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| LCMHS Board Minutes | |
| Date | March 20th, 2024 |
| Time | 5:05pm |
| Meeting called to order by | Zach Williams |
| Meeting Adjourned | 7:06pm |

## In attendance

Board: Mike Feulner, Susan Kimmerly, Zach Williams, Cindy Morin, Geoff Lindemer, Stacey Madden, Mary Anne Lewis

LCMHS Staff: Jeffrey Kellar, Jennifer Stratton, Amy Fitzgerald, Meg Bickerstaff, Katy Kuchta, Sherry Marcellino, Robyn Daley, Katina Idol, James Eby, Monique Reil

Guests: Senator Rich Westman, Representative Dan Noyes

Notes: Emily Roemer

## Discussion with represetatives

* Introductions
* Jennifer Stratton reviewed staff vacancies, staff morale and increase in acuity of need and number of consumers. Presented the need for increased funding.
* Amy Fitzgerald reviewed staff vacancies – each division has about 25% of positions vacant. 32% of turnover was due to salary.
* Jeffrey Kellar reviewed financial position – we are facing a challenging situation. FFY 23 was a $2.3 million loss, with this trend continuing. Inflation and low reimbursement rates have affected this. The 6.5% increase will essentially be level funding, a 3% increase will lead to a higher projected loss. We have evaluated ways to trim our costs and identifying creative ways to capitalize on grants and additional program income. The state has agreed to pause recoupment and Medicaid reimbursement payments.
* Robyn Daley and Katina reviewed children’s services – EPIC have served 31 children in the past year, with some repeats. The program is designed to eliminate the need for children to go to the emergency department. The children who utilize this program are able to access other services quicker and obtain services for the whole family. This program has assisted the schools as well. It recently created a small program for 5 children who were struggling in school. There has been an increase in suspensions, including first graders. The school these children came from received support as well so the children could successfully return to school. Some of these children would benefit from a Behavior Interventionist, but there are currently 15 open contracts for BI’s that we have not been able to staff. The Covid Pandemic led to a lot of trauma school aged children. An increase in Medicaid match rate combined with success beyond six would make this possible
* Sherry Marcelino reviewed community data around homelessness. 7 local agencies work together to attempt to prevent homelessness and work with those who are already homeless. The number of homeless people in the state almost tripled since 2021. Lamoille county has been extremely good at preventing families from utilizing the hotel program. Two flood related grants have assisted in preventing more homelessness in this county. There is likely to be an increase in housing needs due to an increase in the cost of housing as well as some housing not being repaired from the flood in a timely manner. Many of the staff who work with these community members are working above and beyond in terms of time and commitment but are not being compensated due to being salaried staff. Lamoille’s vacancy rate for low-income housing is less than 1%. The state housing coalition is looking at how to replicate the system that Lamoille has created, but we are not able to keep up with need. Some funding sources have not increased in 20 years.
* Monique Reil reviewed the work the mobile crisis team is doing. We have very few staff who have the longevity of Sherry and me. Team 2 training is a collaboration between law enforcement and mental health services. LCMHS has cultivated great relationships with the local law enforcement and hospitals. Everyone in the community is putting in hours that aren’t being paid for to meet the need of community members and are happy to do it. The current volume and acuity of needs are adding secondary trauma for those responding. Our emergency team fields calls that aren’t actually mental health crises, but we meet those needs the best we can, from listening to providing contact information for other services. Some crisis calls are one time, some multiple times in the same week. We have more people working at LCMHS who have lived experience, and it enriches the services to consumers. Current staff cannot keep up with the need. Team 2 is successfully attracting participants from other agencies and industries not usually associated with this work.
* Katy Kuchta reviewed the needs in Developmental Services. Along with staff vacancies, there is a need for home providers. Previously DS serviced mostly people with intellectual disabilities, Down’s Syndrome, etc. But now these consumers are also being treated for mental health illnesses. Collaboration with mental health services is working well though. There isn’t affordable/available housing for consumers or for more people to move to this area to meet staffing needs. There are 2 clients we cannot find housing or staffing for. Many of the services being provided cannot be billed for and a lot of staff are working overtime hours. The upcoming change to conflict free case management isn’t necessarily bad, but it will impact the work of staff (more staff will be needed) and client services. The DS program here has an amazing employment rate. Consumers are getting their dream jobs. The work is hard and staff are making less money than some at McDonalds.
* Board Comments – What can we do to promote our cause with the legislature? Many of our staff are moving to positions with the state they pay more and have pensions. Dan Noyes expressed gratitude for the working being done and the impact it has. He is working closely with Amy Johnson of VCP to advocate for this funding need. Rich Westman – Expressed gratitude for work being done and sharing all the issues being faced. Many DA’s and organizations are in this same situation. Mental health is a priority for the appropriations committee, but it is a tight budget year. It is a tough year with the double digit increase in property taxes. Not everyone understands the difficulty of this work. Zach – the state has found $50 million dollars to cover a storm water rule, but we are only trying to fund a $7.8 million increase for mental health services. Zach Williams and Mary Anne Lewis shared personal stories. Susan Kimmerly expressed concern for what happens in the community if these services disappear. Jennifer expressed the need for adequate yearly increases. The proportion of one-time funding received by mental health agencies pales in comparison to DAIL funding. Sherry Marcelino would be happy to testify for mental health services. She also shared her personal story that when her family doesn’t get the services needed, she can’t do her job efficiently and the people in the community don’t get the support they need.

(Senator Rich Westman, Representative Dan Noyes left the meeting)

* **DISCUSSION:** 
  + There is little understanding in the community about Medicaid and insurance billing.
  + Local principals are happy to help advocate for mental health needs.
  + We have lost new staff because they couldn’t find housing. There is programming that could happen in children’s, but staff are so mentally exhausted.
  + Creative partnering is happening, but there have been funding roadblocks. The payment reform shifted a lot of things. Case rate and per member case rate was implemented at a time when there was less acuity. Now the higher acuity empties the pot quicker. We are getting paid for 2 hours of work with a kid but doing 8-10 hours of work. Consumers have to learn new staff and inconsistency is not good for relationship building. Its hard to get BCBA staff who work with adults to work in the DAIL system if you can find the BCBA to hire. We are working with Dartmouth to meet some needs.
  + Can we do grassroots to raise $7.8 million? We need to figure out how to summarize the issues quickly and simply to affect change. People are not going to understand the details, but there is probably grassroots effort that community members will support. LCMHS is to be the recipient of the proceeds of a local golf tournament. The event is in September. Some local business are tapped out on donations. LCMHS will be a recipient of American Flat Bread’s Benefit Bake in May. All – There are a lot of options of local round-ups, tip jars, etc. Grant position is posted, they can support fundraising efforts.

## Approval of minutes

The minutes from February’s meeting were approved.

FIRST: Mike

SECOND: Susan

APPROVED: unanimously approved – Mary Anne abstained

DISCUSSION: None

## CEO Report

* Roof work has begun. It was covered by a grant.
* Disability awareness week
* First town hall was hosted at the main office. Other building town halls are scheduled.
* Meg Bickerstaff started as ABH director.
* Katy hired a part time ITS house manager.
* We are only really paying utilities on the ITS house we own. DAIL would have to approve any future renting/usage. If we could staff the program, there is a need for the programming.
* We bought the Copley office in 1993. Jeff hasn’t been able to find the transfer documents. Appraisal hasn’t been done yet. A valuation might be available in the property records. Robyn noted that they have a good plan for that building in children’s. Senator Sanders office has some one-time funding available that could be used to renovate the Harrel building for better space utilization.

## Finance Report

* Very encouraged with the discussions with DMH. He has developed some additional asks that could help utilize our resources and billing abilities. We are able to bill out $500,000 from DA’s for funding ITS services. With cooperation from other DA’s, it may be possible to get a consumer to fill ITS space. The biggest roadblock to getting the program online is staffing.

## Committee Reports

* Adult Standing Committee – no updates
* Children’s Standing Committee – no updates
* DS Standing Committee – no updates

## NEW Business/old business

* Strategic Planning – Jennifer and Susan continue to explore options for strategic planning and compliance consultant. Mike F has a contact who may assist pro bono. A board executive committee may be formed.
* Susan would like to announce Jennifer’s appointment in the newspaper.
* Cultural and Linguistic Competency Grant – LCMHS will be holding a panel on April 10th 4-5pm @ centennial library to discuss ableism.

## Next meeting(s)

* James to present staff survey results at board meeting in April.
* April 17th, 2024 – 72 Harrel St. Morrisville, VT – Conference Room