

**The Blair County Department of Social Services
Advisory Board Meeting
Thursday, August 3, 2023 at 11:30 AM
Blair HealthChoices, 81 Holliday Hills Drive, Hollidaysburg**

Board Members Present: Commissioner Erb, Mike Stubler, Donna Gority, Chris Cohn, Becky Aungst, Steve Martynuska, Bob Smith, Rick Petroski, and Susan Franco

Board Members Absent: Dana Melton, Matt Dumm, Susanna Tomlinson and Amber Hatfield

Others Present: Tricia Maceno, Theresa Rudy, Tracy Fitzpatrick, Ginny Christy, Cindy James, Melissa Gordon, Missy Gillin, Lorrie Hetager, Erin Kay, Aimee Burns, Jamie Henry and Jennifer Kensinger

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Call to Order

- Mike Stubler welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. Self-Introductions were made.
- The Board and attendees recognized Theresa Rudy, MH Program Coordinator, for her years of dedicated service to the County of Blair. Theresa will be retiring on August 11, 2023 after being with the County since November 30, 1987.

2. Public Comment

- No public comments were received.

3. Approval of June 1, 2023 Advisory Board Minutes

- *Motion by Bob Smith to accept the June 1, 2023 minutes. Chris Cohn seconded the motion. All approved. Motion passed.*

4. Board Operations – Tricia Maceno, Director, Department of Social Services (DSS)

- Tricia, again, thanked Theresa for many years of service.

5. Mental Health Committee Report (Theresa Rudy)

- The Mental Health Committee did not meet in July 2023.

6. Developmental Programs Committee Report (Susanna Tomlinson)

- The Developmental Programs Committee did not meet in July 2023.

8. County Reports

Social Services Director – Tricia Maceno

- Tricia reported, at the moment, the Department of Social Services is fully staffed.
- Betsy Nelson, Community Development Specialist, started on June 26, 2023.
- Karen (K) Wise, Fiscal Specialist, started on July 24, 2023. Until September, she will be part-time.
- Donna asked about the hiring process for Theresa's position. Tricia answered that it is a civil service process and that interviews will be conducted after names are received from the State.
- Tricia discussed the budget impasse. Hopefully, the budget will pass early September 2023, but it could be delayed through late December 2023.
- Tricia listed what the State will and will not continue to pay for during the budget impasse.
- Commissioner Erb added that the County contracts have a clause that stipulates if the County does not receive government funding that providers will not be paid. If need be, a letter will be sent to providers invoking that clause.
- Donna stated that providers will be able to go to a bank for an interim loan.

MH/COD – Theresa Rudy

- Theresa reported that the two year COVID Mobile Crisis and SAP grants are officially closed. All the outcome data has been reported.

- Theresa stated that Missy is working on finalizing the 2023/2024 contracts.

Mental Health – Tracy Fitzpatrick

- Tracy had no additional MH updates.

Intellectual Disabilities – Melissa Gordon

- Melissa reported that the Quality Assessment and Improvement has started.
- Melissa is currently working on their self-assessment.
- Southern Alleghenies Service Management Group (SASMG) will be monitoring 11 providers from July to December.
- Over the past year, 1,406 incidents were reported. Jamie clarified that reported incidents are not all confirmed incidents.

Breakdown of Top Incidents Reported included:

- Neglect: 257
- Medication Errors: 248
- Abuse: 128
- Individual to Individual: 125
- Behavioral Health Crisis: 113

Rick asked how these incident reports compare to previous years. Melissa answered that they are lower. Higher medication errors are happening during shift changes.

- SASMG did recruit 3 new providers this year.

New Providers:

- Focus Behavioral Health Services
- Applied Consulting & Counseling Services
- Virtual Preventative Services

- Melissa reported that with the new requirements assessments are needed every two years to be eligible for a waiver, which has created a backlog of needed assessments. Dr. Rick Petroski is doing a lot of these assessments, but Melissa has recruited two additional psychologists, Dr. Spayd and Dr. Hazlett to help out, if needed.

Early Intervention (EI) – Kelly Popich

- A report was included in the agenda packet.
- Kelly was not in attendance.

Quality Assurance & Housing Coordinator – Missy Gillin

- Missy reported that Center for Community Action (CCA) has reopened the application process, until August 21, 2023, for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP 2). After processing the backlog of applications, CCA had 1.2 million left in funding. CCA has already used over 5 million in ERAP 2 funding for Blair County residents.
- Missy gave an update on why there are open beds at the Family Shelter. Due to strict guidelines, the Family Shelter has to hold beds for “no shows” for five days while attempting to contact them during that time period. Recently, they had fifteen “no shows” in a one-week period. In addition to, the family shelter apartments are now approved to start accepting applications.
- A Landlord Workshop, sponsored by Operation Our Town, is scheduled for November 3, 2023 at the Altoona Grand Hotel.

9. Ex-Officio Reports

CONTACT Altoona – Erin Kay

- A report was included in the packet.
- Erin reported that for the 2022/2023 fiscal year that the total incoming helpline calls were 5,445 with only one missed shift and the total reassurance calls were 25,461 with eight missed shifts. Volunteers worked a total of 10,728 hours on the phone.

- Erin helped run the Plinko game at the Duncansville Community Days celebration.
- School supplies donations for Family Resources are being accepted until August 7.
- CONTACT Altoona will be sharing a vendor table with NAMI at the Altoona Curve during Pizza Week on Saturday, August 12.
- Erin will be giving a presentation on August 14 during the Blair County Collaborative meeting, which is held at the Center for Independent Living.
- A vendor table will be at Evergreen Manor's "Back to School" event on Friday, August 18.
- Blair County Out of the Darkness Walk is on Sunday, September 10 at Lakemont Park.
- CONTACT Altoona's Annual Volunteer Recognition dinner and meeting is being held on September 13.
- Pennsylvania Association of Non-Profit Organizations (PANO) is having their conference in Blair County this year at the Blair County Convention Center on September 19 and 20.
- Suicide Prevention Summit is being held Wednesday, September 27 from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm at the Blair County Convention Center.
- CONTACT Altoona is having another Powerhouse Sub fundraiser.
- Cindy James added that 11 agencies, sharing mental health resources, will be set up at the Altoona Curve for 6 days during Pizza Week. American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, The Suicide Prevention Task Force and the Blair HealthChoices System of Care are sponsoring the jerseys worn by the team, which will be auctioned off. The money raised will be put back into the aforementioned programs.

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) – Aimee Burns

- A report was included in the agenda packet.
- Aimee reported that the Heather Manges, new Executive Director of the Nehemiah Project, is renovating the 3rd floor of the old Wright school and making it a hub, which will include space for various non-profits, as well as, other activities. There will be an open house there on Tuesday, August 8 from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm.
- Support Groups will be taking a break during August.
- Support Groups will begin at Blair Healthchoices in the near future.
- Support Groups at the Prison have increased from 2 classes to 4.
- Family-To-Family course wrapped up on July 5, 2023.
- 5 of 6 volunteers completed the training for the Peer-To-Peer course.
- NAMI Keystone (state office) has received a grant to offer more trainings.
- NAMI Blair County has applied for a \$30,000 grant to develop a new creativity and mental health program for children and families. NAMI will find out the end of August if their application was approved.
- Planning will begin for the September NAMI Conference. Let Aimee know if you would like to be on that committee.
- NAMI will also be at the Evergreen Manor's "Back to School" event.
- NAMI will be a Blair County Drug and Alcohol Program (BDAP) on August 24 to talk about mental health and addiction.
- NAMI is working on its 2024 course calendar.
- NAMI is seeking book donations for its lending library.
- NAMI will be teaching diaphragmatic breathing at the Suicide Prevention Summit on September 27.
- NAMI will be speaking at the Pennsylvania PTA convention on October 13.
- Donna Malone, President Elect for the Hollidaysburg area Greater Federation of Women's Club, has asked NAMI to present on mental health resources in the near future.

The Arc – Maria Brandt

- Maria was not in attendance.

ID Providers – Lorrie Hetager

- Lorrie reported that incentive payments from the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP), tied to American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars, should be available to Community Participation Support Providers late winter (pending approval from CMS). Formulas were adjusted to look at attendance for Community Participation Support (CPS) for FY 19/20 to FY 22/23. Even at a 50% return rate, they would have unspent ARPA funds.
- Senate Bill 1332 unanimously passed through the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. This bill is also known as DSP SOC bill (Direct Support Professional Standard Occupational Classification System). This legislation will hopefully help address the DSP workforce crisis. Most states currently use the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) occupational classifications to form their rate models. There is currently no classification for DSPs. Most states blend multiple occupational classifications, which vary drastically, to create their rate model.
- Selective Contracting is for providers to be considered a premier provider, starting with Supports Coordination and Residential Providers and Quality Care Measurement/Value Based Payment Option/Managed Care. One of the requirements included providers offering the full range of services in order to be considered a premier provider. They may be changing this to 2 or more service lines.
- 11 providers are due for Quality Assessment and Improvement on-site with SASMG.

Blair HealthChoices/Community Cares – Amy Marten-Shanafelt

- Amy was not in attendance.

Open Forum:

Mike Stubler, on behalf of the Board, thanked Theresa for her many years of service.

Mike Stubler thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

The next Social Services Advisory Board meeting will be held on Thursday October 5, 2023 at 11:30 a.m. at Blair HealthChoices, 81 Holliday Hills Drive, Hollidaysburg, PA (Formerly 120 Holliday Hills Drive, Hollidaysburg)

The next Mental Health Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, September 7, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. Blair HealthChoices, 81 Holliday Hills Drive, Hollidaysburg, PA (Formerly 120 Holliday Hills Drive, Hollidaysburg)

The next Developmental Programs Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, September 7, 2023 at 11:30 a.m. at SASMG training room, 157 Lakemont Park Blvd. or Virtual Meeting