



# Macon County

## Mental Health Task Force

July 22, 2015  
Minutes

**Members Present:** Commissioner Ronnie Beale, Mike Neidig, Kathy McGaha, Patrick Betancourt & Jim Bruckner

Absent: Paula Ledford, Robbie Holland & Marty Wadewitz

**Guests:** Howard Dowdle w/Children's Hope Alliance (formerly Barium Springs & Grandfather Home), Sarah Altman w/Southwestern Community College, Patrick Betancourt w/DSS, Lisa Hilliard w/DSS, Donita Cline w/NAMI, Tabatha Brafford, Ron Ross, Lauren Garner, & Jason Strack w/ACS, Amy Seay & Amy Barnes w/Smoky Mountain Center, Scott Marion w/Macon County Sheriff's office, Dr. Jim Hartye & Darren Boice w/Mission Health, Kevin Inabinet w/Macon & Jackson County Psych, Mike Lewis w/The Franklin Press, Tammy Keezer w/Macon County Public Health, Diane Kilbourn & Hollis w/Angel Medical, Joe Ferrara w/Meridian and Kathryn Holmes w/Macon Psych

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Beale at 8:31 am.

Commissioner Beale noted that Major Andy Shields has retired from the Sheriff's department and will no longer be attending these meetings. He indicated that Mr. Patrick Betancourt was here on behalf of DSS to replace Jane Kimsey as the co-chair of the committee. Ms. Kimsey has also retired.

Commissioner Beale noted that the transports were up considerably. We no longer have to sit with the mental health patients in the emergency room; however we still continue to do the transporting.

A state wide mental health task force has been appointed by the governor and Commissioner Beale will be participating on this task force. The report from Raleigh is the house put \$30,000,000 in their budget the senate changed it a little and we may see the final budget by November. When Wake County hospital closed down, except for treating heart attack, stroke or imminent death, it got everyone's attention. The two appropriation chairs in the house met with Commissioner Beale. There is approximately a \$700,000,000 difference between the house and senate budgets.

The ACOs & LMEs are still in the process of being solidified. The legislature has said they would let the counties decide this piece. Nelson Dollar is still very much a proponent. There are 44 hospitals in the catchment area and the state task force has met with most of these. Without Medicaid expansion the smaller hospitals will not survive. He will be meeting again on July 28<sup>th</sup> with Senator Brown. Smoky Mountain has taken steps to make sure our process is in place. Two of the LME's are not sounding like they are in a good place.

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

**Current Issues and Discussion** – The Stepping Up Initiative through the National Association of Counties is based on our Macon County jail program. This plan was introduced to the National Sheriff's Association. In cooperation with NAMI they implemented a peer counseling program. The current reports only include the state jail facilities and do not include the county data. NACCO was in Charlotte where they discussed the Stepping Up Initiative. They have passed a resolution that Commissioner Beale discussed. Commissioner Beale asked Scott Marion what their numbers were in the jail this morning. He indicated that of the 60 patients he has 24 on meds and 34 on psych meds. Commissioner Beale asked that this task force support the Stepping Up Initiative. They are hoping to start a pilot program here in Macon County. There was a question asked as to where the funding would come from the justice system or mental health. Commissioner Beale indicated it would come from the justice system and money would be distributed based on a formula to make it equal.

MAHEC has a conference being offered September 24 through the 26 called Adverse Childhood Experiences Southeastern Summit 2015. It will talk about school programs, disciplinary work forces, communities and families that can help to identify early childhood markers and identify the environments that cause the children to have problems.

The child patients seem to be staying consistent for Macon County. There doesn't seem to be any fluctuation this summer yet. It's just a matter of getting the parents engaged. Commissioner Beale indicated that the population statistic is normally increased in the summer by 40%. This skews the population numbers. They do see a rise on the medication side for children and they do see a definite rise on the adult side. Ms. Brafford indicated that she pulled three to four years of data and looked at the numbers to see if it is the same people being treated as well as the numbers in general increasing. She indicated she would send that information to Commissioner Beale.

Commissioner Beale has been contacted by several providers because they are not getting paid and they have decided that they will not be able to continue providing the care.

Ms. Kilbourn, with Angel Medical, indicated they were slower last month but this month has made up for that. The biggest challenge seems to be the transportation. They have had great response from their PD people and they have sent several staff members to Mission Medical to attend training. Commissioner Beale asked about violence against their employees and she indicated they had one. They called law enforcement and just their presence settled the patient. The average length of stay in the past six months was 1.32 days which is the least of any of the facilities in the past. Dr. Hartye indicated that he did not have the data available for broken commitments. He indicated it normally runs about 20%. This is for those who come in for involuntary and are the commitment is broken. Ms. Seay indicated she was aware of two cases.

The psychiatrists are more comfortable making a decision when a patient comes in for a particular reason and they can say that it is not needed. Mr. Neidig asked what the process was for the patients who are breaking those commitments as far as follow up care. Dr. Hartye stated that for they are auditing this strictly for the psychiatric patients to be sure they keep their appointment within five to seven days. Some of the issue with these patients revolves around the transportation. The patient is being called if they don't show up for this follow up to make this connection. They are setting a specific time and date and Smokey Mountain is following up on these patients. Smokey Mountain is communicating this discharge information to the providers. The outreach piece of the process is a primary solution. Ms. Kilbourn said that they now have hired employees to provide the security for these patients that law enforcement used to provide. In June of 2014 there were 63 hours of security provided by law enforcement. There were 42 behavioral patients at Mission this morning. There are more young homeless patients being seen based on substance abuse. Mr. Boice indicate his job is to help Mission begin integrating behavioral health patients to accomplish more early interventions and determining which site in Macon would be a good site for Tele Psych in serving these mental health patients and to have the ability to provide high risk medications. They are exploring models and sites and they are hoping to be able to start this process this fall. There must be collaboration between providers, physicians, nursing staff etc. to make the connections for the patient between primary care and mental health providers. Finding clinicians is at a critical point. Recruiting continues to be a challenge. The challenge will

be more to increase personnel rather than moving clinicians around. Mission wants to make more effective use of the staff services of the providers here at this meeting. The goal is to increase the comfort of private physicians in handling a higher acuity level behavioral health patient. They will also need to have a psychiatrist available for consulting on these patients. Primary care doctors and emergency room doctors write the majority of the behavioral health prescriptions.

Ms. Kilbourn gave an update on Tele Psych. She indicated it is working exceptionally well. If the patient is willing to use this type of clinical tool it is very beneficial. Service is quicker.

Mr. Strack said they also are challenged by being able to pay clinicians and also to train them. Between Macon County Psych and Balsam Center they averaged 19.38 hours in June with 15 evaluated. The numbers are staying pretty steady. They are starting to see a lot more schizophrenia. They are trying to be more consistent with the communication with the Emergency Department. They need to be able to increase their own medical acuity so they will be able to take more of the higher acuity patients. They are hoping to become an involuntary commitment drop off. They need to acquire funding for the security personnel that will be needed.

Mr. Inabinet noted that workforce development is a continued struggle. They are competing against Smoky Mountain. Finding clinicians willing to work in this area both geographically and the area of specialty is a problem. The student loan funding reimbursement is a great incentive but it is not that easy to get. Mr. Neidig noted that there has always been a problem recruiting staff. We had been able to do this nationally because we had a good stable mental health program. Now that mental health employees are not considered government employees and it is becoming more private it has eliminated the benefits that the government system was allowing. It is also restricting the way the providers can practice.

Ms. Brafford stated that Appalachian is also working to connect patients to follow up counseling. Engagement is a major part of the patient's treatment plan. There are still emergency room visits that occur. Although they have done marketing there will always be those that will use the ER. The magistrate system is still not effective. The adult clinic and the mobile unit are working well.

Mr. Inabinet stated that a large number of their cases are trauma cases. They currently have 25 clinicians who are able to treat these high acuity patients. A current training has improved the confidence of the clinicians and is helping to them continue to work in the field.

Donita Cline NAMI – completely run by volunteers. They provided a video called “In Our Own Voice” to 325 ninth graders last year. They will be providing this same video to fourth graders as well as a bullying course. They have been meeting with the female inmates at the detention center. It is hard to tell what the results of this are. They are offering other resources and are working on an exit packet for the inmates when they are released. They are working with Smoky Mountain on a resiliency model. They are having a peer to peer class this September that is a ten week course. They are working on a program to put a transition coordinator in place before the inmate exits the jail to provide provider information.

Smoky has tentatively scheduled to provide CIT mental health training in October. There will also be some other medical specific CIT training.

Corporal Marion with the Macon County Sheriff's office indicated that the jail still continues to be busy with transport. They are speaking with their software provider to allow them to input the secondary providers like NAMI as well as the type of confinement. This will allow for data to be provided on a dashboard type report for this task force. Commissioner Beale has been pushing all of the state and county jails to begin keeping this same type of data to be able to determine whether or not we are making a difference.

Mr. Ferrara said that they are working on a Support and Employment developed program through Dartmouth. They are currently serving 50 to 55 adults to help them find competitive employment. Working with Smoky Mountain to help with integrated care in a way that's never been done before. The adult continuum has been good but the child

continuum not as good. The average length of stay for their employees has been consistently 24 months. Being competitive with salaries make it tough.

Ms. Barnes, a local care coordinator with Smoky Mountain indicated that they have a lot of high end consumers who have been recently hospitalized and have had three events in the past year. She has had more children recently on her case load. Her youngest was about ten. The challenge is always locating these individuals. They are doing more integrated health care to be sure the patients are getting all the care they need.

Ms. McGaha noted that they are in the process of implementing the community health assessment. The health department, in collaboration with the hospital, is the lead for this assessment. Mr. Bruckner indicated that the regional study results include information for all counties and that it is communicated appropriately.

Mr. Betancourt reported that they are using some of their taniff money and have contracted with a social worker to provide sitting services with the youth so they are not in the hospital by themselves. Ms. Hilliard reported that of the 38 kids they have about eight that they are still working on leveling.

Ms. Seay noted that Appalachian has a team member that is on the board of Mission Memorial. She can call Tele Psych to give information to help them be proactive with the patient. Commissioner Beale noted a current success story of a patient that he personally knows who came to thank him for helping her become stable. She is back at work and doing well. It was mentioned that there is a need for geriatric beds for the older patients that have both physical health as well as mental health issues. It is also more difficult to find a bed for those who have been known to be violent.

Barium Springs and Grandfather Home have merged. They have a Second Chance program at the jail and help with other linkage programs to help get the inmates to the appropriate level of care. The weekly meetings are well attended. Referrals are down recently. They are seeing both patients from the jail and from DSS.

Ms. Altman noted that Southwestern Community College is promoting their program as a good base step in human services. They are working with Western to develop the students for the providers and encouraging the students to continue on to get their masters. They are working on developing a position that will be filled by one of their chosen students to work at the jail with the inmates to help get them in touch with the necessary resources.

Mr. Neidig stated he didn't necessarily think that the 40% increase in population through the summer was necessarily the same for the mental health community. The percentage of patients within this population already has care at their primary residence but they may have an acute event that ends them up in the ER while they are in Macon County.

Next meeting – September 23<sup>rd</sup> - Human Services Building, A/B conference room

Meeting adjourned at 10:40

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bellavance

These minutes were approved on September 23, 2015 with a motion by Mr. Betancourt and seconded by Mr. Neidig. The motion passed unanimously.