

WESTERN TIDEWATER COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD

MINUTES

March 19, 2024

The regularly scheduled bi-monthly meeting of March 19, 2024 at 9:33 a.m. The attendance was recorded as below:

PRESENT

Cindy Edwards, Board Chair
Toni Brown
Lula Holland, Vice Chair
Audrey Lee
Sarah Rexrode
Margaret Ann Smith
Vicki Wiggins-Pittman (Emeritus)

ABSENT

Steven Blunt
Rachel Lewis (Emeritus)
LaRhonda Mabry
Alysia Pack
Donald Robertson
Angela Vick
Melvin Wofford

STAFF

Demetrios Peratsakis, Executive Director
Matt Hull, Board Attorney
Donna Boykin
Debbie Dashiell
David Hopkins
Andrew Jurewicz
Latril Mariano
Lara Matthews
Sheila Reaves
Brandon Rodgers

GUESTS

Special Guests: Josh Roller, Denise Tynes, FOX/SSG and SMVF Team

Ms. Edwards recognized Board Attorney Matt Hull and Executive Director Demetrios Peratsakis. She then recognized Denise Tynes for her almost 30 years of service with WTCSB either on board or advocating for the agency and expressed appreciation for her

service. Ms. Tynes spoke of some of the highlights of her tenure and expressed her belief in the agency. She commented that the agency has come a long way under the leadership of Mr. Peratsakis and referenced the good work of the board. She was presented with a certificate for 30 years of service.

Audrey Lee, WTCSB's newest board member representing the City of Franklin was introduced.

Mr. Josh Roller of Robinson, Farmer, Cox Associates, PLLC (RFC) presented the Western Tidewater CSB Independent Auditors' Report. Mr. Peratsakis reminded the board that the independent audit is a requirement of the DBHDS Performance Contract.

Mr. Roller called the Board's attention to the *Summary* with RFC's opinion that all required financial information was presented and fiscal year 2023 ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States. Mr. Roller highlighted the Basis for Opinions, the Responsibilities of Management, the Responsibilities for the Audit, the Required Supplementary Information, the Report on Summarized Comparative Information, Supplementary Information and Other Reporting Required. He stated RFC issued an unmodified opinion for the year. This is a clean opinion and the best that can be received.

Mr. Roller then reviewed the letters RFC produced stating that WTCSB complied with all compliance requirements and that RFC did not identify any deficiencies in internal controls.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

MINUTES

The minutes of the January 30, 2024, meeting were reviewed.

Upon a ***motion*** made by Lula Holland and seconded by Audrey Lee, the minutes of the January 30, 2024, meeting were approved.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Peratsakis will be presenting key budget and language items and STEP VA updates, but first wanted to introduce Sheila Reaves and members of the Service Members, Veterans, and Families (SMVF) Team for an overview of services.

The SMVF program targets transitioning service members in Hampton Roads six months prior to discharge until six months post-discharge. Hampton Roads has one of the largest military and veteran populations in the United States with over 2000 members transitioning from military to civilian status annually. Transitioning members can face new situations

such as seeking employment, enrolling in school, a big change in culture for the members and their families, and even homelessness - all of which cause stress.

It is almost taboo to ask for help in the military culture. This program seeks out transitioning members and connects them to needed civilian life resources and benefits and by providing various levels of support (referrals, medical, clinical, housing, substance abuse counseling, outpatient counseling, legal services, and access to crisis services) to counter these stressors.

The Staff Sergeant Gordon Parker Fox Grant (SSGF) provides assessments for risk, outreach, job coaching, vocational/educational coaching, peer support, transportation, referrals and resources.

Ms. Reaves shared that the team is comprised primarily of veterans or veteran-related personnel. She introduced the members and explained the responsibilities of each. She announced the next Community Outreach Symposium entitled "Veterans Helping Veterans", will be held at HUB 757 March 27th from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Referrals are made via the WTCSB Veterans Services Department and listed the various ways the team can be reached.

OLD BUSINESS

Civil Commitment Process Pilot

Mr. Peratsakis highlighted key budget items and language. One that CSBs aggressively opposed has been passed. The private sector has tried to become an authorized agency for the Civil Commitment process for years. Until now, CSBs were the only agencies codified to become active agents in the Civil Commitment process and complete preadmission screenings to determine if an individual who is under an ECO should get a recommendation to the magistrate for a TDO; thereby hospitalizing the individual against their wishes. Many things happen during a TDO. There is involvement by police, magistrates, special justices, family members and people who can testify for and against the defendant. The important thing is that this suspends the individual's civil liberties.

Years ago, the Virginia Psychiatric Association tried to secure this privilege but failed as there were concerns about doctors having a responsibility to make this decision as they had privileges at areas hospitals. No one is better suited to protect the individual and their family than CSBs. Regrettably, despite efforts to stop this, the General Assembly has approved a pilot project at Riverside Hospital in Hampton. All the same requirements that CSBs must handle - bed searches, bed registry, documenting, will be required of Riverside.

Mr. Peratsakis is concerned the pilot will be extended to make it more permanent as Riverside has a wealth of resources. There are a lot of components attached that have been exclusively the domain of public trust including access to funds to support the individual when they are released from the hospital. This could open access of these support funds to anyone

supporting the individual. The hospital system has had many issues. This doesn't address the problem that the General Assembly thinks it does. The problem is bed shortages. State hospitals have fewer beds available and have an interest in seeing more beds opened. The pilot ends 2026 and a Summary of Findings will be provided by DBHDS. The Governor is interested in fixing what he thinks is a widespread problem but while this may open some beds there's nothing to prevent the local private hospitals from cherry picking. Additionally, individuals could be hospitalized when their problems could have been handled successfully in the community. This is unfortunately, a broader policy issue.

Irvo's Law

A new law has been passed. Irvo's Law, also known as HB 1242, was inspired by Irvo Otieno's case. He died while under an Emergency Custody Order (ECO) at Central State Hospital. This legislation seeks to preserve a family member or caregiver's access to a loved one undergoing treatment for a mental health crisis under an ECO or temporary detention order (TDO). The bill ensures that family members can be present during assessments at health facilities, provided their presence does not create a medical, clinical, or safety risk. Irvo asked for his mother while under the ECO and staff refused to allow her to see him to help calm him down/deescalate him which was likely a contributing factor to his escalation. He was feeling desperate in a new system.

Key Budget Items

Mr. Peratsakis touched on key budget issues expected to prevail. There is a 3% increase for state employees including CSBs and \$15 million is included for CSB workforce development. DBHDS will conduct a needs assessment to determine the unmet need for each of the nine service components of STEP VA and develop an estimate of the cost of satisfying the unmet need for each of these components. Findings will be reported to the Chairs of the House Appropriations and the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees and to the Behavioral Health Commission by December 1, 2024.

There is continuing pressure on CSBs from the General Assembly for accountability in several performance areas. WTCSB addressed this by creating a Business Development Department and asked Brandon to lead the effort to identify programmatic improvement and tracking the assurances required by the Performance Contract Exhibits regarding special funding received from DBHDS.

The agency is required to bill Medicaid for services received by Medicaid-eligible individuals as it reduces the burden of state general funds provided. This is an excellent way for the state to leverage additional resources for people who need services. WTCSB has done an extraordinary job of maximizing Medicaid billing. There is no concern for our agency but much concern about other boards. Vacancy and turnover rates must now be tracked and reported.

There is an additional \$40 million for new waiver slots and an additional \$6 million for Permanent Supportive Housing. Crisis Stabilization will receive an additional \$5 million. WTCSB currently has 785 employees. Thirty-nine (39) are new and eight have been terminated since last reported. Currently, 118 positions are vacant. Directors meet with new hires and ensure they understand the agency has an open-door policy and a choice if they wish to grow beyond the program they were hired for. Transfers to other programs are available.

There have been 334 new screenings for individuals since last reported. These are current consumers in need of additional services. This past year, there were 1800 intakes for new services, and the agency will exceed that number in 2024. Wait times are improving and are reasonable, considering staffing challenges and increasing service demands. The wait is 14 days for an outpatient appointment, 19 days for case management and 22 days for psychiatry.

Western Tidewater's current budget shows fee revenue up and expenses down compared to the same period last year.

CCBHC

Mr. Peratsakis asked Brandon to speak on plans for moving forward with Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC).

Brandon explained that CCBHC will move the agency from a fee for service model to a cost-based model better determining actual costs to deliver care. DMAS rates will be adjusted according to the location in which services are provided. Brandon noted that STEP VA was Virginia's way to start to implement nine core service areas from the CCBHC model to prepare the state to take on the full burden.

DBHDS will provide support by offering group virtual training with national experts. WTCSB will likely engage other support as well. There was discussion regarding data and whether to use FY23 data which ended June 30th vs. FY 24 data to make projections. There has been a significant increase in the cost of delivering care between FY23 and FY24, particularly as it relates to the workforce. Making future projections on old information can sometimes put us at a disadvantage; however, DBHDS is concerned that because of the complexity of shifting from a service and disability reporting scheme to a cost-based approach, it will take too long to use FY24 data which doesn't close out in the system until Sept 30th due to the federal budget. It was decided that FY23 data will be used. Andrew stated that ironically, over the past 20 years, the agency has gone from a more detailed cost reporting structure to a more relaxed one with the goal of becoming more uniform. Mr. Peratsakis commented that ultimately, there will be a period to iron out details, but the agency will continue to be as aggressive as possible to make sure the agency is able to report everything necessary.

Employee Insurance

The cost of employee insurance is spiking. The Virginia Department and Human Resource Management and The Local Choice (TLC) is the health insurance carrier for WTCSB. WTCSB received notification of the proposed rate for FY 2025. They include an 11% increase for Anthem and 4% for Sentara. The rates are determined by claims, payments and trends over the past 24 months. WTCSB as the employer can expect an estimated increase of \$242,650 for FY 2025. There are 15 employees over the “high” claim total of \$25,000 and eight of those are close to \$37,000. Insurance is provided and employees are expected to take advantage of it.

NEW BUSINESS

Business Development Update

Brandon presented a Business Development Update on CCBHC, Communications and DBHDS Cost Reporting. The CCBHC model implementation will be a complicated process and many individuals are preparing the agency with policies, workflow and ensuring WTCSB complies with national standards.

Brandon reminded the Board that the Strategic Plan addresses critical areas through three workgroups - Clinical Best Practices (36 team members), CCHBC (38 team members), and 988 (34 team members) and several subgroups leveraging staff experience.

Four workgroups have been created under CCHBC. These are Website, Marketing and Communications (8 members), Benefits and Applications (9 members), Clinical Care Pathways (10 members) and Workspace Needs and Enhancement (8 members). Each one of those workgroups has two meetings per month - one to discuss service areas and the other to report updates and determine if the group has a need for an advisory role from the larger CCBHC group.

The 988 and Regional Programs subcommittees are Communication and Connection (9 members) and Front Door (5 members). These groups are looking at individuals enter the service system and how they traverse service areas in the most efficient, effective way and are linked to appropriate local care.

Brandon then provided key workgroup updates that have happened over the last several months. The CCBHC Workgroup has gone through three specific criteria for CCBHC - Staffing, Availability and Access to Services and Care Coordination. The next update is around the SDA process. As this group began their review, they realized that peer support would be a benefit to that engagement process. We have a lot of individuals who come in through SDA who need to talk to someone with lived experience to help them understand how beneficial it is to maintain their mental health. This helps cover the gap until the individual can enroll in case management. The goal, for reference, is to get this down to 10 days. It was also determined that a new Benefits Specialist Position is needed.

The workgroup reviewed the Finance which resulted in re-organization and the addition of a Representative Payee position. The agency has expanded rapidly and so has the number of individuals we this service to.

The Community Needs Assessment Scope was developed, and the agency wants to partner with Old Dominion or Norfolk State to conduct this assessment. Good work has been done by the Obici Healthcare Foundation; however, this assessment will focus on behavioral health. Brandon is hopeful to leverage some grad student work to analyze this information.

Latril is leading a workgroup to draft a proposal for the use of office space at Harbour View. WTCSB has been in this location for almost 8 years and the way space is used has changed over time. That same kind of work is happening at all locations. The agency needs a new location in Isle of Wight and is currently looking at space beside Food Lion on Church Street.

Communications Reboot

As CCBHC requires a lot of change management and communications WTCSB has initiated a “Communications Reboot” by leveraging the existing partnership with Alford Creative. This is the company that helped redesign the agency website and launch the regional website. The owner, Beth Alford, is an expert in organizational development and communication strategies. Ms. Alford has been doing some onsite work, conducting listening sessions and getting information directly from staff to develop a strategy for WTCSB to use internally and externally. One thing to note is that there are certain benchmarks for organizations with certain numbers of employees. As WTCSB has over 800 employees, it is important to put a lot of effort into making sure all communications are approved. What is shared with the public will likely be very different than what is shared with one staff member, for example. Website priorities were further defined to ensure the agency is engaging new clients and prospective employees and ensure we present a consistent message. In the past, public providers did not need to worry about brand; however, now it is more important to market and ensure we present as experts to get certain funding.

AWARDCO

Lara Matthews presented an update on AWARDCO Custom Recognition Platform. This is still on track for a May 1 “go live”. KRONOS integration has been ordered and is in process. Programs already set up and tested include the Kudos Program, the Appreciation/Gratitude Program, Core Values Program, Birthday Program and the On-Boarding Program. KRONOS integration will allow WTCSB’s HR system to communicate with AWARDCO to automatically transfer new hires, take off terminated employees, etc., so HR staff do not have to manually enter these changes.

Lara reviewed the Service Recognition Program and items and points employees will receive based on years of service. Each point equals \$1.00. Points can be used to purchase items

on the AWARDCO website. This is the first “monetary” award offered. Points increase as service years go up. Mr. Peratsakis noted that decisions haven’t been made regarding attaching dollars to rewards. This money would come from the same pot as employee bonuses so this will need to be considered carefully. The Health and Wellness Program was chosen upon receiving the insurance quote. The agency is trying to encourage employees to become healthier. Points can be awarded for achievements such as running a 10k, going to the gym, using the Calm app, etc. Proof will be required. This program is in the beginning stages.

Software for this program will run \$15,000 - \$25,000 which may sound expensive, but it will alleviate a lot of work for HR staff.

Mr. Peratsakis reminded the Board to review the program highlights submitted by each director.

Mr. Peratsakis also invited the Board to join in a celebration honoring recent retirees following the meeting. He introduced retiring staff Mildred and Laura Costley. The Board expressed appreciation to Mildred Moore for 22 years of service and Laura Costley for 39 years. Staff members spoke about them and presented tokens of appreciation.

Executive Session

There was no Executive Session called.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, upon a ***motion*** made by Vicki Wiggins-Pittman and seconded by Lula Holland, the meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,