



Tompkins County
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BOARD

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

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Substance Use Subcommittee

Tompkins County Community Mental Health Services Board
55 Brown Road, Ithaca NY 14850
Monday, March 4, 2024, 5:30 p.m. Meeting Minutes

MINUTES
APPROVED 4/1/2024

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

Present: Jan Lynch; Mary Hutchens; Sheila McEnery; Jessica Conner, PsyD; Travis Winter; Dr. Auguste Duplan; Sally McConnell-Ginet; Howard Reid; Khaki Wunderlich; Anna Tamis, PhD.; Stu Bergman (Zoom); and Larry Roberts (Zoom)

Excused: Nicole Zulu, PhD.; and Deb Barber

Legislature:

Guests: Josephine Gibson, MHA; Jenny Miller, MHA; and Alaina Zapf PsyD.

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

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Ms. Lynch. Introductions were made. Ms. McEnery moved to approve the February 8, 2024, minutes, seconded by Dr. Duplan.; all were in favor.

Privilege of the Floor & Announcements: None

Mental Health Association (MHA) Updates: Executive Director, Ms. Gibson, introduced their newly hired Chief Operating Officer, Jenny Miller. Ms. Gibson provided a thorough history and overview of MHA and the services it offers via a PowerPoint presentation. The Mental Health Association (MHA) in Tompkins County, established in 1954 draws on lived experiences and training to empower individuals, families, and groups by providing peer support, advocacy, and services that promote mental health recovery and prevention of mental illness. Their services work to end the stigma of mental illnesses by encouraging open conversations and education on the topic.

MHA is a community-based, non-profit organization with funding from the NYS Office of Mental Health, Tompkins County, donations, and grants with a budget of just under \$600,000 with about \$450,000 from NYS OMY, \$100,00 from Tompkins County and the rest of the funding from Mental Health First Aid trainings, grants, and private donations. All services are free, and many are funded by the Sophie Fund.

MHA is a peer-led and peer-run agency which means everyone at MHA identifies as a peer including herself and she graciously shared her experience. When she came to MHA 24 years ago, she started her journey to recovery and was inspired to help to work with others to help them not feel the way she did.

Programs include:

Peer Support Services - MHA's Peer Support Specialists/Advocates offer emotional support, share knowledge, teach skills, provide practical assistance, and connect people with resources, opportunities, and communities of support.

Peer Family Support Services - Provides support, advocacy, and referrals for parents and caregivers raising a child or young adult who is facing social, emotional, or behavioral health challenges. Services are provided by a certified Family Peer Advocate who has lived experience raising and caring for children with mental health conditions. This program is challenged with engaging parents.

Justice Support Services - Offers person-centered, strength-based support to individuals with mental health and/or co-occurring challenges who are involved in the criminal justice system. In addition to supporting recovery, the Justice Support services help in reducing recidivism and reentry into the community. This program is expanding and receiving positive feedback.

Outreach Center - A multi-purpose facility for the community providing classroom and training space, meeting space, and home to our Social Drop-In program. The Center is easily accessible and located centrally on the Ithaca Commons. Staffed by NY State Peer Specialists, the center has drop-in hours and a variety of weekly activity groups. The Peer-Led Social Activity Group is considered psychosocial, and the Peer-Led Social/Work Groups are skill-based.

They hold weekly groups at the psychiatric unit at Cayuga Medical Center where many referrals are received from the one-on-one programming.

Community education – Wellness Recovery Action Plan, Mental Health First Aid, De-Escalation training (coming soon). They collaborate with PROS, Challenge, Cayuga Medical Center, Cornell, NAMI, and the Sophie Fund.

In 2022 MHA served 1,420 unique individuals across all the programs and 2023 is expected to be similar. There are 9 total staff members with 4 full-time administrative staff and 5 part-time peer specialists and feedback is collected through surveys.

Challenges – only anecdotal evidence, not seen as professional, recovery is not linear and funding challenges.

Announcements - Mental Health Association has a name change – “**Mental Health Advocates of the Finger Lakes**”, which will expand into other counties. They are adding the position of a Certified Recovery Peer Advocate to the team. The annual “Better Together” event will be held at Stewart Park, on Saturday, May 11th from 11 am – 3 pm.

Family Support Services for families with children with mental health issues face challenges with limited funding, engaging parents, and staffing issues. Respite is not sustainable.

Outreach Center Update – The Outreach Center which houses the psychosocial program is not doing as expected and struggles with collaborating with other agencies, funding, and staffing issues despite an increase in demand for services. Ms. Gibson is unsure of the Center’s future.

Deputy Commissioner’s Report/Update: Ms. Ayers-Friedlander reported that Tompkins County will have a Children’s ACT team (for children 10 years and older) that will be shared with Tioga County and will start in a couple of weeks. Two RFPs are in development for a Home-Based Crisis Intervention (HBCI) service for mental health needs under the Office of Mental Health and another for children with developmental disabilities under the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities. They are a short-term, intensive support service for families with children under 12 experiencing mental health crises. The service provides 10 hours/week of in-home support, modeling, and teaching families how to respond differently to their child’s behaviors and collaborates with other systems such as schools and public health.

Ms. Ayers-Friedlander discussed the challenges of providing respite care for children with high needs, including limited local options and transportation difficulties.

Samantha Fletcher of the Office of Mental Health has a newly created position to work on workforce development and recruitment to gather data on local services agencies’ workforce challenges. As a data analyst, Ms. Fletcher will be able to provide potential solutions with state-level expertise. A form is being created for the contracted agencies to complete annually for the first year and then quarterly with other agencies volunteering their data.

CSB member Howard Reid is helping select an RFP for Tompkins County for intensive support. The mobile supportive RFP (formerly the Family & Children’s Outreach Worker Program) will close in early April. The Ithaca Housing Authority is offering an affordable housing lottery for three different sites

Commissioner’s Report/Update: Mr. Kruppa reported on the article from the Ithaca Voice-driven by a former employee who made claims against the department. He said the organization felt they were not fit for the organization and was separated from employment with the department. The complaint is currently under investigation by the County’s Human Resources Department. Tompkins County Whole Health remains committed to health, diversity, equity, inclusion, and transparency.

The Alcohol & Drug Council, an independent non-profit organization, has suspended operations due to struggling with staffing issues and financial challenges. They have been supported by the County and OASAS in additional funding over the last few years to fill in gaps as they expanded with needed services (Detox and Stabilization facility) but unfortunately, they weren’t able to sustain themselves financially.

OASAS and DOH are working with ADC to ensure a safe transition of care for clients. CARS has made itself available to take on as many clients as the clients choose them. It is ultimately the client's choice of where they go for care. Transitions should be complete by the end of the week and then conversations about the future will begin. The community is eager to get the Detox and Stabilization facility operational.

Mr. Kruppa became aware two weeks before they announced their closure and alerted OASA immediately. Possible solutions were discussed but ultimately the ADC’s Board decided that suspending operations was most prudent for the organization. OASAS, DOH, OMH, and licensed organizations are having conversations about the lost services of prevention, the outpatient clinic, and the detox and stabilization center.

CARS under the umbrella of Cayuga Health System has initiated a rapid review process for interested displaced workers. Guthrie is also playing a part.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.



**The Next Community Mental Health Services Board Meeting is
Monday, April 1, 2024, at 5:30 pm.**