**Statutory Advisory Board (SAB)**

**August 4, 2023**

**Minutes**

SAB Attendees: Blair Wong, Brian MacDonald, and Kathy Petkauskos

MCB Staff Attendees: John Oliveira, Nathan Skrocki, Lucy Evangelidis, Mike Saccone, Karen Hatcher

Meeting Held via Zoom; Recordings made available to public on MCB YouTube channel

Public invited to participate through Q&A made at end of the meeting.

Minutes

Blair motions to accept the minutes from the June meeting.

Minutes will be accepted based on Kathy’s comments and the edits that follow.

Commissioner Update - Budget

Budget has been approved at the House and the Governor has ten days to sign it and veto items. Agencies received a second 1/12 portion of funding.

MCB CFO search is completed. The new CFO is starting a week from Monday. Her name is Sheila Tunney, and she has worked with state and federal agencies and done a lot of budget work.

Nathan Skrocki – Registration Update

Nathan shares his screen to show the dashboard.

Total registrations are up to 1,049. 15 are in the queue needing additional verification which is a normal amount. Open social rehabilitation (SR) cases went down 105 and SR children’s (SRC) cases went up 24. DBS is level from previous month. Not much change in open vocational rehabilitation (VR) cases from the previous report. 60 closed SRC cases and 1,005 closed SR cases. 12 VR closures successfully and 6 non-successfully.

There have been close to 5,000 certificates of blindness (COBs), 606 IDs, 354 EDPs for phones, and 64 handicapped placards processed this calendar year.

Nothing surprising about the numbers this month which is great to see.

Blair asks if there are statistics regarding once a strategic plan has been defined for a client and the actual delivery of the services.

Nathan says he can look at that and get back to Blair once he knows if it’s possible to pull that data from AWARE.

Blair mentions that the Boston Globe article reported that there might be an overload of clients based on the number of case workers. He wants to know if that can be verified and what we can do to improve.

John says that additional $250,000 funding in the budget will be used to hire staff on the SR side of the agency.

Brian asks if the vacant positions at the time of the article have been filled as it was a snapshot in time.

John says every available position has been filled over the past several months. We have also brought in some retired staff as consultants. This is a situation that continues to change.

Blair asks if there are metrics that demonstrate how many clients a case manager can handle at a time by specific case manager and region. If so – can the SAB see those metrics?

John says those metrics can be obtained but case managers are all a little different. For example, some case managers are very quick to do the follow up paperwork to close a case while others focus more on open cases and do a lot of closures later. Because of this, many have a number that exceeds the targeted number set by the unit, but some do not. It depends on factors such as the region and the employee’s work style. Case managers have a target number that gets evaluated midway through the year as well as in June.

Brian says that the metric showing the time frame between a plan established and the support services starting would be useful.

John says they can get this measurement by taking a sample from the population of cases.

Kathy refers to the article stating that resources and services have been slashed and greatly compromised including wait times for services. Data might help alleviate some concerns. She also asks if John has any concerns about caseloads and workforce.

John says that things are always changing but the number of staff out on leave right now are higher than back in April. The additional funding will be helpful. He thinks it can be managed with the additional funding but he will also be asking for a few more positions to help fill caseloads. Once new staff are onboarded and staff on leave return, we will have a better understanding of the need.

 In terms of resources, now staff feel comfortable that they have what they need and are getting the support and equipment needed to deliver services to the consumer.

John says it is also difficult to find qualified staff.

Commissioner Update – General Updates

Internship program closing ceremony is back in person at the state house on August 10th.

The job fair and employer seminar continues to be developed. The employer seminar will take place in September and the job fair in early October.

White Cane Day planning continues to move forward. The committee met yesterday and the event will be held in October.

Our media campaign is moving along. 75 potential consumers have seen the ads and made inquiries. There have been no hits yet regarding new employers.

Questions from the Public

Brians references a question brought up the previous month about the time of these meetings. The board can be flexible if that is what the committee wants to do overall.

Debbie M asks if the additional $250,000 in the budget will be written into the amount that will be given to the agency every year. Once we hire people there must be job security.

John says he has not seen how the money is loaded yet but that it obviously makes sense what Debbie is saying. We are not going to hire people and then have to lay them off June 30th. He is hoping it is part of our appropriation moving forward. This is an ongoing need.

David Kingsbury asks about the SAB memberships. There are currently two vacancies, and one appointee has been identified already and the paperwork has been sent. What is the progress on filling the second vacancy and what assurances can you give that the final approval of those two people will be expedited?

John says candidates for those two positions have submitted their level of interest. This has been forwarded about three weeks ago to the correct department. He has brought this up to the Undersecretary and will bring it up in their meeting again next week. It will then go to the Governor’s office. He his hoping by September we will have an answer. Five people have expressed interest in these two positions.

Meeting adjourned.