

HealthChoices Advisory Board  
Zoom Meeting  
November 21, 2024

- I. Introductions: Those in attendance were: Janet Verga, Drew Lazo, Mike Ramsey, Kristy Cole, Tisbine Moussa, Tom Walker, Matt Bauder, and Donna Thorman
- II. Review of August 22, 2024 minutes – no edits noted; minutes approved as final
- III. Community Healthcare Alliance Report:

**Member/Family Advisory Committee**

- Ronnie was not in attendance
- Matt provided Ronnie's recent report from CHA
  - Saw him yesterday at CHA. Reported about LANTA and issues continuing in various ways and providing the complaint number. Helping a member in a residential program. Just being a support for fellow members.
  - Haven House program going well and will be having a Thanksgiving dinner.

**Provider Advisory Committee** – Position is open-discussed at CHA yesterday. One person reached out during this last period but declined to join due to personal and work conflicts, but if things ease up they will reach back out.

- No updates provided

**Children's Advisory Committee – Mike Ramsey**

- Mike discussed the Community Connections United Way Day of Caring and how well it went and was a great experience. Wants to continue to promote that group with providers in the LV. In past they have done a holiday get together and will see if that is of interest to the group. Tom showed some pictures from the United Way Day of Caring.
- Tom brought up the federal government shooting down the federal OT rules that Mike discussed before. Also discussed PRTF commenting period being open. Mike said he heard that Family Based MH is next for the state to look at updating regs.

IV. NAMI/OMHSAS/Provider/Peer/News

- Donna reported hearing from NAMI about getting more families to take the family to family training. Mike asked Donna to give his info to them if they need more info or referrals to certain programs. Donna asked what age group FBMH treats, up to

18. Essentially they need a MH diagnosed or risk of hospitalization. No lower age, but needs and evaluation that the program is medically necessary.

- Family to Family Training for family members (an 8-week course) and Peer to Peer have come to an end and then will be starting up in early spring for new sessions. People can still contact and get their name on the list since 15 people is usually how many they can have in a group.
- Donna wanted to provide info about the Family Basics Training for kids under 16. Its online on the website and is free. Can be done at their own pace. Takes 36 hours total, but can take it in small intervals.
- NAMI had some faith groups reach out for assistance to help support them with members who have MH issues.
- NAMI is working on planning the Spaghetti dinner for next year, no details at this point.
  
- Janet spoke about the next Member Advisory Workgroup (MAWG) that is scheduled for December 10<sup>th</sup> at the Clubhouse in Allentown.
- Janet discuss the Peer Support Network (PSN) meetings that are occurring. They had their final meeting of 2024. They get better attendance when a speaker is scheduled and no one is scheduled for December. The last speaker was from Merakey Wellness Recovery Teams (WRT) and talked about connection between physical and mental health and the services they provide. Also talked about plans for next year and there are supervisors that would like to attend a supervisors specific meeting. At this point the meetings are for anyone to attend (supervisors or CRS staff). There will be some planning on how to cover Value Based Purchasing and other topics with the supervisor sessions separate from the peer group.
- The Lehigh Valley Employment Task Force is having a webinar on December 18<sup>th</sup>. Obtaining and Maintaining Employment is the title. Jessica Trutt from Goodwill Keystone area speaking about job seeking, interview, and then communication with employers after the fact to maintain the employment. Working on topics for next year.
- Since last meeting PS services are still having struggles to staff. A lot of it is based on location, Easton and Northampton County seems to be difficult at this time.

## V. Magellan Behavioral Health Report

- Tom discussed that the MA unwinding has finished and July is the new normal for membership. The loss of membership has had large impact on revenue for the HealthChoices programs and we are starting to see a stop/slow to the downward trend of membership. We aren't seeing large increases, but at least picking up some memberships. We are still pre pandemic levels for both Counties. There is always growth expected year to year of our population. There are campaigns being launched for Public Service Announcements to urge people to apply.
- Tom added that the membership issues are a challenge to the program for 2024 where we are upside down for the revenue coming in vs the claims we have to pay out. The general consensus is that 2025 program appears to be upside down as well

that is related to the state rate offer. This is predominantly driven by the membership and until that changes there will continue to be problems for the program to ever grow and to be solvent.

- Kristy added that there were significant losses (high millions) and next year, unless things are stagnant we are not going to be ok. The rate offer doesn't support doing more and expansions. The state gave a midyear rate adjustment this year, but it didn't even cover 10% of the Northampton County losses. This is historic and has never happened and is across the state with all Counties and all BHMCOs.
- Tom added that the amount that OMHSAS was given did not allow for them to do anymore. We negotiated with the state for the rates and got a little extra but then was told we need to live within our means. We will be looking at data informed. We will be looking at quality metrics, cost effectiveness, and looking at every program for opportunities to evaluate what needs to stay and what can be shifted to other aspects of the program. It will be very strategic.
- Kristy added that the challenge is also that during the Pandemic the PCs had extra funds due to members staying on MA and this allowed those funds to be given to the providers to help maintain them during this time. Now it is the opposite. We have no extra and are in the red. There are also issues being reported about the County Assistance Office and that members are struggling to get responses or mistakes are being made. We brought this up to OMHSAS and they are looking into it.
- Donna was surprised to hear the numbers are down since it always seems there is more and more demand for MH treatment and needs continue to rise. They are going to have a lawyer in the area come and do a talk at NAMI to parents who are having issues. They always refer to John Lees at Magellan if there are issues. Tom suggested that when someone has a problem or gets HIPP or CHIPP instead of their original MA, the family can appeal to the County assistance office. Janet also added about MAWD (MA for workers with disabilities)
- Tom indicated that Counties and Magellan held a Behavioral Health Summit in October. Main topics for the Summit included Workforce development, Emergency Room Boarding, Behavioral Health continuum of care, and Social Determinants of Health and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
  - 70 providers attended. 100 registered.
  - Talked about actionable solutions to these problems which included follow up items to critical challenges in behavioral health such as; Enhancing service integration, advocating for varying funding reforms, addressing systemic barriers, and improving crisis intervention and general resource access.
  - Immediate action steps are to convene an ED boarding workgroup and drafting recommendations for reduction of patient risk at hospital level and enhancing crisis service accessibility on the community level. Want shift to community services rather than going right to the ED.
  - We will be launching a recruitment drive for workgroup leaders and members. Want to engage diverse leaders to be champions of change

- One suggestion was to develop and distribute policy briefings for payer and legislative reforms. Which would address funding gaps, we aren't sure where this goes and how it would work but was a common theme in several workgroups.
- There will be follow-up meetings in April 2025 related to this Summit.
- Magellan has hired a community health worker (CHW) Kelsey Craine to support older adults in partnership with DUOS-personal assistance for Healthy Aging. They help link resources and optimize Medicare benefits. The CHW does in person support.
- Magellan lost and gained a Psychologist advisor. And also hired an ABA BCBA support worker. All state requests and now Magellan is fully staffed in their medical and clinical teams.

## VI. Northampton County HealthChoices Report

- Kristy provided updates related to Northampton County's reinvestment plans
  - Social Determinants of Health plan through Conference of Churches continues as normal.
  - Outpatient Restoration Long Term Structured Residence –8 bed facility for competency restoration or step down from the prison. Now known as R-LTSR Is finally open and has 2 members, 2 going through intake and 2 in the pipeline. Funding will transition fully to Magellan as of 1/1/2025 and the hope is to have most of the 8 beds filled by end of year. COMHAR is the provider.
  - Safe Harbor funding for expansion is still in process and hoping for ground breaking soon to expand their warming/cooling shelter and a few other expansions in their programs.
  - Respite program through Concern – For October 1 in individual and 3 in group. There are also 4 applications for kinship supports.
  - High Fidelity Wraparound program – contract is completed and our plan covers Non-CYF involved youth and there are 3 individuals being served
  - CAMS Care Suicide training for clinicians – contracts are being worked on to move this plan forward and hoping for kickoff in New Year.
- Nicole Seiple Forensic Program Specialist in Mental Health has left the County and they are working on filling her position. Cathy Kromer and Tiff Crush are coverage for now.
- Tisbine reported that through CFST meeting it was asked to have more info on Peer Services. Magellan is working on getting some Peer resources put up on their website. Tom asked if this was shared with QI staff. Yes, at PQAC. This is for an informational flyer to be able to give info in a snapshot. Janet reported that there is already something she has like this and will share with the group. It just may need to be updated.

## VII. Lehigh County HealthChoices Report

- Matt provided updates related to Lehigh County's reinvestment plans
  - High Fidelity Wraparound through Pinebrook/Family Answers – there were 17 active cases in July with 5 members pending to be brought into the program. No waitlist.
  - 2:1 ABA Support Program – 1 member being served
  - Housing Clearinghouse through Conference of Churches – 18 new members served with 212 members assisted year to date
  - Social Determinants of Health through Conference of Churches – 3 new members with 32 members served year to date. Lehigh is currently develop a contract with DUOS-through CBCM program to help seniors. Looking for a 2025 contract to start soon. Plan is to work with SDOH plan and supply each senior that enrolls a food and travel gift card.
  - Respite program through Concern – 4 members have been referred since between home and group option. Concern operates group out of Bethlehem, which isn't most conducive for Lehigh. But it is nice for members to socialize. They are working on a Lehigh location.
- Matt reminded the group that we need the Conflict of Interest forms completed and returned for the February meeting.
- Matt talked about a Lehigh specific topic. There was a discussion over summer about Advisory board meetings following under Sunshine act. Most parts are in compliance. One things is once the minutes are finalized, they are published on the County website. The changes would be that we need to nail down the dates of meetings then openly publish those dates. There is a site that it goes into a publication. For Lehigh County as a whole they will put a newspaper ad that will run in early 2025 that notes all the Advisory board meetings and when they occur. One other things is that there are certain aspects of Advisory Boards that need to be voted on. Such as minutes or decisions that the board would weigh in on. We will be looking over the by-laws next year to make sure they are updated and amend what is needed, and that would be something that gets voted on.
- Tom asked about Magellan's need to sign conflict of interest since Magellan is ex-facto. Tom will need to run it past legal.
- Drew updated that Magellan's quarterly newsletter is out for the Quality Department, it's called Magellan Explorer and is on their website. Additionally it provides directions and instructions on how a member can be on the complaints and grievance hearing panel. There is a stipend that is received for participating.
- Drew talked about the OMHSAS Performance Improvement Project that started in 2021 and focused on Substance Abuse issues. New one for 2025 is in works and waiting on state for more info. We know the new one will be targeting Suicide Prevention.

## VIII. Adjournment

Next meeting will be held on **February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at 2:00pm** at the Valley Youth House office or via TEAMS depending on circumstances.