

# HealthChoices Advisory Board

## In-Person and Zoom Meeting May 22, 2025

I. Introductions: Those in attendance were: Janet Verga, Drew Lazo, Mike Ramsey, Kristy Cole, Tisbine Moussa, Tom Walker, Matt Bauder

II. Review of February 27, 2025 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 – Matt updated that he talked at CHA about the development of the state hospital grounds near where he is living and it will impact the area. He also noted that there is a fairly long housing wait list that is posing a challenge for members.

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

- John was not in attendance-Matt noted that he talked at CHA about the Mental Health renewal issues that we have been encountering across counties and across the state. He said length of time, decreases in approvals are impacting his agency

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

- Mike noted that there is a concern about the increased costs of liability insurance. They work in Philly and its even more there since they work in the community and that increases the costs as well. Matt asked if VYH covers for full time staff-yes-its for liability all levels.
- The PHEAA (PA Higher Education Assistance Agency) has a scholarship grant program called GROW PA to support workforce. They will award 5k grants if you are living in PA, agree to work in PA, and are an in-demand position-which includes social work.
- Psychiatric RTF regs. OMHSAS just had a webinar yesterday. There is a copy of slide show that will be attached. Some changes made based on comments (training requirements/reporting requirements). Hopefully will be out in Summer.

IV. NAMI/OMHSAS/Provider/Peer/News

- Donna was not in attendance
- Janet discussed the Lehigh Valley Peer Support Network. Met last month. Attendance is better since hybrid. One in person at Haven House and 6 or 7 online.

Both CRS and CPS attend. Did a short version of ‘Cultivating Hope’ which Janet will be presenting at the PA Peer Support Coalition Conference on June 5<sup>th</sup>. The presentation came from work that Tracey Samuelson from QI did before with more info gathered and presented.

- Janet discussed next month’s Peer Support meeting will be virtual and Supervisors focused session and it will be about CSP (Community Support Program). Discussion was brought up about peers not being able to bring peers to meetings and bill for it. So, they will be talking about billable goals at this meeting. They are hoping to get Scott Kiefer and Sara from Advocacy Alliance.
- It seems like Peers are being more staffed. There are some delays but it seems like it is on the referral end, but there are staff available.

## V. Magellan Behavioral Health Report

### • **Suicide Prevention and CAMS Care Initiative**

The CAMS Care RFI was launched at the April 17 Behavioral Health Symposium. Year 1 goal is to train **50 clinicians** in suicide-specific care, with plans to reach **200 providers over four years**. This effort spans multiple levels of care and aligns with the **Zero Suicide framework**.

### • **Behavioral Health Symposium – April 17, 2025**

The **Lehigh and Northampton County Suicide Prevention Task Forces** delivered the keynote. Presenters included **Robyn Barbosa, Sue Wandalowski, and Vicky Conte**. **OMHSAS co-led and moderated** the event—special thanks to **Steve Ross and Kama Kessel** for their leadership.

Key themes:

- Reducing **ED boarding** through upstream interventions.
- Embedding evidence-based models like CAMS in clinical workflows.
- Advancing cross-county collaboration in crisis response.

### • **Cognitive Enhancement Therapy (CET)**

CET launches **July 1, 2025** in partnership with the University of Pittsburgh and PRS providers. This is the **first CET model under managed Medicaid** for adults with autism.

### • **Integrated Care in Rural Communities**

A collaborative care pilot is live between **Nulton Diagnostic and Neighborhood Health Centers**. Psychiatry is embedded in primary care using shared registries and consult platforms. Billing codes have been identified to support sustainability post-grant.

### • **MH/ID Coordination – Synchs Expansion**

The Synchs pilot is expanding based on strong outcomes. The tools bridge mental health and intellectual disability systems and will roll out across outpatient, BCM, and IDD supports coordination programs.

### • **Community-Based Care Management (CBCM)**

- **DUOS (Northampton):** 23 new enrollments; 1,200+ SDoH referrals; Q1 spend **\$93K (32%)**.
- **Conference of Churches:** 89% avoided hospital reentry; 74% achieved housing and income stability; Q1 spend **\$20.5K (23%)**. Now includes a SOAR-trained case <https://www.canarx.com/plan/?planid=NORTHAMPTONmanager>.

• **Policy & Strategic Communications**

A school-based **Medicaid Access Letter** is being finalized at a 6th-grade reading level to support PH-95 education during IEP/504 discussions and back-to-school outreach.

• **Public Engagement**

- **Autism Walk** was held April 27 in partnership with Northampton County.
- May campaign underway for **Mental Health Awareness Month**.
- **John Lees**, host of Magellan's *Behavioral Health Matters Podcast*, led a workshop at National Conference on podcasting as intervention to promote positive mental health, increase understanding of behavioral health topics and services, and to reduce stigma.

Tom discussed how MA enrollment numbers are flat where pre-pandemic there was year over year growth. Mike (VYH) noted they are seeing this as an issue for families and members they serve who are losing benefits. VYH would love the toolkit that was discussed above to help families understand the process and to support them as a provider. Matt added that some members are getting moved over to CHIP or HIPP.

Janet offered her experience with MA, MAWD and the issues with renewals that she has seen firsthand. From someone being on paid CHIP and then to MA and now to CHIP again. Then Jane went from MAWD to MA. Although there haven't been income changes. Issues with CHIP is that there are not enough providers that accept it.

Janet sent some links to follow up on topic—

<https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dhs/resources/medicaid/medicaid-general-eligibility.html> ;!!A Yfr0wIxos!yWNIcTv-cfVOWScmn1GExjOSw5cxTdqClMaOISruiGx943WhNad1NRPLIEPLBzpRHC7IxU8 wx25j9UgXhUuXtvJzEw\$

There will be a presentation to the School Based Collaborative on this topic of enrollment and CAOs.

At a state meeting Matt discussed that some CAOs are taking 60 days for determination but Office of Income Maintenance is saying it is down to 14 days. But others are seeing different.

There was discussion of the Bill that just passed and the changes that will come to MA and the impact it may have. Increased determinations will be challenging to complete since it will be twice annually instead of once, which is already a challenge. Conversation occurred

about what the current process is and there seems to be some differences in redetermination happen currently based on each members circumstances. There is much uncertainty with what the states will be faced with as the feds move forward.

Matt brought up one more concern from the PACA meeting he attending and was concerned because they mentioned that CMS hasn't even approved the HCs MA rates that are currently in place. They asked questions and the state answered them and hasn't heard anything back and we are almost halfway through the year.

## 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 – Contracts are signed and there will be an education day scheduled soon.
  - 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 – we are considering doing the same as Lehigh with the food/gas cards DUOs program however the plan is ending this year and we hope to extend it and want to add that program if there is funding available.
  - Respite through Concern – program continues with increased kinship applications being received. 9 members. 2 kin. 4 group members and 6 applications in process for Kinship.
  - High Fidelity Wraparound through Pinebrook Family Answers- this is for non-OCYS involved youth and they serve roughly 7 members per month and one on waitlist.
  - Safe Harbor Expansion- landlord moved items out and now demolition and construction is in process.

Tisbine added that there have been some changes with MATP—conversation continued that it is changing for older adults. Janet will send article out.

Rideshare limits by days.

This year is a PEPS year—that means it is a Triennial review for all of the Magellan Counties.

## 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 on and ongoing basis with a few 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 although they are doing better and they are searching for a new member as they may be discharged in July
  - Housing Clearinghouse through Conference of Churches – 79 unique members served.
  - Social Determinants of Health through Conference of Churches –39 members served a month. No real large ticket items like education or childcare. Mainly food and transportation.
  - Social Determinants of Health through DUOS – 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. Member can access up to 350 dollar vouchers in a year. Over 80 vouchers have been claimed.
  - Respite program through Concern – 7 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.
- Drew reported they have added 2 members to serve on the Complaint and Grievances panels, which is good as we are still seeing increased utilization in SUD level of care hearings.
  - CAMS is aligned with our new Practice Improvement Project which will be worked over the year which focused on Suicide Prevention to identify interventions to address suicidality and hopefully decrease suicide attempts.
  - Drew brought up the LANTA budget. They are decreasing 20 percent (75 percent of weekend) Walnutport and Slatington and north area are decreasing services. The cost of rideshare is increasing. The SDOH plan may be able to assist with transportation if needed. Janet added they are upping fares by 25 percent and decreasing many services after 7pm.

VIII. Adjournment –

IX.

Next meeting will be held on **November 20, 2025 at 2:00pm** at the Valley Youth House office or via TEAMS depending on circumstances.