

## HealthChoices Advisory Board

### In-Person and Zoom Meeting August 28, 2025 @ 2:00 pm

- I. Introductions: Those in attendance were: Janet Verga, Drew Lazo, Mike Ramsey, Kristy Cole, Tisbine Moussa, Tom Walker, Matt Bauder, Ronnie Colbert, John Jones, Paula Kenderski, and Donna Thorman
- II. Review of May 22, 2025 minutes – no edits noted; minutes voted on and approved as final
- III. Community Healthcare Alliance Report:

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

- Ronnie noted that there are new intern staff working at Haven House
- Ronnie added that Haven House has been changing things up with new classes to include an LGBTQI group as well as a Pride Day celebration
- Ronnie indicated that Lanta issues continue with some members encountering rude staff and others dealing with late drop-offs
  - The Lanta complaint process was reviewed and upcoming Lanta advisory board meetings noted
- Ronnie reported that he continues to recommend members use available resources when needed including 988 and warmline

#### **Provider Advisory Committee**

- John indicated that there is new Performance Based Contracting occurring within Intellectual Disabilities Residential Settings
  - He added that referrals have to be tracked differently and there are a number of other factors that the state will look at related to ID Residential Providers
  - There have reportedly been dollars ear marked by the state specifically for Pay for Performance type standards
- John reported that there is a new initiative within DHS for members/families to provide feedback regarding their experiences with providers that will then be made public. This is more specific to the Office of Developmental Programs at this time and is slated for implementation 1/1/26.
- John added that there is a tiered service delivery option being explored within the PA Office of Developmental Programs as well. He noted though that these talks seem to have dies off and he is unsure is such a system is still being explored.
- John noted that there is currently no money available to DHS due to the on-going budget impasse.

- John indicated that there has been increased use of ride share options to attend appointments but how members are accessing such is at times confusing as some members can access it and others can not
  - Tom reported that Magellan attempts to educate members on ride share options when and where possible. Tom noted there may be transportation options through current SDOH programs and Danny's ride is another ride share option located in the Lehigh Valley.
  - Janet added that Mike Paulik from Lehigh County Office of Intellectual Disabilities can provide options for connecting members to ride sharing as well.

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

- Mike reported that he has been hearing about Federal Contract concerns related to language surrounding DEI, LGBTQI issues, etc.
- Kristy indicated that these language issues have also become a concern related to provider grants and trainings.
- The group discussed that some of these impacts may also affect 988 based on the orientation of the caller.
  - All agreed that the possible changes coming as a result of the BBB are putting providers in moral and ethical decision-making positions that have never been encountered before.
- Mike noted that there have been recent concerns raised by providers about Liability Insurance. He added that there have been noted increases to costs that are beginning to become barriers to providers being able to consistently maintain the coverage that they need.
- Mike reported that VYH has made the difficult decision to close their Family Based program. Mike added that staffing of Master Level clinicians became a barrier to on-going operations.
- Mike indicated that the new Associate Licensed Professional Counselor Certification may be a factor in the hiring challenges providers are facing as it now makes it easier for students coming out of a graduate program to become licensed to accept insurance and work in a private practice. So while this opens up potential access to outpatient levels of care, it may make community-based levels of care more difficult to implement given a reduced pool of applicants. Mike added that VYH has lost three Master Level clinicians to private practice work in just the past year alone.

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

- Janet reported that the peer support network met in early August. She noted that there has generally been good turnaround times for CPS referrals to receive services. Janet added that Spanish speaking CPS are available. The next peer support network meeting will be 9/10.
- Janet indicated that transportation is an on-going issue that presents for many members. Janet added that the issues aren't always with Lanta but at times with

members being willing to learn the skills needed to take other transportation options available to them.

- Janet noted that transportation issues can affect members and associated work requirements for enrollment. In addition, there can be barriers to employment related to legal/forensic issues that members may have.
- Donna reported that the Annual NAMI Walk/run is scheduled for 9/20 to be held in the Lehigh Parkway. Registration can be accomplished by going to NAMI's local website.
- Donna indicated that 2 family to family classes recently graduated and the next Family to Family will begin after Labor Day with the exact date TBD.
- Donna noted that there was 1 peer to peer class that recently graduated and there will be a new Peer to Peer class starting at some point in September as well.
- Donna reported that on September 12<sup>th</sup> the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) will be meeting to prepare for the CIT training that will be provided to police officers from 10/6-10/10.

#### V. Magellan Behavioral Health Report

- Tom began by talking about Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the field of Mental Health
  - Magellan has not yet issued a policy and procedure about the use of AI but feels one will be needed in the future. Tom added that Magellan compliance is currently exploring what such a P&P might look like.
  - AI has reportedly been used to write treatment plans and treatment notes in some areas.
  - Tom noted that there will be a fall Symposium put on by Marywood and Cedar Crest College regarding AI and the field of Social Work on 11/5.
- Tom reported that on 7/25, Magellan released an updated statement on continued provider expansion and rate increase holds due to concerns about the 2025 HC budget.
  - Tom noted that Lehigh, Northampton and Magellan are waiting on the 2026 rate package from the state that should be received in late September
  - Tom indicated that Lehigh and Northampton's financial remain at a break even point that prevents current program expansion and rate increases.
  - Tom added that Magellan continues to receive, maintain, and pend all rate increase and expansion request. These requests will be responded to when possible.
  - Counties and Magellan continue to present these challenges to the state when and where possible.
- Tom presented that NAMI hosted the Magellan Member and Family Work Group meeting on July 17
  - Tom indicated that topics included: Navigation of services, importance of contacting Magellan when there are challenges in navigating benefits and/or services, and options for parents/guardians to access information when they have an adult child who is actively receiving services and supports
- Tom noted that the draft Crisis regulations that continue to be talked about at the state level still have not been released for comment.

- Tom reported that there was recently a Value Based Purchasing summit hosted by OMHSAS
  - Tom added that the summit was for more than just Behavioral Health, including Physical Health, Community HealthChoices, Children’s Services, etc.
  - Tom noted that OMHSAS is attempting to standardize the approach and language across the various HealthChoices programs and services
- Tom indicated that the CAMS Care Initiative continues to be rolled out with 12 providers having applied and been accepted, 100 total clinicians currently being enrolled, and a role-play session scheduled for the clinicians on October 2
- Tom stated that there will be a virtual Provider Town Hall held on September 17
- Tom reported that the newest Behavioral Health Matters podcast was just released. The newest podcast was with Jim Presto (from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention) focused on 988 and available suicide prevention resources. This podcast episode along with others can be found on Magellan’s website or through YouTube. Tom added that the next podcast will focus on the Community Connections program, which helps connect a social worker with law enforcement. This program is an innovative model to address members crisis needs in the community.
- Tom indicated that the next Behavioral Health Symposium will occur in November/December with the next date and location still being decided on.
- Tom spoke about the upcoming homeless encampment closures that will be occurring in both Allentown and Bethlehem. Tom noted there is a great deal of coordination currently occurring to support the citizens that will be impacted by these closures.
- Tom noted that the School Based Outpatient Provider Collaborative has been working on an MA toolkit to assist schools and providers maintain services, insurance enrollment, and identify general options that may be needed for students/members/families. Tom added that this is especially needed now as MA enrollment has been decreasing across the state after nearly 20 years of growing enrollment.

## VI. Northampton County HealthChoices Report

- Kristy provided updates related to Northampton County’s reinvestment plans
  - CAMS CARE – Kristy thanked Tom for the update provided earlier and noted she is pleased with the number of clinicians and providers currently signed up for the training.
  - Clearinghouse through Conference of Churches – continue to offer contingency and Bridge funding. Kristy added that they recently upped the contingency CAP and were able to identify some new 2-bedroom options for families that are referred
  - Social Determinants of Health through Conference of Churches – the plan currently continues but is scheduled to end at the end of 2025. Kristy will be submitting a continuation plan to continue this reinvestment plan and is hopeful she can also add additional dollars to the plan to be able to offer transportation vouchers through Uber.

- Respite through Concern – program continues with 8 members receiving services including 3 through kinship care
- High Fidelity Wraparound through Pinebrook Family Answers- this is for non-OCYS involved youth and they serve roughly 8 members per month
- Safe Harbor Expansion- Kristy noted that demolition is now complete and they are moving into the rebuilding stage
- Kristy reported that Northampton County Base Mental Health has recently hired several new staff
- Tisbine presented that the Triennial PEPS review is scheduled for the Counties and Magellan for next year. This will be the large review that occurs every three years covering all PEPS standards.
- Tisbine indicated that Magellan/Counties are still looking for members to participate in the Complaint and Grievance process as panel members

## VII. Lehigh County HealthChoices Report

- Matt provided updates related to Lehigh County’s reinvestment plans
  - High Fidelity Wraparound through Pinebrook/Family Answers – there were 20 active cases in July 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 July with 39 members served year to date. Focus is generally on transportation and food assistance though one parent did access child care assistance for the first time this summer.
  - Social Determinants of Health through DUOS –transportation and food vouchers continued be offered.
  - Respite program through Concern – 13 members served through Respite thus far. Site-based group options have not been utilized much this year and will likely be decreased in 2026. There has been increased use of home based and kinship respite service.
- Drew reported there is new Performance Improvement Project (PIP) initiative through OMHSAS focusing on suicide prevention. Counties and Magellan are in the first year of the new PIP that includes planning and developing targeted interventions that can impact the initiative.
- Drew indicated that there is an OMHSAS webinar scheduled to review proposed changes to Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) regulations.

## VIII. Adjournment –

Next meeting will be held on **November 20, 2025 at 2:00pm** at the Valley Youth House office or via TEAMS depending on circumstances. **Edit: Due to conflicting meetings, the November 20<sup>th</sup> meeting will only be held via TEAMS. There will NOT be an in-person option for this meeting.**

