Massachusetts Autism Commission

Health Care Sub-Committee Meeting Minutes

March 19, 2021 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Via WebEx

Kathleen Stern - Hosted WebEx, Lisa Crouser took Minutes

**Present**: Amy Weinstock (co-chair), Kate Ginnis (co-chair), Christine Hubbard, Maura Sullivan, Wells Wilkinson, Laura Conrad, Jean Frazier, Leonard Rappaport, Ann Neumeyer, and Shari King

**Approval of Remote Participation**

Lisa Crouser stated that the meeting was subject to the Open Meeting Law and that the Sub-Committee members present would need to vote to approve the remote participation of members because of their geographic location, whenever any members were utilizing video and/or tele-conferencing. Remote access was approved unanimously by the members.

**Introductions and approval of the October 8, 2020 Minutes**

The minutes from the Health Care Subcommittee Meeting of October 8, 2020 were approved by individuals as part of their introductions.

**Update on Behavioral Health Urgent Care Project**

**Kate Ginnis and Jean Frazier reported on MCPAP-ASD***.*

* Kate Ginnis - It launched and is going well. 7 days/ week for MCI and MD consultations.
* Jean Frazier – Thrilled to be part of the team – Leadership team meets regularly and have prescriber calls to iron out case issues. Numerous testimonials from families, MCI staff and prescribers and the data looks good. Volume up to 200. ED boarding looks like it has gone down every month except Oct. Has cut ED Boarders in half. She wanted to thank Kate for her motivation and perseverance.
* Kate Ginnis is glad that they didn’t pilot program or wouldn’t be where we are. John Straus has been really enjoying it. One of the priorities on road map is to figure out how this can be more expansive. Thinking about how we get the expertise in other settings.
* Jean Frazier believes this is a national crisis. She has been asked by other states what we are doing and has call scheduled with someone from Texas. Kate also mentioned the program to someone she was working with in Texas.
* Kate Ginnis – There is money in the ARPA recovery plan for potential funding- Might be opportunity to get federal money.
* Maura Sullivan – Asked if there are specific access points as she is being asked about it by legislators. Kate explained that consultation happens through Crisis Teams, even if child is boarding at home. Families can’t call. Situation where family had a successful intervention and now mom doesn’t want a consultation as she fears child now wouldn’t be able to get hospitalized. Kate will catch up with Maura on 2 specific cases.
* Amy Weinstock - Mobile crisis provider said how helpful it has been. Provider said if would be great to have a BCBA on each team. Laura Conrad said MH gives funding and Mobile crisis teams could hire BCBA’s with that funding.

**REVIEW OF 2021 PRIORITIES**

* **Emergency** Care – Discussed above
* **Extension of MassHealth coverage for persons over the age of 21**
* Laura Conrad – There is no update. Put on hold about a year ago. No avenue to get federal dollars for people over 21.
* Maura Sullivan – Portion of new bill filed includes AAC devices. Will be prioritizing it this time.
* Amy Weinstock shared that on national level one or two states have expanded – New Mexico and maybe one other. AIRC getting some calls from parents who are fairly desperate.
* Maura Sullivan – There is another bill for a pilot program for ages 21 -28 or 21-25 – pilot for smaller age group.
* Amy Weinstock asked if there is anything under COVID that can be done - Laura Conrad informed Committee that’s no longer an option. She doesn’t know if there is anything in the federal relief package that could help.
* Kate Ginnis mentioned maybe look into whether there is another mechanism – block grants.
* Maura Sullivan– There are funds for BH support
* Amy Weinstock - Mentioned COBRA funds will be available under the federal relief package.
* **Expansion of training on ASD**
* Maura Sullivan – Re-filed hospital training bill. Written with Mass Hospital Association. Number one bill this session.
* Still need to tackle accommodations in the hospital – people going and not allowed to have their support person. Received large grant and will be able to train 4 hospital emergency departments – Received grant from WI Foundation to target training for ED’s. 1 hour training.
* Still have other bills trying to push through – Operation House Call. Transition back to group home bill.
* Lenny Rappaport – Shared that Children’s has been doing lot of training – have curricula that might be helpful to Maura. Laura Weisman and Nancy Sullivan at BCH have published articles too.
* Shari King – Added that Audrey Christenson is with them and has done curricula on security guards. They also have resources that would be helpful.
* Maura has received 4 letters of interest, but has not yet chosen hospitals for the trainings.
* Kate G.– Offered to help if hospitals are still excluding supports.
* Maura - Last ditch efforts to get IDD and ASD added to list of comorbidities to get these individuals prioritized for April 5th. VERY important priority and final plea.
* **Update on AAC Devices** - Goal to decrease the hurdles to get non-dedicated devices. And increase education in community for providers who might be willing to work on it.

**COVID UPDATES**

* **Telehealth Coverage Extension**
* Laura Conrad– She expects an extension of telehealth. It is in the works, not final. Providers were vaccinated as essential early on so hopefully able to do more in home services if families want.
* Lenny Rappaport -Telehealth hasn’t been great for EI.
* Kate Ginnis - Many employees in the field have been leaving the field due to concerns. There is a new Director of EI and Kate has been meeting with her. Homebound patients also have an issue with getting vaccines. How will they be supported? LTSS is working on the homebound vaccination push.
* Lenny Rappaport - Places are just following governor’s rules.
* **RACIAL DISPARAITIES**
* Amy Weinstock – Not sure where to begin with this. But, we can’t ignore it.
* Laura Conrad asked if Amy was in contact with a woman in VA who does Autism-in-Black conference. Laura will send Amy information. She has a lot of knowledge.
* Maura Sullivan – Working on a bill that addresses marginalized groups and health care disparities. Includes bias and impact on treatment intersection. One of her teachers from CT will be doing training with a great curriculum - intersection/ bias.
* Shari King – Thinks it would be nice to get more input from other stakeholders. They have a diversity council at BMC, Dept of Pediatrics, and she could get their input.
* Christine Hubbard – Can reach out to the Portuguese support group – also have contacts in the Somali community (Asha). Put together list of community liaisons.
* Amy Weinstock believes that we need to think strategically about this. Christine thought maybe we can set up focus groups.
* Kate Ginnis would like to have invited guests to speak at the next meeting. Families/providers who can speak to their “on the ground” experiences. Not sure which meeting, this one or the bigger meeting. Commission level?
* Amy Weinstock would like to try for the bigger meeting or if we don’t get it, can be with this subcommittee, or with this subcommittee in conjuntion with other subcommittees.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Meeting Adjourned.