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|  | *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  *Executive Office of Health and Human Services*  *Department of Mental Health*  *25 Staniford Street*  *Boston, Massachusetts 02114-2575* | |  |
| **CHARLES D. BAKER**  ***Governor***  **KARYN E. POLITO**  ***Lieutenant Governor***  **KATHLEEN E. WALSH**  ***Secretary***  **BROOKE DOYLE**  ***Commissioner*** | | **(617) 626-8000**  **www.mass.gov/dmh** | |

*Statewide Mental Health Advisory Council*

*(Via Videoconference)*

*November 21, 2024*

PRESENT: Chuck Weinstein, Joan Cho Sik, Eno Mondesir, Dave Brown, Catherine Vuky, Vivian Nunez, Susan Martin, Jean Giagrande, Autumn Versace, Karran Larson

ABSENT: Cynthia Piltch, Ilya Ablavsky, Heather Henderson,

STAFF: Brooke Doyle, Crystal Collier

GUESTS: Alan Burt, Jordan Goldstein, Advocate-Disability Law Center, Warren Lent, BCB Government Relations

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**Call to Order –** 8:30a.m.

**Welcome by Chair**

* Welcome Guests; Review of On-line Etiquette, Guest Policy, Open meeting policy

**Approval of Minutes**

* September 19, 2024 minutes approved.

**Commissioner’s Update – Brooke Doyle**

* The company that operates the contract for Bridgewater State Hospital clinical services (WellPath) filed for bankruptcy. The company will still operate during the court proceedings. DMH receives transfers from BSH regularly and will continue to monitor the situation. DMH will keep the Council up-to-date when more information is known.
* Budget season is in its early phases. DMH’s budget is impacted by a small portion of federal funding through our block grant. Council will pay close attention to the SAMHSA PATH Grant and the Center for Medicaid/Medicare Services that supports Medicaid broadly. DMH anticipates a very difficult budget year. Will share more details when known.

**Advancing Health Equity in Massachusetts - Interagency Health Equity Team (IHET) –Crystal Collier, Chief of Staff**

* IHET is now known as Advancing Health Equity in Massachusetts. Maternal Health and cardiobolic mental health still remain the same.
* DPH has a great deal of information with regard to population health. That will be helpful to DMH to identify gaps in services.

**Council Member Updates, Issues, Concerns, Consultation**

* Vivian’s provider (Family Services, Inc.) is no longer going to provide services to anyone who has MBHP as primary source of payment. More than 50% of participants will be left out. Was told it’s an issue with MassHealth payments to MBHP. The teaching line program with Family Services has been discontinued as well due to this MassHealth problem. The Commissioner is aware that some agencies have opted to not enter into contracts because of rates. The Commissioner will investigate this issue.
* Jean Giangrande asked to have a meeting with all area board reps to discuss what each board is doing and what issues/concerns they may have.
* Eno Mondesir discussed how the 2024 election results have had significant health and mental health ramifications. Churches are reaching out to parishioners about their concerns. People are very anxious about the transition of the administration. The Commissioner agrees and anticipates the anxieties may spread as people discuss the election more. She encourages people to communicate on behalf of DMH, on behalf of the Council, that it is important that we all stay clear and true to the values that drive us. The Governor has anchored on that point. The DPH Commissioner has also been telling his teams that it is important that health not be seen as a partisan issue. Mental health is true to that too. The Commissioner encourages everyone to focus on the facts and not get dissuaded with false information. Crystal Collier indicated that DMH has been working to create connections to faith communities since May, during May is Mental Health Month, all over the Commonwealth and DMH continues to make connections. DMH is building relationships and connections to allow people to talk things through. Faith communities are sometimes the first responders to someone who is in crisis and we will continue to foster that community engagement.
* Alan Burt thanks the Commissioner for joining the end of the year site and area board meeting in the Southeast. He appreciates all DMH does.
* Karran Larson has been working to collaborate on mental health and SUD in recovery in the deaf community. Efforts are being made to get the word out that we have ways and capacity that we didn’t have in the past. Education in the community is key. There are three programs working to develop capacity for deaf and hard of hearing, North Suffolk, High Point, Behavioral Health Network. BSAS has given some money to help with this. Good to see progress and collaboration with all the agencies.
* Dave Brown indicates the CBHC has been wonderful for the City of Lynn. The behavioral health unit is still working with the police. Co-response unit also working with the police. Lynn has a large diverse population. They’ve been reaching out to undocumented people asking them to report crimes. They’ve been afraid. They’ve made great strides in making undocumented people feel comfortable to call the police when they need assistance. They are hesitant to get involved because of citizenship status.
* Catherine Vuky is working with Asian community centers in 5 locations. Insurance is a big issue in the community right now – especially with seniors.
* Autumn Versace works at Baystate Health as the Director of Midwifery. A Legislative passage on maternal health bill was passed at the end of summer. See article here. [MASSACHUSETTS LEGISLATURE PASSES COMPREHENSIVE MATERNAL HEALTH BILL](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/malegislature.gov/PressRoom/Detail?pressReleaseId=137*:*:text=*28BOSTON*20-*208*2F15*2F2025*29*20Today*2C*20The*20Massachusetts*20Legislature*20passed,expands*20the*20statewide*20universal*20postpartum*20home*20visiting*20program.__;I34lJSUlJSUlJSUlJSUlJSUlJSUl!!CPANwP4y!Rgny-E0KKozwvyheEwXzE0bh6SrANEuf-dpf_8bN8cs5AHiUZjHV5CLmdOBmBbCE0PLwQWOO8RnPCY5jnCmQQ9iUqn1hriCY550jcQ$)
* Susan Martin is a pediatrician on the South Shore. There continues to be concerns on mood disorders in children/teens especially with the start of the school year and the darker winter months. The challenge in finding mental health services, particularly therapists, is one that continues due to a lack of openings. Wait times are very long. Hoping there will be funding that will attract more individuals into the therapy career to help with this issue. Aspire has been wonderful. Some patients have been having telemedicine visits that have helped to divert the child from going to the ER.
* Jean Giagrande thanks the Commissioner for coming to SEA board annual meeting. Meeting was very successful. The coming year will be focused on school age children and mental health and what can the board do to increase awareness in legislation.
* Chuck Weinstein explains DMH has funded peer activities for over 10 years. In the peer world there is a tool called WRAP – wellness recovery action plan – peers working with peers to write a plan so if they become unwell there is a plan of their wishes on how they want their treatment to go. It’s voluntary.

**Old & New Business**

* Call for Topics.
  + DLC presentation on Bridgewater SH
  + Faith based representatives/panel – Eno will follow-up with Chuck.
  + Catherine Vuky would like to talk in depth about overcoming barriers to mental health care in the Asian communities – will present in January
  + Peers – WRAP plan
  + Prevention
* Cynthia thought a Holiday gathering in Marlboro on a Saturday or Sunday for lunch would be nice in December. Chuck will send out a survey to see if folks are interested and when might be a good time.
* SAC still has open seats – reach out and encourage folks.

**Next Meeting**

January 16, 2025

**Future 2024 Meetings: Thursday’s 8:30-10:00am**

March 20, May 15, September 18, November 20

**Meeting adjourned 10:00am.**