

**COUNTY OF**



**ALLEGHENY**

**RICH FITZGERALD**  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

**MH/ID Advisory Board/Drug & Alcohol Planning Council  
Joint Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, September 9, 2020  
4:30 p.m.-6:00 p.m.  
Microsoft Teams meeting**

**Present MH-ID Advisory Board:** Maria Silva, Paul Barkowitz, Kathy Testoni, Barbara Wolvovitz, Chris Michaels, Gerry Dugan, Laurie Barnett Levine

**Present D&A Planning Council:** Paul Freyder, Val Ketter, Mario Browne

**Absent D&A Planning Council:** Theresa Edwards, Marvin Randall, Vicky Lahey

**Present Staff:** Denise Macerelli, OBH Deputy Director; Jewel Denne, OBH/MH Assistant Deputy Director; Brenda Bulkoski, OID Assistant Administrator; Bridget McNamee, OBH Special Projects Manager; Linda Kuster, DHS/Office of Integrated Programs Systems Integration Specialist; Michelle Lee, Bureau of D&A Services Clerk Typist 2

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**I. Call to Order & Introductions**

Bridget McNamee called this meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

**II. Board & Council Business**

**MH-ID Advisory Board and D&A Planning Council May 2020 Joint Meeting Minutes**

Bridget McNamee will email the joint MH-ID Advisory Board/D&A Planning Council meeting minutes to the MH-ID Advisory Board and D&A Planning Council members for approval. The D&A Planning Council did not have a quorum, at this time. *Please note: On 9/9/20, 6 p.m., Bridget McNamee emailed the MH-ID Advisory Board and the D&A Planning Council the May 2020 joint meeting minutes for approval.*

**III. Presentation-New System of Care Grant-Linda Kuster, DHS-Office of Integrated Program Services**

Linda Kuster, from the Office of Integrated Program Services, presented a PowerPoint on the new System of Care grant. Linda Kuster is the manager of the current Systems of Care Grant. She said in response to Maria Silva's question about the RFP that one case manager would be assigned to work with one CYF-involved family, rather than having separate case managers for adults and for youth. Jewel Denne said they would be looking for an individual who has a background in family systems. Linda Kuster said she would take Paul Freyder's question about incorporating D&A services into this MH grant back to the team developing the model so they can address it. Paul Freyder had asked if there was some thought about incorporating a D&A person into this model. Linda Kuster talked about the ACM (Administrative Case Management)/ASC (Administrative Service Coordination) component of this grant. Chris Michaels asked if ACM and ASC were being used interchangeably in this context. Jewel Denne said that they were being used interchangeably in this context. Linda Kuster gave contact information for herself and Sheila Bell, the CYF Community of Practice Manager and DHS

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Assistant Executive Deputy Integrated Program Services (*Please see the last slide in the PowerPoint.*). *Please see the attached PowerPoint for further information.*

#### **IV. ODS Updates-Brenda Bulkoski**

Brenda Bulkoski presented a PowerPoint on ODS Updates. Chris Michaels asked if the waivers were temporary. Brenda Bulkoski said that as of this meeting, these changes will end on March 20, 2021, but they could end earlier if the pandemic really does subside. Chris Michaels asked how the residential staff were doing. Brenda Bulkoski said that from the reports they receive, very few staff have tested positive for COVID-19. The providers have been very diligent and responsive, so in cases where a staff has tested positive or is presumed positive, they have very comprehensive supportive action steps. Staff are encouraged to stay in a central location, rather than going home to their families and infecting them. Staff are exhausted from long hours and the stress of always being tested and re-tested. Brenda Bulkoski said they heard that even when providers are offering increased pay, staff are starting to get very weary. Chris Michaels asked if there is anything they could do, in terms of keeping up morale and acknowledging staff's value. Brenda Bulkoski will add this as a question to ask providers when they reach out to them on a weekly basis. During these times, they talk to providers about PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), but it would be good to ask what providers are offering their staff to decompress, such as a support group. This information would be invaluable to gather and share amongst providers. She will provide the information she learns at the next MH/ID Advisory Board Meeting. *Please see the attached PowerPoint for further information.*

#### **V. OBH and D&A Bureau Updates-Denise Macerelli**

##### **OBH Updates**

Denise Macerelli said that racial equity would be discussed at the September 10<sup>th</sup> BH Providers Meeting. The opportunity for providers to join a focused learning initiative on racial equity will be discussed. Before the pandemic, DHS/OBH held separate monthly BH and D&A provider meetings. During the pandemic, DHS/OBH has combined these meetings into a BH providers meeting of both D&A and BH providers. The providers have found the combined meeting format to be extremely helpful, and there has been excellent participation. Denise Macerelli said the incidents involving George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, amongst numerous others before and after these incidents, have raised a national awareness of the need to address racial equity. It is hard to think that we had not seen the pervasiveness of this issue, which communities have been asking us for a long time to see. DHS/OBH is taking the opportunity to address the issues of disparity, equity, race, and injustice in their work in a way they have not talked about and worked on before. DHS/OBH is putting together a cohort of opportunities. DHS has been working with The Pittsburgh Foundation for over 1 yr. looking at DHS data regarding race and utilization. DHS will lead a lot of their work with the data, but data is only part of the picture. DHS will also need to lead a community-wide initiative for their providers. Everyone must pay attention to things, like policies & practices, and how they inadvertently create inequity or result in disproportional representation of people of color. There is a need to look at hiring and how to provide opportunities for people of color to serve communities, to lead, and to have opportunities for advancement. There is a need to look at how the county, AHCI, CCBH, and providers are creating a culture of inclusion. The county, AHCI, and CCBH have an opportunity to support some of providers' work on trying to create a culture of inclusion. The county, AHCI, and CCBH will need to help lead some community-wide level work. Everyone needs to start from a basic understanding, awareness, and acceptance that racial inequity and injustice exist. Then they can begin to have a candid dialogue together and begin to work towards meaningful solutions for the people who are coming to be served. It is very important to lead with optimism and to be mindful about leading with race and acknowledging inherent biases. It is about moving forward with

understanding and compassion that helps all of us to serve people better. DHS has received a lot of community feedback from The Pittsburgh Foundation. They have had a lot of discussions in Black and Brown communities. DHS will be looking to build a broad stakeholder group to get input from consumers or people who are trying to be served by the system. The goal is to build upon the experiences of individuals we are trying to help. Mario Browne said this is a tough dialogue, but it is a critical one, so he is really looking forward to engaging in it.

### **Pat Valentine's Retirement**

Denise Macerelli said Pat Valentine, DHS Executive Deputy Director of Integrated Program Services, has announced her retirement. Pat Valentine will be leaving DHS on October 23, 2020 after working at DHS for about 24 yrs. Denise Macerelli said there are no words that can really honor Pat Valentine in the way she deserves. Pat Valentine is leaving behind a strong team. Chris Michaels said we can look at all of Pat Valentine's accomplishments and contributions and feel hopeful as we look at how far Allegheny County has come in the past 20 yrs. or so. Pat Valentine was the driving force behind the MH changes for many years. She is very resilient and was a constant. You could go to her with personal or professional problems, and she would help you if she could. She is an important person to NAMI. We can wish Pat Valentine well and be thankful that we had her. Laurie Barnett Levine said Pat Valentine deserves to retire, and she wishes Pat Valentine well. Denise Macerelli said Pat Valentine has been a driving force on the MH side and a lot of the innovation and the movement DHS has had around their D&A service development. Marc Cherna has also been tremendously supportive around the development of DHS' D&A service development. Marc Cherna and Pat Valentine have been a very formidable team. We have been so lucky in Allegheny County to have their vision, their compassion, and their understanding at the helm. There was never anyone who could not go to either one of them with anything.

### **D&A Bureau Updates**

Denise Macerelli said Dr. Latika Davis-Jones has resigned as the Bureau of D&A Services Assistant Deputy Director to explore other opportunities, and her last day is September 11, 2020. Denise Macerelli wishes Dr. Davis-Jones all the best. She appreciates all the work Dr. Davis-Jones has done for DHS, and on behalf of our community for people struggling with addiction and their loved ones and families. Dr. Davis-Jones will be sorely missed. Dr. Davis-Jones and Maisha Howze put together a temporary transition plan. DHS/OBH will be making a more formal announcement about what that structure will look like. Dr. Davis-Jones' position will be posted for a backfill. Dr. Davis-Jones brought a unique and enjoyable perspective to the DHS team. Denise Macerelli said she knows that wherever Dr. Davis-Jones goes, she will be brilliant. Mario Browne said in the chat that it is bittersweet that Pat Valentine and Dr. Davis-Jones are retiring and resigning.

Denise Macerelli said the work with Renewal relating to the engagement center is moving forward. The D&A family residential program designed for CYF-involved families, which had caregivers who needed residential D&A treatment and were at risk of losing their children because of substance use disorders, was paused. This facility has become an emergency COVID-19 shelter for families who needed to quarantine. The work with the COEs (Centers of Excellence) has been ongoing although some of the work has changed slightly. Work is being done with the CACs (Certified Assessment Centers), which is a relatively new initiative. In addition to the engagement center, which will be run by Renewal, there are 4 other CACs. The CACs are designed to provide neutral level of care (LOC) assessments, along with some support and engagement with certified recovery specialist services. The LOC assessments will be neutral in referring clients to the appropriate LOC based on their needs. The referrals to a LOC will also take into account client choice. The engagement center will also have the ability to do neutral

LOC assessments. The CACs will ensure that the person gets connected to the provider the person chooses which provides the LOC they need. Jenn House said the CAC's goal is to conduct LOC assessments (onsite or mobile) in a very timely manner. Denise Macerelli said a lot of this came out of the fact that they did not know what was happening to people on the front-end of the system. They did not know how many times providers would say to people calling that they could not admit them because they did not have any available treatment slots. They would ask people if they wanted to be put on waitlists. After a person would be assessed as needing D&A residential services, there was often no beds available. Sometimes people waiting for treatment beds were in a great deal of distress, were discouraged from treatment, and sometimes died waiting for a bed. These initiatives are intended to better support people who are seeking help for D&A issues at the time they are seeking help. DHS/OBH wanted to build a system of services and supports to help get people seeking help for D&A issues where they needed and wanted to be. The CACs are required to meet certain reporting standards. They are required to send DHS/OBH information about when assessments are provided and what happened to people who were assessed. There are certain parameters on the back-end of the evaluation which expects that people will get to treatment as quickly and safely as possible. Through client and satisfaction surveys, DHS/OBH will be able to determine the experiences of individuals served by the CACs. DHS/OBH has changed the standard of practice to be a higher one.

Jenn House announced at the September 3<sup>rd</sup> BH Providers Meeting that Gov. Wolf had announced the week of August 31<sup>st</sup> that the shelf life for the nasal spray form of Narcan was now extended to 36 mos. (3 yrs.). Historically, the shelf life of the nasal spray form of Narcan had been 24 mos. (2 yrs.). Denise Macerelli said there is ongoing work to look at the distribution of Narcan. DHS/OBH had worked with ACHD (Allegheny County Health Department) on some work related to the opioid epidemic, including Narcan distribution. This work including working on how to keep Narcan within expiration dates and moving within the community. DHS/OBH developed an initiative with the Allegheny County Jail to offer free Narcan to everyone leaving the jail. DHS/OBH and ACHD worked on making Narcan available to providers, who requested to have it in their facilities and programs. DHS/OBH and ACHD worked with Prevention Point Pittsburgh (PPP) to get Narcan to people on the street. About 6-8 wks. ago, PPP said to the county, CCBH, and AHCI that the system of using face-to-face contact to distribute Narcan to the community may need to be revisited since people did not have as much in-person contact during the pandemic. They might need to think of different ways to distribute Narcan and reemphasize the availability of Narcan. Almost a third of the services delivered on the MH side, are being delivered remotely, so there is no opportunity to distribute Narcan in person. At an upcoming BH provider meeting, DHS/OBH will do an education session on Narcan. This session will be particularly for MH providers. The opioid overdose death report with ACHD showed that about 33%-34% of people who died from an opioid overdose had only been touching the MH system at the time of their death. DHS/OBH will talk to the provider community to discuss better ways to distribute Narcan to the community.

## **VI. MH Updates-Jewel Denne**

Jewel Denne said that during the bi-weekly BH provider meetings, topics, like OMHSAS updates, any bulletins/waivers, and CCBH updates on gap payments, are discussed. During the last month or so, they have held meetings on specific topics, like school-based services, on the weeks between the bi-weekly meetings. OBH/MH staff, like education specialists and school-based liaisons, attended the school-based services meeting to talk about the work they had been doing with the schools in planning for students returning to school (virtually, in-person, or hybrid). On September 10<sup>th</sup>, there is another meeting on the topic of race and equity. There has been a lot of ongoing work on race and equity internally at DHS with the DHS Office of Equity and Inclusion, along with at AHCI, and with DHS/OBH providers. There will be an upcoming

series on race and equity. During the September 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, DHS/OBH will ask providers for their feedback on what they would like to see done system-wide. Providers would be asked to talk about the race & equity work they were doing within their organizations.

DHS/OBH is trying to sustain and keep providers full during this time. They have done alternative payment arrangements with CCBH and gap funding. At the last meeting, SAP services were discussed and how SAP services were moved to FFS (fee-for-service) this past year. When the schools switched to virtual learning, this disrupted how providers were delivering SAP services. The issues that are currently being discussed are what services the schools need right now, how these services could be provided virtually, and how to keep providers full, even though the services they are delivering may not fit into the billable world. We are still operating under the 1993 draft crisis service regulations through OMHSAS. The state has opened up the crisis regulations and are reaching out to all PA crisis providers to get input on these regulations. The state is also looking at model programs across the country. Allegheny County has one of the best models within the state. There was a press release 2 wks. ago around a crisis stakeholder group in Allegheny County, which Marc Cherna co-chairs. Emergency Services Chief Matt Brown, who oversees the 911 center, some DHS contracted providers, the courts, Probation, and the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police are a part of this stakeholder group. The group is tasked with looking at crisis response models, where the police respond and considering if they could do something differently in situations, where there are not necessarily any safety concerns, that would decrease the police response to those calls. They are thinking about complementing and/or replacing the police response with more of a social service response. One of the topics being discussed is what is happening with the 911 center and the 911 dispatch. Currently, 911 dispatches are emergency services, which include police, ambulance, and fire. There is a question about if there is a place for a social service response. As mentioned at the last joint meeting in May, there was a slight spike in positive COVID-19 cases in MH residential facilities. Since that time, the cases have decreased, and there are very few positive COVID-19 cases from the congregate care facilities. Provider staff are doing an excellent job in monitoring and have great plans in place if staff test positive. September is Suicide Prevention Month. There are a couple of upcoming walks. DHS/OBH has not seen an uptick in crisis calls or an increase in completed suicides within their service system.

## VII. Other Announcements

### **October 10<sup>th</sup> NAMI Walk**

Chris Michaels said the national NAMI walk is occurring virtually this year on October 10, 2020. The theme is that it is a day of hope. There will be a raffle. **More information is available on NAMI's walk website:** <https://www.namiwalks.org/>. During NAMI's national conference, which was held virtually this year, they give out annual awards. NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania is very proud to have received the state organization of the year award.

### **Allegheny County Coalition for Recovery (ACCR) Wellness Challenge**

Paul Barkowitz said ACCR is having a wellness challenge this month. The wellness challenge includes physical & mental health, along with anything else that helps people during this difficult time. **People can go to ACCR's website:** <http://coalitionforrecovery.org/> to register for the challenge. Registration gets you a certain number of chances to win a weekly lottery. You get more chances to win if you upload pictures on their Facebook page.

### **September 12<sup>th</sup> Ray of Hope Virtual Walk**

Laurie Barnett Levine said the Ray of Hope, Westmoreland County's Suicide Prevention and Awareness Task Force, was holding a free virtual walk on September 12<sup>th</sup>. At 10 a.m., there will

be a special event for people who lost loved ones due to suicide. *Please see the following website for further information:* <https://www.rayofhopewestmoreland.org/annual-walk/> .

#### **Mental Health America October Virtual Meeting**

Laurie Barnett Levine said Mental Health America (MHA) will have a free annual meeting, which will be held virtually for the first time in October. Paul Gionfriddo, the CEO of MHA, will be speaking at this meeting. They will be honoring the innovators that they did not get to honor in the spring because of the pandemic. She said she could share more information about this meeting as it gets closer.

#### **September 19<sup>th</sup> Pittsburgh Recovery Walk**

Jenn House, from CCBH, said that part of the Pittsburgh Recovery Walk on September 19<sup>th</sup> would be held virtually. Participants can choose to walk in the morning of September 19<sup>th</sup> wherever they feel safe to do so. Participants can upload pictures showing themselves walking on social media and use the tag “@pghrecoverwalk” on social media and the hashtag “#MyRoadPGH.” There will be a livestream event in the evening that will feature different speakers on recovery, pictures people uploaded on social media, and the announcement of the 2020 Recovery Award winners. Participants can register on <https://pghrecoverywalk.org/> .

#### **VIII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:57 p.m.

#### **IX. Next Public Meetings**

The next public MH/ID Advisory Board Microsoft Teams meeting will be on Tuesday, November 10, 2020 from 4:30 p.m.-6 p.m.

The next public D&A Planning Council Microsoft Teams meeting will be on Wednesday, November 11, 2020 from 4:30 p.m.-6 p.m.