



# Macon County Mental Health Task Force

April 22, 2015

## Minutes

**Members Present:** Commissioner Ronnie Beale, Jane Kimsey, Major Andy Shields, Mike Neidig, Kathy McGaha, & Paula Ledford

Absent: Jim Bruckner & Marty Wadewitz

**Guests:** Dave Richards w/NC DHHS, Lisa Hilliard w/DSS, Francis Venticinque, & Donita Cline w/NAMI, Duncan Sumpter, Tabatha Brafford, Ron Ross, Lauren Garner, Jason Strack & Tara Payne w/ACS, Amy Seay, Rhonda Cox, Judy Johannsen & Amy Barnes w/Smoky Mountain Center, Robert Holland w/Macon County Sheriff's office, Candace Burton, Matt Gaunt w/Barium Springs, Jim Hartye w/Mission Health, Diane Kilbourn w/Angel Medical, Paula Ledford w/Macon County Schools, Don Buckner & Kevin Inabinet w/Macon & Jackson County Psych and Mike Lewis w/The Franklin Press.

Commissioner Beale opened the meeting at 2:01. After everyone introduced themselves, Commissioner Beale introduced Mr. Dave Richards - Director Mental Health Services at NC DHHS. Mr. Richards has been in social services/mental health services for over thirty years. Commissioner Beale noted that since the reformation of mental health it has been fragmented. Throughout these changes this core group of individuals has been helping families to get the services they need.

Mr. Richards spoke about what a strong advocate Ronnie Beale is for our community. There has been more conversation surrounding mental health this year than any time in the past. We all agree that the behavioral health system has to work. The current system is evolving and we have a great opportunity to improve it. If we continue on the path we are on, we have the potential to create a mental health system that will be used as a model for others. This is a complicated system with a lack of benefit in the private insurance sector. We are making progress. Smoky has been making suggestions for improvements. There has been some additional funding made available which is a positive step. When the state representatives look at proposals for appropriation from the Governor's budget the mental health portion is the highest it has ever been. The Governor and the Secretary have committed to make these services available. This is a significant investment in what we are trying to do in the public sector for the mentally ill. In conversation with members of the senate they have discussed many alternatives. They understand that this is still not enough. The best thing they can do is to listen to the providers and what the road blocks are, that are getting in the way. That is why he is attending this meeting.

The public safety money is still between the house and the senate regarding the jail population proposal. They are watching this budget very closely. They are trying to convince the state to provide the necessary treatment to help reduce the involuntary commitments of children.

**Approval of Minutes:** – A motion was made by Major Andy Shields and seconded by Kathy McGaha to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

### *Current Issues and Discussion:*

Commissioner Beale noted that this will be Ms. Kimsey's last meeting as the co-chair. Ms. Kimsey wanted to complement the work with the LME and service providers in connection to services for children. They have been doing a great job. They are diligent in trying to keep families together. There are still areas for improvement but things are going much better in this area. They are seeing an increase with the adult behavioral health need patients and they contract for guardianship services. The results have been excellent.

Commissioner Beale indicated that these mental health task force meetings came about through conversations between himself, Major Andy Shields and Ms. Kimsey. Major Shields has been working for thirty years with these types of issues. Major Shields reported that they had 247 involuntary commitments last year. In 2006 there were 109. He reported the numbers for time, transport and sitting with these involuntary commitments. Some of this time was waiting for a bed to open up in a state facility. The dramatic change this year is to have the guardianship role picked up by Mission. This only began last month. They have had 49 transports so far for the year using 87 officers. In March they had 757 hours which were provided at the hospital to service the 22 transports. The hourly rate, including transportation and food, totaled \$253,625 last year.

Sherriff Robbie Holland noted that they currently do not have any employees budgeted to specifically deal with the involuntary commitments. Commissioner Beale noted the changes made to the magistrate laws were initiated at these meetings. The Second Chance program has volunteers who offer their help in the jail for individuals who require drug & alcohol counseling, follow up, etc. This is having great success. The problem before was these individuals would get clean in jail and want the help but didn't know where to go to get it when released.

Mike Neidig also spoke about the Second Chance program. He indicated that the main thing is to make sure that these individuals have the opportunity for treatment after they are released. Now that the inmates are being given the information to contact someone to begin treatment they frequently go immediately to the centers for rehabilitation as soon as they are released.

Candace indicated that when an inmate comes from the jail to them for treatment, 60% had already contacted at least one provider last year. There are some that end up being connected in other counties. They are also being directed to the walk-in centers. If they are non-funded the LME's are helping to find treatment. We will be writing a new jail plan for the LME's to consider.

Mr. Holland asked inmates to take a survey. Of the 100 surveys that were completed by inmates, these inmates had 247 children. Mr. Holland asked some of the other Western North Carolina Sheriffs to ask their inmates to take the survey.

Memorial Mission has taken over the guardianship at the AMC ER and have partnered with Smoky Mountain. Ms. Kilbourn reported that in April they had 12 behavioral health patients. They still rely heavily on the Sherriff's department as their backup. The average waiting time is 42 hours for these patients. Five of these patients were able to be sent home. Their wait time has been approximately twenty five hours. Two of the patients had multiple assessments.

Not all of their commitments are involuntary. About 30% of these are voluntary commitments. These patients are seen each day by a staff psychologist. They are looking at doing therapy by Telepsych. They have piloted this at the Mission campus and it results in de-escalation so it is working. They are averaging less than one per day that has to be boarded. This is any patient who is there more than four hours. The process is a lot more involved than just rolling out Telepsych.

In terms of thinking from a systems standpoint there are a lot of smaller ED's that don't have the necessary psychological expertise to help these patients. Without Medicaid expansion there are several counties that will be losing their hospitals. Mission is committed to making sure that the transport and treatment of children is not a traumatic experience. This is not easy. There are five partner hospitals that are part of the Mission system.

Mr. Beale reported that Appalachian is one of the main providers not getting paid for approximately 40% of their patients. Mr. Sumpter noted that the sense of companionship in a small county forces providers to pull together to insure the best treatment for the patient. They offer a peer support training for the far west. They were able to double their peer support work force. They continue to work with Smoky to take some of the higher acuity patients. They hope to make some progress there soon.

Ms. Brafford noted that they have had 220 mobile crisis individuals per month. This does not include reassessments. Last month they saw 17 patients in crisis in Macon County. Four went to the ER. Two were placed by Mission. The other individuals were diverted and never ended up in the ER. Others were voluntary. There are populations that sometimes get stuck. There are a lot of long term placement cases. Mr. Inhibit noted that the acuity of the individuals they are seeing is much higher. The removal of target case management has hurt the treatment system. The peer support model is something they are using but too often the only way to get treatment is if these individuals are in crisis. As an agency, they have had more suicides in the last 12 months than there has been in the last 13 years combined. The burnout rate is high and people end up leaving their jobs. They are very concerned about the changes in the continued reform for services not to be viable. The service definition does not support a team system to sustain a small county. It deprives that county of necessary services.

Dr. Buckner spoke about Meridian, that the challenge for this agency is a limited amount of money to spread over a large amount of people. There are so many individuals that are in crisis who decide to go to the ER because they cannot see a prescriber. There were 33 behavioral health patients in the Haywood Regional facility yesterday. Meridian and Appalachian are trying their best to get the patients connected to the treatment they need. We need to look closely at ways to divert individuals from the ER and get them the treatment and continuum of care. Mr. Richards noted that every recommendation they have received has been the same. There needs to be more beds for the community. The system needs to move this way. They are required by Medicaid to have a per diem rate for standards that have to be in place. He is hopeful that the legislature will respond this year toward community based services.

Mr. Beale mentioned that they have had numerous meetings with Senator Tommy Tucker and some of the other budget chairs in the legislature. They will be talking with Senator Tucker again on May 5<sup>th</sup>. They are teaching these individuals what is going on in the mental health system. Major Shields asked a question about what the goal is of the legislature. Mr. Richards said that they are not interested in putting more beds in Broughton. They want to add more beds at the local facilities. Haywood Regional currently has 16 beds and they are planning to expand. Commissioner Beale noted that they hope to have beds at Balsam Center.

Ms. Burton with Barium Springs is more connected with the substance abuse patients. Hawthorne Heights in Bryson City is a youth shelter. The two Franklin Rotary Clubs have a mission to help with these facilities. A problem they are seeing is that there is only one, level three foster home in the county. There is a need for medical foster care homes for babies who are born addicted to drugs. They are working on getting some level two plus homes.

Mr. Inabinet with Jackson and Macon County Psych indicated his biggest need is to support staff that is getting worn out. A large portion of his time is spent supporting staff and making sure they have the resources they need. He wishes that the decision in Raleigh would help these employees who are giving their all to their jobs. Most of the kids they serve are through school based programs. They have enhanced services and intense home therapy programs. 47% of the Day Treatment program work that takes place in the schools is pro-bono.

The goal is to get these students back to a regular school program. The diagnosis of Autism continues to rise and the system does not pay for the services for this diagnosis but there is nowhere else they can go. Everyone's caseloads increase in the spring.

Ms. Ledford spoke for the Macon County Schools program. She indicated that because of the work all of the providers are doing they are in the best spot they've been in, in a long time. They still have parents who are unwilling to engage in the treatment of their children. Mr. Beale noted that due to the efforts of the schools and the providers they are seeing improvements in care.

Mike Neidig noted that they have a meeting of the provider agencies to discuss issues at least once per month. They seem to have more prescription services in the community than they had before. There is a discrepancy between the available services to those who are on Medicaid or on state funding.

Rhonda Cox indicated they are supporting private hospitals and supporting these agencies to handle the higher acuity levels. She noted that the early intervention program is working. There is work being done to attract appropriate professional staff in the far west. They are getting ready to pull together a region wide learning collaborative to teach medical providers, not just behavioral professionals. They are working on recruiting families into the intensive alternative therapeutic family treatment. They have been working with Mission on a pilot program for whole person care and integrated person care for the whole family. They served 3,200 consumers last month. They will be offering a crisis intervention training beginning August the 20<sup>th</sup>. They have a committee meeting next week.

Ms. Cline with NAMI indicated that they offer regular support group meetings for families and training for consumers. They will have presented their program to every ninth grader in the county by the end of this school year. This is something new they have been doing. They have been holding a pilot program at the detention center for female inmates for two months now. They are working on statistics to see if it's working.

**Other Business:** - Commissioner Beale reiterated that DHHS in Raleigh has got to listen to the agencies that have boots on the ground. The people in this meeting are out there and they are seeing what's going on. The budget will see improvements if we keep these individuals out of the jail and catch the acute cases before they present at the ER.

Help with Needs Assessment – May 18<sup>th</sup>

NAMI is presenting a program at Tartan Hall in cooperation with the League of Women Voters on May 14<sup>th</sup> @ 6:00 PM

**Schedule Next Meeting:** – July 22<sup>nd</sup>, at Macon County Services Building in A/B classroom at 8:30

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bellavance

These minutes were approved on July 22<sup>nd</sup> with a motion by Mike Neidig and seconded by Kathy McGaha. The motion passed unanimously.