

SOUTH CAROLINA MENTAL HEALTH STATE PLANNING COUNCIL

March 20, 2024

Minutes

Members Present

Robert Bank, MD
Deborah Blalock
Amy Jolly
Bill Lindsey
Carol Rudder
Phoebe Malloy
Joan Herbert
Hannah Bonsu

Tray Stone
Renaye Long
Chris Kunkle
Angela Carol
Versie Bellamy
Beth Franco
Candy True
Stuart Shields

Sheline Flarisee
Chief Michelle Mitchum
Ryan Chitwood
Aaron Brown
Eileen Schell
Beverly Griffin

Guests

Keith Jackson
Nichole Lowder

Ana Garcia
Ernie Lathrop

Staff

Michele Murff
Megan Knight

Documents Distributed

January 10, 2024 Minutes

March 20, 2024 Agenda

Welcome and Introductions

Deborah Blalock called the meeting to order at 10:00AM. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves.

Approval of Agenda

On the motion of Dr. Chris Kunkle and seconded by Mr. Tray Stone, the agenda was approved.

Approval of Minutes

On the motion of Ms. Beth Franco, and seconded by Ms. Angela Carrol, the minutes were approved.

Comments from the Acting State Director, Dr. Robert Bank

Dr. Robert Bank reported that the restructuring has proceeded in legislation but has not fully passed yet. Based on last year's bill, responsibility for the veterans' nursing homes will be transferred from the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to the Department of Veterans' Affairs (SCDVA) on July 1, 2024.

Dr. Bank reported that the Senate has presented their version of the 2025 state budget.

One goal for the 2025 Fiscal Year is to provide telepsychiatry to more patients across South Carolina. DMH is looking to partner with nursing homes to offer consultation by telepsychiatry. This would also increase access and recruitment in more regions of the state.

There was time for questions and discussion. Topics included the possible sale of the current Central Office building for DMH and funding for the possible move to West Columbia.

Legislative Update, Dr. Robert Bank

There was no official legislative update. Please see above for discussion of the restructuring bill and state budget.

Comments from the Chairperson, Deborah Blalock

Ms. Deborah Blalock provided the Council with general updates in Ms. Janie Simpson's absence.

Ms. Blalock shared that SAMHSA is completing a site visit for the Block Grant in August.

Mental Health Advocacy Day was successful despite the rain. Moving indoors increased participants' opportunity to interact with legislators. Speakers included Senator Thomas Alexander, Bill Lindsey, Representative Bill Herbkersman, Sheriff Leon Lott, Representative Sylleste Davis, Senator and Danny Verdin. Thanks are given to Maranda Beaver for her role in organizing the event.

There was time for questions and discussion amongst the Council.

Community Mental Health Services (CMHS) Update, Deborah Blalock

Ms. Deborah Blalock shared the four legs of the DMH 2024-2025 Strategic Plan: increase access to quality mental health services, increase workforce retention and recruitment of qualified employees, improve the effectiveness of administrative operations to extend services, and increase prevention and early intervention efforts in partnership with the Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS). Please share feedback with Ms. Blalock. The goal is to have the strategic plan ready to present to the Commission by April 15, 2024.

ACT Teams, meant to increase the ability to visit patients with severe mental illness in their homes multiple times per week or day, are in development at 13 of the 16 Community Mental Health Centers in South Carolina.

There was time for questions and discussion amongst the Council.

Peer Support Program at the Department of Justice, Nichole Lowder

Nichole Lowder presented a detailed overview of the program. South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC) has 21 institutions in South Carolina with 15,000 residents and 250-300 releases per month.

Some highlights of the presentation are that the program's recidivism rate is 17%. The program started in 2018 in partnership with DAODAS to train 100 SCDC residents as Certified Peer Support Specialists (CPSS) by 2020, extended to 2021 due to COVID-19. The program trained 121 CPSS by 2021, and there are currently 49 active CPSS from this program. Future initiatives include in-house Peer Support Training, opportunities with Mental Health Peer Support, and Outpatient Level of Care Treatment at every Level 2 and 3 Institution.

There was time for questions and discussion.

Announcements

Ms. Renaye Long with the South Carolina Housing Authority introduced the new Public Engagement Digital Manager, Ana Garcia. On March 19, 2024, Interim Executive Director Richard Hutto became the permanent Executive Director of the Housing Authority. Ms. Long also shared that SCHousingSearch.com is launching a private landlord component. The Housing Authority is also training staff on mental health first aid through the SAFETalk program provided by the Office of Emergency Services at DMH.

Ms. Angela Carrol with the Department of Social Services (DSS) shared that the Office of Child Health and Wellbeing is also focusing on prevention by increasing access to initial well-child visits and mental health assessment screenings.

Ms. Michele Murff with DMH is sharing a PATH update with the minutes.

Ms. Hannah Bonsu with DAODAS shared the 2024 South Carolina Governor's Opioid and Addiction Summit April 30- May 1 at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center. On March 15, the South Carolina Center of Excellence in Addiction established their warmline for medical practitioners to speak with other professionals from MUSC, Prisma, and Clemson University for second opinions on addiction, and eventually mental health.

Mr. Bill Lindsey with the National Alliance on Mental Illness South Carolina (NAMI SC) shared that S855 regarding the delivery of medical services in South Carolina with an expansion of Medicaid will not pass. Senator Tom Davis will be presenting the initiative as a proviso.

Ms. Beth Franco with Disability Rights South Carolina shared the April session of Vocational Rehabilitation 101 and will provide a link with the minutes.

Mr. Tray Stone shared that there is a Columbia NAMI SC walk on May 18 at the Columbia Riverwalk. There are also walks in Greenville and Spartanburg on May 18. Mr. Stone also shared that the NAMI SC book club is currently reading Anne of Green Gables. Ms. Candy True also discussed NAMI SC Homefront for families of Veterans. The next session is in September, please share with families of veterans.

Ms. Eileen Schell with Mental Health America of South Carolina (MHASC) shared a document of free trainings available virtually and in-person.

Ms. Carol Rudder encouraged attendees to join a team for the upcoming NAMI SC walks. She will be representing her son on the "Chris's Champs" team.

Mr. Stuart Shields shared that he attended the Cross-Cultural Conference in Greenville, which included a session by the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) about health care disparities for people of color. They provided data that could be beneficial for the DMH Strategic Plan.

Ms. Beverly Griffin with the Federation of Families will share a link with more information about the Columbia Wave Fest on April 27 at the First Choice Community Center.

Old Business/New Business

Ms. Deborah Blalock shared that Ms. Janie Simpson, Chair of the Planning Committee, received the Order of the Brick for her years of service in mental health.

Ms. Deborah Blalock also shared that USC will hold a memorial on March 29, 2024, for Dr. Melissa Reitmeier who served as the Vice-Chair of the State Planning Council for many years and acted as the Chair of the Nomination Committee starting in 2015. A link with more information will be provided.

Ms. Eileen Schell shared that Anita Baker, who worked for Mental Health America, passed away on March 17, 2024. A visitation will be held on April 5, 2024, at the Dunbar Funeral Home on Devine Street.

Public Comment

There was time for public comment from all attendees.

Adjournment

On the motion of Dr. Chris Kunkle, and seconded by Mr. Tray Stone, the meeting was adjourned at 11:55am.

The next meeting of the South Carolina Mental Health State Planning Council will be held May 15, 2024, from 10:00AM – 12:00PM at the Department of Mental Health, 2414 Bull Street, Suite 323, Columbia, SC 29201.