2015

Minutes

Members Present: Commissioner Ronnie Beale, Mike Neidig, Kathy McGaha, Robbie Holland, Patrick Betancourt & Paula Ledford

Absent: Jim Bruckner & Marty Wadewitz

Guests: Howard Dowdle, Candace Burton & Jolita Jackson w/Children's Hope Alliance, Sarah Altman, Linda Henry, Desiree Selby, Amanda Jenkins & Temre Gillig w/Southwestern Community College, Donita Cline & Francis Venticinque w/NAMI, Tabatha Brafford, Ron Ross, Lauren Garner, & Jason Strack w/ACS, Amy Seay, Nancy Chastain & Amy Barnes w/Smoky Mountain Center, Dr. Jim Hartye w/Mission Health, Kevin Inabinet & Elizabeth Littlefield w/Macon & Jackson County Psych & Ryan Hanchett w/The Franklin Press

Commissioner Beale welcomed everyone and thanked them for being there. He handed out the President's Mental Health Engagement Task Force publication. He congratulated this task force on the progression of this group. It has been developed into a statewide task force lead by the Governor. This report has been distributed to all the LME's. Mr. Beale discussed the new structure of the LME's.

Legislative update - 164,000,000 was cut out of the budget to LME's. Most of that was to make them spend their fund balances. We don't know what the percentage affect with be to Smoky Mountain yet. There was a compromise between the house and the senate that amounted to \$30,000,000. This was cut but it is being run into a new bill. The legislature will adjourn next Thursday.

Approval of Minutes: – A motion was made by Mr. Betancourt and seconded by Mr. Neidig to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

Reports

Barium Springs – Ms. Burton noted that Barium Springs will no longer be providing adult services. They will only be providing children's services. This will specifically affect Macon County. This will not cut services to the Macon Detention Center. Appalachian has discussed the transition plan with them and are continuing to accept the transfer of children's service patients. The projected transition date is November 1. Appalachian has been able to give them acceptance of their DWI program and their adult patients will be able to continue their counseling services. This should be a seamless transition. Barium Springs is still invested in growing Hawthorne Heights. Jolene Jackson will be maintaining their contract with DSS. There will still be an office at 150 Georgia Road. Personnel will continue to work in that office for communication purposes. Commissioner Beale noted that we are always disappointed to lose adult service providers.

Barium will continue to provide the intake and assessment services but will transfer them to Appalachian. This will cut down on the patient's wait time. Once the assessment is done the patient will be able to make their first appointment at Appalachian so there will be a smooth transition.

Appalachian – Ms. Brafford referenced the increase in their numbers. Since June they have gone from 60 to 62 percent and in August they were at 85%. Their numbers will probably be at 90 % census by the end of September. Appalachian is still seeing the same acuity patients but they are having better luck getting patients from the ER's and even being able to keep some out of the ER.

Mr. Ross noted that Appalachian is working with some of the larger counties to get better response times, doing better triage and trying to get someone out to the patient. They have a wait list this week. Appalachian has an application in to increase their number of beds from 12 to 16. They are currently in discussion about funding for their IVC drop off site. The wait list is reviewed regularly. If a patient comes out of the ER it is important to continue service in between the time they have their next appointment. This is called a warm handoff. The mobile unit is currently staffed with clinicians. It is their hope to be able to staff with peer support specialist positions. There are currently twelve staff members but when they go to 16 beds at least one more clinical staff member will be needed on the floor.

Mr. Beale asked about the use of Telepsych. Ms. Brafford said Appalachian uses them every day and they have five units. They are using the Telepsych as a diversion while clients are waiting for a bed. This happens after the commitment is broken. We are also using this in the ER on a daily basis. There are still hospitals like Kings Mountain that have decided not to accept any of our substance abuse detox patients. The suggestion was that they can probably keep their beds full just from their own catchment area. Ms. Seay noted that Murphy Medical remains part of the Telepsych system and changes there will compel Kings Mountain to start taking patients from them.

Mr. Beale asked what the majority of the increase has been. It was noted that there were more substance abuse detox patients than mental health patients. Appalachian has added some different groups and they have made some changes regarding the type of care they are giving. This has had good results and more consistency with the system working properly.

From the outpatient side they are able to get patients in faster and more efficiently. The patients are often times able to be seen within the first day or two. Although this is getting better providers are still having no shows. The transition with the adult services has been a real testament to everyone's commitment to the clients. They are fortunate to have Mr. Dowdle come on board. They will also be picking up the jail program.

Macon Psych – Mr. Inabinet noted that this has been the busiest they've ever seen with schools starting. The summer this year was different due to the parents not being involved. Families do more traveling and the no show rate increases. The enhancement services continue to run. Macon Psych's school program combines the K-5 programs and the middle school through high school age kids. The kids really want the treatment. The parents either won't or can't make the commitment to get the kids to their appointments. Some parents are suffering themselves or can't afford the treatment. The open door policy and with Meridian being right next door it makes things easier to offer those parents the treatment they may need. The communication between agencies has become much easier. One of the basic reasons the children get more care during the school year is they have more healthy eyes on them to help determine who needs help.

Macon County Schools - Ms. Ledford noted that it is good to know there are people she can call when they have a student in crisis. The schools are looking at suicide prevention and will be doing some training with the staff regarding what to look for, where resources are and how to identify depression in adolescents. When you have children in your classroom with serious mental health issues it is about being able to keep

those kids in class. One of the hardest things is they are dealing with parents that also have mental health issues. The staff at the schools need to have more time to train.

Commissioner Beale asked if the providers were seeing more grandparents bringing these kids in for services. Mr. Inhibit noted that there are more grandparents and even great grandparents taking care of these children.

Macon County Sheriff's Dept. – Robbie Holland noted that he hadn't been able to attend these meetings in the past. It has been a real blessing to have security at Mission Hospital. They can now just pick up the mental health patient and leave them at the ED. The Sheriff's office has been able to fill four positions this year from money they saved not having to sit with mental health patients in the ED. He learned several years ago that they went to battle with Smoky Mountain to get a program in their jail. We now have Mr. Dowdle along with Mike Neidig that started the Second Chance program. When the two of them went before the commissioners it was supported financially. Sheriff Holland noted that he just learned recently that the jail was going to lose the services from Barium Springs. He now knows that Appalachian will be taking over these services. He feels like when someone is in jail and they are clean they are begging for help. Now the jail has the support of the mental health community and making those connections is imperative. Sheriff Holland asked that as the administrator, that the providers please let him know if they will not be able to continue any of these services. He noted that he would appreciate this courtesy from all of the providers.

Commissioner Beale noted that he and Sheriff Holland have a very close working relationship in connection to the individuals who are incarcerated. The percentage is approximately 15 to 17% of the prisoners in the system that are suffering from mental illness. North Carolina has 10% less people incarcerated than the national average. It has 23% more incarcerated for property crimes than the national average. The more time spent in jail the higher the chance becomes that the individual will get in trouble in jail. If it can be determined at intake that an individual is an addict they can be offered the option of rehab instead of being placed in jail.

Southwestern Community College (SCC) – Ms. Altman introduced several of her students from the human services technology program. The students are learning how to ask questions of clients, as well as how to do group counseling. Appalachian has had a student in the past as an intern and they ended up hiring her. Appalachian is hoping to get two interns next semester. There are twenty-three students currently in this class at SCC. These students will have an AAS from SCC and can transition into Western Carolina as a junior.

Dept. of Social Services – Mr. Betancourt noted that he is sorry to hear that Barium will be pulling out of the adult care side of mental health but is glad that Appalachian is picking the services up. He thanked SCC for their services that help them on the economic services side. NCFast is a system that has given them lots of heartache but in the end will help them serve more clients in the long run. Child welfare continues to see grandparents raising their grandchildren. The program to become more informed regarding trauma systems is a good pilot. One of the SCC students asked if DSS would consider offering an intern position for the two year students. Mr. Betancourt indicated that they would most definitely consider this. DSS with new legislation will be able to extent care for patients up to the age of twenty one. Mr. Betancourt thanked all of the mental health providers for working with DSS every Friday morning.

Joleta Jackson is currently with Barium Springs and Children's Health Alliance. She manages Region 1 which includes eight counties for family preservation. Barium provides in home services for DSS. They also contract with local counties for reunification of families.

NAMI – Ms. Cline noted that NAMI recently attended a recovery rally and received a Recovery Champion Award. Last school year they presented "In Our Own Voice" to 325 school age children. This year they

have five more presenters and hope to expand. The Peer to Peer classes started yesterday. NAMI will be offering a program called Parents and Teachers as allies. She asked Ms. Ledford for suggestions about the best time to offer this program. There is a weekly support group meeting in the detention center and NAMI has been doing Wellness Recovery and Action Plan (WRAP) programs.

Mission Medical – Dr. Hartye noted the number coming into the ED is steady between 25 to 30 clients per month. The hospital had up to 6 clients one day. The average length of stay is holding between 1 to 2 days. Angel has offered a number of initiatives with the ED nurses to give them more comfort in caring for the mental health patients. Angel is looking at more care coordination support. Leadership is starting to look at pre-natal care for patients with substance abuse issues. The hope is to get these patients into care earlier in the pregnancy. There is also a committee that is looking at clients who because of behavior issues have been kicked out of the youth home. Some of these are Medicare patients so they have fewer resources. These are usually folks with traumatic brain injury or behavior disorders. A number of these are older individuals.

Commissioner Beale noted that the term swing bed will be coming back into the mental health vocabulary. Also geriatric care will be coming back with a vengeance. A swing bed is a bed that could be used for any patient, mental health or otherwise.

How do we support nursing homes with mental health services because we are running out of places to put them. Mr. Beale noted that the next governor's task force meeting is the 15th of October. If there is something any of the providers want fixed for either adult or children's mental health services please send him an email.

Mike Neidig noted that the loss of Barium Springs as an adult provider is sad but he is thankful that Appalachian is taking over the care and services are appreciated and he encourages all involved to make the transition as seamless as possible.

Next meeting – TBD

Meeting adjourned at 10:17

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bellavance

These minutes were approved on November 17, 2015 with a motion by Ms. McGaha and seconded by Ms. Ledford. The motion passed unanimously.