

# HealthChoices Advisory Board

## In-Person and Zoom Meeting February 27, 2025

- I. Introductions: Those in attendance were: Janet Verga, Drew Lazo, Mike Ramsey, Kristy Cole, Tisbine Moussa, Tom Walker, Matt Bauder, and Donna Thorman
- II. Review of November 21, 2024 minutes – no edits noted; minutes voted on and approved as final
- III. Community Healthcare Alliance Report:

### **Member/Family Advisory Committee**

- Ronnie was not in attendance – no updates to provide

### **Provider Advisory Committee**

- Matt noted that there is someone interested in joining the Advisory Board in the Provider Advisory Committee capacity.
- John Jones of Lehigh Valley Adult Services provided his name for consideration
- The Advisory Board members in attendance took a vote and John was unanimously selected to serve as the Adult Provider Committee representative.

### **Children's Advisory Committee – Mike Ramsey**

- Mike noted that there is a great deal of uncertainty at the moment related to both state and federal budgets and proposed funding
- He added that they are trying to plan as best they can for the future of services
- Mike indicated that Valley Youth House has had difficulty lately hiring MA level staff. He added that there are on-going challenges finding staff that are willing to go into home and community-based settings
- Mike promoted A Home Within, which is a free therapy program for individuals who are currently residing in or have resided in Foster Care. Mike indicated that it offers telehealth counseling services, seems to have an easy referral process, and can generally get individuals connected with a therapist within a couple week.

### **IV. NAMI/OMHSAS/Provider/Peer/News**

- Donna reported that NAMI will be holding a free session on April 24<sup>th</sup> related to legal guardianship
- NAMI is currently halfway through their current Family to Family program; another round of the Family to Family program will begin in April

- Donna noted that the NAMI Peer to Peer program will start soon again as well; please look at NAMI's website for exact dates
- Donna indicated that the Family to Family and Peer to Peer programs are both free to attend as are their support groups
- The NAMI spaghetti dinner will be held April 5 at the Greek Orthodox Church from 4-7
- Donna added that the Lehigh Valley Mental Health Walk will occur on May 5
- Janet reported that she had a good meeting with the local peer support providers in January
- Janet indicated that OMHSAS is holding quarterly peer support meetings; meeting in January focused on Forensic and Crisis specialties as well as the new regulations
- Janet noted that the state will release a FAQ document on the new regs with a date yet to be determined.
- PMHCA (Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumer Associations) held a listening session about what is working and not working within the peer support program; there was notation made about Disability Right Network in PA exploring a lawsuit related to challenges accessing peer support

#### V. Magellan Behavioral Health Report

- Tom began by reminding the group of the financial challenges being encountered by providers, Counties and MCOs in 2025
- Tom reviewed the rate setting process used by the state and how it related to the 2024 capitation struggles
- Tom noted that Magellan and its Primary Contractors sent a letter to all contracted providers in December 2024 indicating there will be no rate increases or program development until we can assess the 2025 rate impact
  - This impact will not be known until 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2025 at the earliest
  - Tom added that this approach is being used by all BH-MCOS and primary contractors given the challenges experience in 2024
- Tom then provided a strategies update for 2025. These strategies include:
  - **Network Collaboration & Coordination**
  - Goal: Improve provider collaboration through summits, system coordination meetings, and level-of-care-specific provider engagements.
  - **Supporting Students at Risk for Behavioral Health Crises**
  - Goal: Develop school-based mental health interventions, expand early identification strategies, and enhance provider collaboration.
  - **Community-Based Care Management & Social Determinants of Health (SDoH)**
  - Goal: Expand Community-Based Care Management (CBCM) with a focus on Social Determinants of Health (SDoH).
  - Conference of Churches continues to operate a CBCM program focused on stabilizing members in housing following an Acute Inpatient Hospitalization. DUOS is our other CBCM program focused on seniors and their SDOH needs.

- Major Milestone: The Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) Referral Tool has officially launched. In partnership with the Lehigh Conference of Churches, this tool connects Medicaid-eligible individuals to essential resources such as housing, food assistance, transportation, and social services. Early feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and additional enhancements are being explored to expand its impact.
- **Forensic Behavioral Health Strategy**
- Goal: Enhance support for justice-involved individuals, including forensic-focused care coordination.
- County-Specific Efforts:
- Northampton County: Supporting Restoration LTSR by improving care transitions and forensic services.
- Lehigh County: Expanding open clinic access to better serve individuals requiring behavioral health support upon reentry.
- **MH/ID Coordination Strategy**
- Goal: Improve service coordination for individuals with Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities (MH/ID).
- **Upcoming Event: 2025 Behavioral Health Symposium**
- Save the Date: April 17, 2025
- Focus: Crisis Services & Community Response
- 📍 St. Luke's Sacred Heart Campus
- 📅 Thursday, April 17, 2025
- 🕒 8:30 AM – 1:00 PM
- Symposium Overview
- This year's symposium will bring together county leaders, behavioral health providers, first responders, and community organizations to discuss crisis services, system-wide collaboration, and emergency response models.
- Magellan is working with the Autism Action Committee on a **Cognitive Enhancement Therapies Initiative** – Magellan is partnering with ASERT and the University of Pittsburgh to introduce Cognitive Enhancement Therapies under Psychiatric Rehabilitation. This is an evidenced based practice for members with Autism.
- **Health & Human Services Job Fair** – March 25, 2025
- Magellan is partnering with Cumulus Radio to host a Health & Human Services Job Fair at: Lehigh Valley Mall, Tuesday, March 25, 2025  
12:00 PM – 5:00 PM
- This event will connect behavioral health and human services organizations with potential employees to support workforce development and recruitment efforts.
- **Awareness Campaigns** – Magellan will launch community engagement campaigns in recognition of Autism Acceptance Month (April) and Mental Health Awareness Month (May) in collaboration with Cumulus Radio.

## VI. Northampton County HealthChoices Report

- Kristy provided updates related to Northampton County's reinvestment plans
  - Restoration Long Term Structured Residence (LTSR) – this plan is now closed and the beds are filled. Kristy added that there is now a wait list.
  - CAMS CARE – Kristy indicated that the contracts are currently being executed. This will be launched in April with a learning day for providers in June.
  - Clearinghouse through Conference of Churches – they are accepting new members into the program but there have been many referrals due to a lack of affordable housing
  - Social Determinants of Health through Conference of Churches – they have been receiving many referrals as well; education and child care are the two areas that aren't being accessed as had been anticipated
  - Respite through Concern – program continues with increased kinship applications being received
  - High Fidelity Wraparound through Pinebrook Family Answers- this is for non-OCYS involved youth and they serve roughly 5 members per month
  - Safe Harbor Expansion- Kristy noted there have been issues related to construction so this project is being pushed back
- Kristy indicated that she has hired an additional Quality Assurance Manager
  - Paula Kenderski was the CASSP Coordinator in Northampton and will begin with NC HealthChoices on March 3<sup>rd</sup>

## VII. Lehigh County HealthChoices Report

- Matt provided updates related to Lehigh County's reinvestment plans
  - High Fidelity Wraparound through Pinebrook/Family Answers – there were 17 active cases in January with 4 members pending to be brought into the program.
  - 2:1 ABA Support Program – 1 member continues to be served in this specialized program for members with Autism
  - Housing Clearinghouse through Conference of Churches – 15 new members served
  - Social Determinants of Health through Conference of Churches – 6 new members had intakes in February with 39 members served year to date
  - Social Determinants of Health through DUOS – program is going live at the end of February with transportation and food vouchers being offered
  - Respite program through Concern – 5 members were served in January with kinship and site based showing more utilization than the general home based option
- Drew reported there has been an increase in grievance hearings, especially as they related to Substance Use disorder treatment.
  - Drew added that some SUD providers have been having on-going difficulty applying ASAM (American Society of Addiction Medicine) criteria despite consistent technical assistance

VIII. Adjournment – prior to adjourning, all participants in attendance today turned in their Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement.

Next meeting will be held on **May 22, 2025 at 2:00pm** at the Valley Youth House office or via TEAMS depending on circumstances.