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**CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES**

December 4, 2023

**BOARD MEMBERS: PRESENT IN PERSON**

Commissioner Robert Postal  
Valerie Postal

**GUESTS:**

Carol Winters-Regional Director, Peerstar  
Alyssa Fouser-Supervisor II, Region C Peerstar

**BOARD MEMBERS: PRESENT VIA ZOOM**

Commissioner Alice Gray  
Cinda Welsh  
Brenda Stayrook  
Tom Weyandt  
Cory Sisto  
Stephanie Porch

**GUESTS:**

Kendra Wilson-Certified Peer Specialist, Peerstar

**ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF:**

Kathy Whalen, Administrator  
Lisa Miller, Administrative Officer

**BOARD MEMBERS: ABSENT**

Stacey Leach  
Natasha Ufema  
Commissioner Scott Walls  
Wendy Melius  
Chuck Culbertson  
Leigh Keiser  
Robert Digon  
Polly Digon

1. The meeting of the Citizens Advisory Board (C.A.B.) was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Cory Sisto-Chair. The meeting was properly advertised and posted as per regulations. A hybrid meeting format allowed for in person attendance in the JVBDS-Large Conference Room and virtual access via the Zoom Meeting Platform and the Zoom Meeting conference line.
2. **Public Comment** - none
3. **September 25, 2023 Minutes**  
Motion to approve by Tom Weyandt; seconded by Brenda Stayrook. Motion adopted unanimously.
4. **PEERSTAR** - [www.peerstarllc.com](http://www.peerstarllc.com)  
Carol Winters, Regional Director offered an overview of the organization that includes 19 staff in HMJ and Centre Counties. Staff must have a high school diploma and a mental health diagnosis; a driver's license is helpful but not required. Two weeks (75 hours) of training is provided for each staff to become a Certified Peer Specialist in Pennsylvania; with the requirement of 90 days employment with Peerstar. Staff continue to receive training and support throughout employment.  
Peer services are offered to those 18 years and older with a serious mental health condition and have Medical Assistance Insurance. Peers work 1 to 17 hours weekly on six identified areas with

individuals as needed: Crisis, Community, Self-Advocacy, Self Help, Wellness & Recovery, and Social Networking. Determination of need are discovered through an Adult Needs and Strengths Assessment (ANSA). Services include: Peer Support, Forensic, Co-Occurring, Dual Diagnosis, Wellness Coaching, Empowered Aging, and Certified Recovery Specialist.

Alyssa Fouser, Supervisor added the staff are in place to act as a cheerleader, an accountability partner and to provide extra support.

Peerstar participant and CAB member, Tom Weyandt shared his positive experience since 2020, noting he has more time with his peer than he can have with his counselor.

## 5. **Membership**

Huntingdon County will be re-appointing Wendy Melius to another 3-year term.

Mifflin County will be re-appointing Valerie Postal to another 3-year term; and has placed an advertisement in the local newspaper seeking additional interest.

## 6. **Committee Reports**

**Child and Adolescent Social Service Program (CASSP):** The report was given by Brenda Stayrook. There were 5 adolescents in Residential Treatment Facilities (RTF), with one of those pending discharge in January. Student Assistant Programs (SAP) are active in the three-county elementary and secondary schools. The Partial program, serving 6<sup>th</sup> thru 12<sup>th</sup> graders, located in Huntingdon, is accepting referrals from all three counties. CSBBH expansion programs were approved for South Huntingdon Junior/Senior High School and Huntingdon Middle School. HMJ adolescents have had good access to inpatient beds; however, there is limited community support with Family-Base and MST having waitlists. Tussey Mountain School District have had two recent suicides and are offering services for students, teachers and community in conjunction with the Jana Marie Foundation, Huntingdon Crisis Intervention and the TIDES Foundation.

**Discussion:** Kathy Whalen provided a clarification that children in RTF/inpatient may remain longer than necessary because community base programming required with discharge planning have waitlists. JVBDS will be meeting with BHARP to address the requirements for staff and waivers to increase hiring to fill needed positions.

**Mental Health:** No Report.

**Intellectual Disabilities & Autism:** No Report.

**Early Intervention:** Valerie Postal reported from the Provider Meeting notes regarding service needs. OCDEL continues the push for providers to be involved with the coaching initiative with the addition of training to the OCDEL portal and continuing to offer a \$1,000 stipend. Coaching surveys have been completed in partnership with the Messiah College Masters' level OT Program. The presentation is expected in December. The Family Survey ended June 30th 2023, with a final percentage of 38.3%. Three areas in need of improvement shared at the Regional EI Meeting are 1) Connection with other families (82% - a huge improvement from 2022 with 64%), 2) Connection with non-EI resources (75%), and 3) Family Leadership (72%). Another area of discussion/need, parents have a way to improve their own EI programs. HMJ overall rating was 85%. Trauma Training will be offered through SPROUT for all providers.

DISCUSSION: Cory Sisto shared IFC Services is seeking to secure its first 3800 Regulated Residential Home licensure for a Mount Union residence that is expected to house (2) dual diagnosed adolescents currently in RTF placement for two years plus. The 3800 Regulated Residential Homes could assist with adolescent placements that have no family, no foster nor adoption outlooks, and in need of 24/7 care.

Commissioner Postal shared one of CCAP's priorities is to "address the needs of children and youth who have complex behavioral issues". As CCAP works with legislators, there may be synergies available to support and fund programs such as the 3800 Regulated Residential Homes.

**Program Reports** provided by Kathy Whalen, Administrator

Kathy Whalen announced the Mifflin County Co-Responder Team has been recognized and will be showcased June 9 -12, 2024 at the International Co-Responders Alliance in Omaha, Nebraska. Bob Henry-JVBDS, Shanon Quick-CCR, Chief Clemons-Lewistown Police Department, Kristen Wiser-Co-Responder with LPD and Dusty Sipes-Co-Responder with MCRPD will be attending the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual National Co-Responder Conference.

Mental Health Commitment Data through October 31, 2023 was reviewed.

Ms. Whalen shared the first ever, JVBDS brochure, project completed by Bob Henry, Bethlyn Corbin and Amy Markley. A copy of the brochure will be included with the meeting notes. Discussion on distribution included where ever Crisis Cards were delivered and made available as well as doctor offices. Plastic brochure display holders are on order. The brochure will have a cut area to hold a crisis card.

Intellectual Developmental Disabilities October monthly report was reviewed. HMJ has received an additional 5 Community Living Waivers (CLW) to be used for those individuals currently over their PFDS Budget Cap. One individual remains on the Emergency PUNS List awaiting the family's decision to move him to a residential home. This waiver opportunity will be reviewed again in 6 months.

HMJ IDD/Autism Program completed its OPD Monitoring. Data & Policy (80%) corrections requested specific language changes; Record Review (99/1%) was cited for missing authorization for waiver services for two individuals who have since passed. The paperwork requested was outside the necessary filling number of years. The program will be working to update Incident Trend Analysis and its Quality Management Plan. HMJ was complimented on its management of waivers; requesting only Emergency Waivers when immediately necessary. The state only has 100 consolidated waivers per year.

Ms. Whalen participated in the 2023 CCAP Newly Elected Officials Workshop and Fall Conference, as a representative of PA Association of County Administrators, on Sunday, November 19, 2023. It was believed to have 70 persons in attendance.

Early Intervention currently has 16 providers and all providers are involved with the Coaching Process. Two new providers serving the outer areas of Huntingdon County where there is a need. Amy Markley participated in the Juniata River Valley Ice Festival November 30<sup>th</sup> promoting early literacy.

## **7. Fiscal Update**

Kathy Whalen shared the recent amendments to the JVBDS contracts for fiscal year 2023-2024. With the non-renewal of the Keystone Human Services contact; additional funds were applied to the Service Access and Management, Inc (SAM) contract to provide the Supported Living Program. One original full-time staff continued with SAM and is currently serving a full case load. Step-by-Step, Inc. was contracted to provide Community Residential Rehabilitation Services within the existing Mifflin and Huntingdon County homes. They provided a smooth transition for all clients and staff involved.

In addition, JVBDS' current auditor is phasing toward retirement and provided notice to stop services. Boyer & Ritter has been chosen as the new Auditor starting with FY 22/23. Nate Follmer failed to return his Letter of Agreement to continue as WEBMASTER for the JVBDS site. Phil Rossi Web Designs will begin managing the site as of December 1<sup>st</sup> 2023. Phil Rossi has been managing the HMJ Employment Coalition's Roads to Employment web page since 2021. An increase to the Community Services Group contact was for a rate increase for the Atlas Assisted Living Bed.

The two new Early Intervention Providers are listed.

JVBDS will begin a mid-year review of all contracts and letters of agreement.

## **8. Old Business**

Students who may have an interest in membership with the CAB, will be asked to join the meeting as a member of the public.

## **9. New Business – None to Report**

Motion to adjourn made by Tom Weyandt; second by Stephanie Porch. Motion adopted unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 5:23 p.m.

**Next Scheduled Meeting via the hybrid model: in-person at the JVBDS Large Conference Room or via the Zoom Meeting Platform on March 25, 2024 at 4:00pm**