

## HealthChoices Advisory Board

### In-Person and Zoom Meeting Minutes November 20, 2025

- I. Introductions: Those in attendance were: Janet Verga, Drew Lazo, Mike Ramsey, Kristy Cole, Tom Walker, Matt Bauder, Paula Kenderski, Ronnie Colbert
- II. Review of August 28, 2025 minutes – no edits noted; minutes voted on and approved as final
- III. Community Healthcare Alliance Report:

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

- Ronnie was in attendance – He is just getting back into a regular routine. He is doing Haven House 730-1145. Today is normally his day off but he wanted to attend the meeting.
- They are setting up for the traditional Haven House Thanksgiving Dinner. Open meal anyone invited to attend. Hope them to have a safe holiday. Call 988 if need supports or warmline.
- Things were somewhat good with LANTA. Now there have been reports that some people are being picked up late and getting home very late. Same issues popping up again. Ronnie experienced a driver missing his turn to drop him off. Tisbine has attended the meetings and will continue to address whatever issues come up in these meetings.
- Matt gave praise to Ronnie in having gone through a difficult time and reinforces the fact that when you use the resources and supports available you can still maintain safety and get your needs met. Ronnie didn't realize how it impacted people when he was gone. They had someone check on him since he wasn't attending.

#### **Provider Advisory Committee -John Jones**

- John was not in attendance

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

- Mike was in attendance. He discussed the SR Settlement and potential impacts. Some things are already done or need processes cleaned up or standardized but wants kids to have access to the care they need. See attached for details and the link for a summary of the changes to come.

<https://www.disabilityrightspa.org/spotlights/settlement-reached-addressing-mental-health-reform-for-dependent-children/>



SR-Settlement-Agreement (2).pdf

- He also noted the difficulties for providers in increased healthcare costs for their staff and the challenges it is creating for their budgets. One provider had noted a 24% increase.

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

- Donna was not in attendance
- Janet discussed the Lehigh Valley Peer Support Network Meetings. They have been pretty well attended. More supervisors usually but some act as Peer specialists. Last one talked about the changes in Peer Support code of ethics and went over mandated reporting and criminal background issues. One provider OMNI has 2 Spanish Speaking peer with openings. Trying to schedule a training in the new year.

#### V. Magellan Behavioral Health Report

- Tom discussed the state rate offer for HC for 2026 was adequate. Providers will receive info about Retrospective rate increases that will be issued as lump-sum payments and sustained prospectively. Community-based services are included, with certain exclusions noted. Payments are anticipated by the end of December. Program expansion requests will resume following allocation of rate increases, with strategic review continuing into Q1 2026.
- Tom wanted to note that Crisis and related services are undergoing changes and regulations are still in the works. We continue to develop responsive models to individuals in need of crisis support.
- Tom then discussed the upcoming Behavioral Health Symposium that will take place on December 5<sup>th</sup>. Supreme Court Justice Kevin Dougherty will be the keynote speaker. Topics will be Crisis/justice involved individuals with panels from MH, Crisis and other local players. Kidspace will discuss their walk-in services.
- The MA Toolkit has been released first for youth in particular to school district employment and next will be for adults. We know there are a lot of changes coming and we want to keep up with members staying connected. We are at or below member enrollment from pre-pandemic.
- Member meeting will be coming up focusing on MAWD along with the application process for MA and SDOHs that will be during a Christmas lunch meeting on December 12<sup>th</sup> at Goodwill clubhouse at 10 am with free lunch served afterwards. Prior registration is required and email John Lees. Janet provided link in chat.

## VI. 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 on an ongoing basis with 4 members in process of intake.
  - 2:1 ABA Support Program – 1 member continues to be served in this specialized program for members with Autism. They had some reemerging problems during start of school and member is getting stable again. Hoping to ID another member at beginning of year.
  - Housing Clearinghouse through Conference of Churches – 18 members served year to date and 49 new members in October. All members are using contingency program. Also seeing family's getting established. 6 members using bridge subsidies.
  - Social Determinants of Health (Health Related Social Needs—is the new term that is being used instead of SDOH) through Conference of Churches –84 members on the rolls. They're doing a lot of work to connect members to resources that will meet these needs rather than just funding commodities to meet these needs. Connecting to food banks. Drawdown has been slower. But the COC has identified more members with educational opportunities and looking how to best to support those members. Potential tuition reimbursement or scholarship. They are putting together a proposal for how to manage this. Maybe this can link to Peer training Janet was speaking about earlier.
  - Social Determinants of Health through DUOS – Serves older adult/Medicare population. program went live in February with transportation and food vouchers being offered. 50 dollars for either one. Members claim the vouchers, but not all used at once. Over 100 members claimed vouchers. Those were used for 243 unique transactions in October.
  - Respite program through Concern – 12 members were served with kinship and showing more utilization than the general home-based option. Site based option is in Bethlehem and isn't being highly utilized either so for the remainder of the year lessened groups. IN 2026 group will be reduced by about 50 percent to better shift funding to home based of kinship. Will still offer groups but look at more in the summer or holidays when there may be more need.

All reinvestment plans are approved for 3 years and sustainable through that time.

- Matt report Josh Siegel has been elected as new County Executive for Lehigh. He putting together a transition team. Current executive is looking to stay on for a short period of time to assist with transition. There will also be a new DHS director. Kay Achenbach is moving on but may stay on a short period of time in a fiscal position.

- We had Triennial PEPS (Program Evaluation Performance Standards) kickoff this week. Every three years full review.
- Drew joined and added they are still seeking panel members for review hearings and go on website to suggest reinvestment needs and gaps in services that we should be aware of in terms of reinvestment.

## VII. Northampton County HealthChoices Report

- Kristy provided updates related to Northampton County's reinvestment plans
  - CAMS CARE – Suicide intervention training for Clinicians. We had 56 clinicians complete the role-playing training and now can actively offer the CAMS modality in their practice. They need to attend 4 consultations calls to get support and complete the program. We are looking towards the 2026 RFI for the next round of training and will release that info when it is available.
  - 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 is scheduled to end and we requested to extend for 5 years and add some funding to be able to add the same as Lehigh with the food/gas cards DUOs program. Need to wait on OMHSAS approvals though. COC is really working to connect folks since plan is to cover things not covered elsewhere.
  - Respite through Concern – program continues with increased kinship applications being received. 9 active members. 2 Looking to be more strategic for group options in new year as Matt discussed. Some had very little attendance and we are revamping.
  - High Fidelity Wraparound through Pinebrook Family Answers- this is for non-OCYS involved youth and have 6 current members and one on waitlist.
  - Safe Harbor Expansion- Continues and is in rebuilding stage

Tara Zrinski is the new County Executive-formerly controller and on County Council. She plans to keep Sue Wandalowski on as DHS director. More to come.

Kristy notes that the state budget has passed and the County is working on paying any providers that were put on hold.

## VIII. Adjournment –

## IX.

Next meeting will be held on **February 26, 2026 at 2:00pm** at the Valley Youth House office or via TEAMS depending on circumstances.