



Tompkins County
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BOARD

Tompkins County Whole Health
201 East Green Street
Ithaca, New York 14850-5421

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Developmental Disabilities Subcommittee
November 14th, 2023, 10:00 a.m. Via Zoom
Meeting Minutes

Minutes Approved
12.12.2023

Present: Jeffrey Boles, James Beaumont; Sheila McEnery; Sally McConnell-Gist; Allison Weiner-Heinemann; Cassidy Stanley; and Walaa Maharem-Horan

Excused:

Unexcused: Nancy Saltzman

Guests Present: Briggs Seekins, Challenge; Gabriella Ayers, Catholic Charities; Jamie Kelly, OPWDD; Michelle Gravel, Springbrook; Madison Saufley, Southern Tier Connect; Pete Cornell, Catholic Charities; Aaron Brozon, Unity House; Jennifer Goodman TST BOCES; Melinda Sheppard, Southern Tier Connect; and Jessica Conner, Northeast Pediatrics

Staff: Harmony Ayers-Friedlander, DCS; Margo Polikoff, RN, CSCN; and Karan Palazzo, LGU Administrative Assistant

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The meeting was called to order at 10:03 a.m. by James. Sheila motioned to approve October 2023 minutes, seconded by Allison; all were in favor.
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Privilege of the Floor: None

Announcements/Correspondence: James shared that the living wage in Tompkins County is \$18.45. Jessica shared that Ithaca College is having a Health Care Careers Expo on Monday, November 20, 2023. Cassidy will have a table there and can forward the flyer information.

Discussions

Collecting Data from Providers: James said the data collected will be for the sole purpose of advocating and highlighting people without services due to the workforce staffing crisis. Walaa asked if the NYC asylum seekers qualify for the positions needed in the County. James said, "Yes, it is already in the works since Tompkins County has agreed to take them in, but it will take up to a year before people can get work outside NYC". Harmony added there may be other legalities and Jamie will check to see how OPWDD is working with the Department of Labor on this issue. Walaa doesn't believe housing is a part of the equation with conversations she had with the Department of Labor. James will contact DOL to further investigate.

CSE Chair Meeting on November 17, 2023: James shared that all three subcommittees (Developmental Disabilities, Mental Health, and Substance Use) met to create a specific data-collecting template and he shared his screen of the draft to get the DD subcommittee's feedback.

Template for data-collecting – Data collection will identify eligible individuals for services but not all eligible individuals are receiving services. Templates will not have identifiable agency names but individual **program names** for the data to be gathered from and will highlight what each organization has.

Sample of data requested - The number of positions available, the number of open positions, the total number of meetings, the number of people on the waitlist, the number of people sitting on a waitlist for each service type, the number of people going without services due to not getting in the front door due to staffing issues, and the number of people not being served. James clarified that a waitlist person is waiting for a spot to become available vs. people already in the program losing services due to staff shortages and the inability of the agency to provide those services.

James found that the OPWDD website posted that 586 people in Tompkins County were getting OPWDD services and is interested in how many are getting services from our providers. He is looking to get the total number to match up the number of eligible or approved for those receiving services in Tompkins County. Jamie will look to find the total number of those who have been eligible in Tompkins County as she looks for employment information about asylum seekers.

At the bottom of the sheet will have a section for stories about the impacts of gaps in services for qualitative information including stories of results of people going without and stories of things that are happening to underserved individuals.

Harmony said that the County is currently updating funded agency contracts for 2024 and they submit other quarterly data to the County. This specific data request will probably be reviewed and finalized in aggregate by the CSB in a closed session. During this 2024 contract update, the agencies were made of this request and found some concerns, based on their current staffing situations. But, since a lot of data is not being requested as it is limited to particular services, it should work. From the data/information collected, there might be actions that can be taken locally beyond advocacy at the State level.

Walaa asked, in light of the staffing shortages, how can parents do more self-direction care for individuals with disabilities. Jamie responded that you could utilize family members or other individuals in the individual's circle as respite providers but depends on the situation and the family dynamics as well. There are a variety of therapy services including music therapy with a cap on funding based on Department of Health guidelines. She supports advocating for therapies that are duplicates of State Education Department Therapy.

Walaa shared her experience with advocating for her child's special education needs. It was suggested that increasing communication with parents, attending budget meetings, and writing letters to your local legislature will have great impacts. Subcommittee members agreed to support and take actions needed to better inform decision-makers and provide more information to parents to help advocate for themselves.

2024 Provider Fair - Volunteers are needed to help plan the 2024 provider fair as well as providers who will table. James will send out emails for responses.

CSC Chair Meeting 11/17/23 – The meeting on November 17th will discuss the transition of services for those of age. Jennifer provided information on how to continue conversations with providers coming to schools and getting that information into the students' and parents' hands before graduation.

OPWDD Update - Jamie shared that an annual report will be available shortly that will highlight changes to forms; Appendix K ended on November 11th with many changes put in place in the COLAs. Guidehouse will submit a final report on Managed Care to OPWDD in late spring and should be an agenda topic of discussion. Crisis Services for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities teams struggle across the state and regions due to staffing shortages across the board.

211 Update – James spoke with 211 and they confirmed a continuous update of service providers. A meeting to discuss updating local provider information on 211's website will be scheduled.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.



**The next Developmental Disabilities Subcommittee Meeting is
Tuesday, December 12th, 2023, at 10:00 a.m.**