



**Tompkins County**  
**COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BOARD**

**Tompkins County Whole Health**  
**201 East Green Street**  
**Ithaca, New York 14850-5635**

Ellice Switzer, Chair

Jan Lynch, Vice Chair

Frank Kruppa; Commissioner

Harmony Ayers-Friedlander,  
Deputy Commissioner/Director of Community Services

Larry Roberts, Chair,  
Mental Health Subcommittee

James Beaumont and Jeff Boles, Co-Chairs  
Developmental Disabilities Subcommittee

Marley Brooks and Jacob Parker Carver , Co-Chairs,  
Substance Use Subcommittee

**Tompkins County Community Mental Health Services Board**  
**201 East Green Street, Ithaca NY 14850**  
**Monday, November 6, 2023, 5:30 p.m. Meeting Minutes**

**Minutes Approved**  
**12.4.2023**

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkpJNVbpLLbEbhoDbTIEgSQ>

**Present:** Ellice Switzer; Mary Hutchens; Sheila McEnery; Stu Bergman; Dr. Auguste Duplan; Sally McConnell-Ginet; Jessica Conner, PsyD; Jan Lynch; and Larry Roberts (Zoom)

**Excused:** Travis Winter

**Legislature:** Randy Brown

**Guests:** Nicole Zulu, Debbie Barber; Anna Tamis; Howard Reid; Khaki Wunderlich

**Staff:** Frank Kruppa, Commissioner; Harmony Ayers-Friedlander, DCS; and Karan Palazzo, LGU Administrative Assistant

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The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Ms. Switzer. Introductions were made. The "Peer Outreach Center Update" from the Mental Health Association was deleted from the agenda. The October minutes were tabled until the next meeting.

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**Privilege of the Floor & Announcements:** Although the amendment was withdrawn, Dr. Conner asked the CSB to be mindful of the City pulling funding from Southside Community Center. The CSB has the ability to deliberate these issues and develop positions for future conversations when needed. Dr. Conner announced that Northeast Pediatrics has been awarded the NYS Healthy Steps Grant of \$500k over a 5-year period to provide more behavioral and developmental support for families with kids ages 0 to 5. Mr. Roberts announced that the annual Mental Health Conference will be held November 17<sup>th</sup> via Zoom which will focus on women and mental health.

**Housing Issues for Individuals with Substance Use, Mental Health, and Developmental Disabilities:** Tammy Baker, Tompkins County Homeless Services Coordinator invited Jess, Case Manager, SPOA Coordinator, and licensed mental health therapist at St. John's Community Services, and Haley Romero, Housing Coordinator at Opportunities Alternative and Resources (OAR) to enhance the discussion as they provide services with the homeless population; both have mental health backgrounds and PAC funding experience.

Ms. Baker explained that people experiencing homelessness and looking for temporary housing, face a challenging approval process with the Department of Social Services (DSS) requiring filling out lengthy forms and providing two forms of ID to verify homelessness which is the most challenging. DSS follows OPWDD State regulations and uses a formula that takes 50-75% of income and needs and individuals must meet with a CASAC for alcohol and substance use counseling. Individuals are sanctioned for not following the treatment plan after a referral is made.

Even if someone is housed, they may still face challenges due to the lack of stability and resources, and the need for ongoing treatment and support. There are challenges in providing shelter for vulnerable populations, including non-binary individuals

and those of color, who may face violence and discrimination. Low-barrier shelters are funded by the State during Code Blue months (November – April) utilizing the facilities at the Salvation Army and cannot turn anyone away.

St. John’s Community Services (shelter) provides support services including case management, trauma-informed training, and seasonal client care specialists at the Econo Lodge. The Salvation Army and Econo Lodge are only for DSS-approved individuals.

Philosophies and Resources: Individuals experiencing domestic violence do not meet the criteria for emergency housing.

- DSS OPWDD regulated
- Continuum of Care put out by Home Together Tompkins County where everyone has a right to be housed when ready
- Housing First - benefits both homeless families and individuals with any degree of service needs and is tailored to help anyone chronically homeless or homeless due to a temporary personal or financial crisis
- Permanent Supportive Housing (mainly for youths) – Paid for, high-focused, low-barrier, serves people who are homeless, not a compliance-based program, weekly support, monthly home, and health inspections. This program needs accountability to be built into it as well as incentives for responsible behavior. Property managers should work closely with case managers

Ms. Baker provided a detailed document on the available housing in Tompkins County. Navigating the system is difficult due to limited resources, conflicting policies, strict State regulations, and personal conflicts. She believes affordable housing must have a case manager on site and intensive wrap-around and support services to keep individuals housed. There was a discussion of a blind man housed in an SRO being evicted despite a lack of accessibility.

Ms. Baker announced that she is leaving her position this Friday but during her time she found that outreach workers are many challenges for outreach workers trying to work with the homeless including the necessity for better communication and data accuracy. The self-reported Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is important but not always accurate.

**Commissioner’s Report:** Mr. Kruppa reported that it was confirmed that “Disability” is a reason for not being in person and countable towards a quorum moving forward.

Tompkins County Whole Health Updates:

- The Mental Health HVAC system is near completion
- Improvements to the security of the Mental Health front desk
- Genoa Pharmacy in Mental Health is not fully open
- Construction begins on Thursday at Brown Road for licensed mental health space (taking 3-4 months to complete)

Mr. Roberts addressed concern about the status of the outreach workers from Family & Children Services (FCS). Mr. Kruppa said that the 1 year of funding to expand the outreach workers program throughout the county that was secured last year, was included in the budget to continue funding in this year's budget to the legislature, but there was no funding. This loss of funding caused many FCS staff to find employment at REACH Medical.

It was the first time the MH department was financially involved in outreach workers, and it seems to be a systemic challenge. The funding came from a variety of sources and the county expects to figure out a plan to have four outreach workers and a supervisor throughout the county because of the success and the need in the County. He noted that the legislature has been very supportive. There are also several other important one-time fundings where the legislature will have difficult decisions to make in the next three years.

Applicant Debbie Barber expressed her interest in joining the CSB. She will be able to provide solutions for the community as a representative from the Sheriff’s Department and her daily experiences as a CARE team member.

An executive session was added to the agenda.

7:01 p.m. Mr. Bergman moved to go into executive session to discuss applicants; seconded by Ms. Lynch.

7:10 p.m. Mr. Bergman moved to go out of executive session; seconded by Ms. Hutchens. The CSB recommended Debbie Barber to the CSB.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:11 p.m.



**The Next Community Mental Health Services Board Meeting is  
Monday, December 4, 2023, at 5:30 pm.**