



**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

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Substance Use Subcommittee

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**Developmental Disabilities Subcommittee**  
**December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 10:00 a.m. Via Zoom**  
**Meeting Minutes**

Minutes Approved 1/13/24

**Present:** Jeffrey Boles, James Beaumont; Sheila McEnery; Sally McConnell-Gist; Allison Weiner-Heinemann; Cassidy Stanley; and Nancy Saltzman

**Excused:**

**Unexcused:** Walaa Maharem-Horan

**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 November 2023 minutes, seconded by Allison; all were in favor.  
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**Privilege of the Floor:** Jessica brought attention to the difficulties she's been having with Medicaid cab transportation accessibility for individuals with developmental disabilities. The group suggested some alternative options including Gadabout which has a minimal cost.

**Announcements/Correspondence:** Chris shared that Racker anticipates opening a 6-bed IRA in Cortland in the near future.

**Discussions**

**CSE Chair Meeting on November 17<sup>th</sup>** – Providers met with school staff and discussed the aging out process, key contacts, and the importance of early conversations to prepare students, individuals, and parents before graduation. Although it was successful this is the beginning of improving the process and communication with providers and schools and as a committee are open to looking at other opportunities for engagement.

Creating a hard copy pamphlet of accurate updated information for families inclusive of available providers and their services and making it available online and partnering with 211.

**Youth Transition Services Report:** James discussed the most recent report on Youth Transition Services that was collected pre-COVID-19, in 2019 which was not great, and believes things must have worsened for those with developmental disabilities including fewer opportunities; fewer individuals going into the workforce; less secondary education opportunities; and fewer opportunities to engage in their communities. He will share the report with the committee.

**Data Collecting for Advocating:** James shared that the data collected will be beneficial in conversations with OPWDD. The DD subcommittee will ask attending agencies/providers for quarterly reports but will be required annually from agencies/providers

on staffing issues. Harmony added that contracted agencies are required to provide that information, but other agencies could provide that information to enhance advocacy efforts.

Harmony shared that she is on the Issues Council for Senator Lia Webb’s office whose office is interested in issues around mental health, substance use, and developmental disability issues. They were impressed with our idea of collecting data and are interested in collecting data across the 52<sup>nd</sup> district which includes Tompkins, Cortland, and parts of Broome counties. She reached out to both counties and is interested in the concept.

Cassidy added that Workforce Development is working on a survey on the needs of the community, what the community is not getting, and what type of help they need to obtain employment.

James clarified that the data collected by the County will be collective of all agencies to quantify the workforce crisis.

Advocacy for DD Services - James stresses the need for advocacy to spread awareness via emails and organizing groups.

Added discussion on the Justice Center speeding regulations communication with providers - James shared that the Justice Center recently sent out an email on speeding regulations for staff that confused many providers, and he feels it may hinder even more who might consider working in the field. Staff speeding > 20 mph will require a call from the Justice Center and speeding under <20 mph the agency handles internally.

2024 Provider Fair - James will send out emails to providers interested in participating in the 2024 provider fair as he and Jeff begin preparing for the event.

Provider Updates

Challenge – Briggs had no updates to report.

Mozaic–Jennifer reports they are still accepting referrals for social work in psychiatry but have received some from LifePlan CCO. More referrals are needed to bring more staff on board.

Southern Tier Connect - Melinda had no updates to report.

Catholic Charities – Gabriella reported staffing remains the issue.

Springbrook – Michelle reports staffing issues and telehealth.

Ithaca Youth Bureau – Court reported many events have been planned for the holidays; more group homes are attending; offering cooking classes for kids and adults.

Racker – Chris reported having a big holiday ball that included a semi-formal dinner, a DJ, and other festivities.

Workforce Development – Cassidy reported receiving new computers for job-related services.

Unity House – James reported that they are looking forward to their holiday party on Thursday and planning activities for 2024.

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



**The next Developmental Disabilities Subcommittee Meeting is  
Tuesday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.**