

Eastern Iowa MH/DS Region
Special Governing Board of Directors Meeting
Meeting with State Legislators
January 15, 2021
2:00-3:30PM
ZOOM Meeting

The MH/DS Governing Board of Directors Meeting was called to order at 2:03 PM by Chair Beck. Beck, Irwin, Smith, Sorensen, Willey, Nauman, and McGovern were present. Cobb and Roome were absent. Management Team present: Lori Elam, Julie Tischuk, and Felicia Toppert. Lynn Bopes and Becky Eskildsen was absent. Fiscal Agent: David Farmer. Guests: Beth Stoffer, Lisa DuFour, Todd Noack, Jen Tamayo, Angela Gallagher, Cheryl Plank, Denise Beenk, Terry Haru, John Rohlf, Carol Foster, Barbara Robinson-Lagarde, Cheri Sexton, Waylyn McCullough, Jill Westhoff, Kelly Herd, Peggy Huppert, Todd Lange, Richard Whitaker, Amy Groth, Francie Tuescher, Representative Mary Wolfe, Representative Cindy Winckler, Senator Chris Cournoyer, Representative Monica Kurth, Senator Jim Lykam, Senator Mark Lofgren and others present by phone.

Chair Beck started the meeting by asking the Governing Board, Management Team, Fiscal Agent, and Legislators to introduce themselves and state which areas they are representing in the Region.

Lori Elam, CEO, and Jen Tamayo from Robert Young Center, shared with everyone the current Crisis System Statistics. Information was shared that the Region's crisis system is set up to be a continuum of care that helps link people to agencies and services in the community and divert them from EDs, court committals, and jail. Services presented were: total number of crisis evaluations to date, telehealth crisis evaluations through December 2020, rate of community reconnection without a hospital admission, rate of 30- day crisis representation, the number of mobile crisis calls, the use of crisis stabilization residential services, and Peer Respite-Rhonda's House service usage. Lori and Jen pointed out that COVID has impacted the use of crisis service and has caused lower numbers of people accessing the system. People are reluctant to leave their home and seek the care they need for fear of becoming ill. Discussion was held.

Lori Elam, CEO, started a discussion of Legislative issues and directed everyone to the handout: Eastern Iowa MHDS Region- Meeting with State Legislators regarding Legislative issues-1/15/21. Lori reviewed 4 areas of concern: **1)** New Mandated intensive mental health services and Children's behavioral health services are to be available by 7/1/2021. **2)** Regions and counties can only carry forward a fund balance of 40% by 7/1/2023. **3)** Out of state individuals are impacting mental health, General Assistance, and Sheriff's-jail budgets as they come to Iowa seeking services. **4)** Levy cap of \$30.78 is from the FY15 expenditures. It is time to "rebase". Lori reviewed each concern and let the Legislators know the issues and offered possible solutions that would allow the Region to continue to provide the needed services to people. Solutions that Lori reviewed for each concern: **1)** Delay the implementation of the intensive and children's behavioral health services by 1-2 years. **2)** Eliminate the percentage requirement (40% for Eastern Iowa MHDS) or move the date back 2 years to have fund balance available to implement and provide the new services. **3)** Revise the current "residency" definition and add state resident requirements for those that are moving from state to state to access services that take away from the

people living in the Region. 4) Look at lifting the cap amount or look at current expenditures to determine a cap amount that works for the Region to implement new services and sustain the current services. \$30.78 does not allow the Region to do this. It is time to “rebase”. Discussion was held.

Public Comment: Richard Whitaker shared that as a provider, Vera French CMHC, is starting to see more people access services in person but there continues to be a lot of stress and anxiety of people leaving their homes for appointments. There has been discussion of insurance companies ending the use of telehealth to provide appointments and asked them to extend this option of providing services. Rich also shared about Vera French’s Multi-Systemic Therapy program assisting families and at risk youth to stay in school, find work, and stay out of the judicial system by participating in the program. Rich feels that this will be a great program for children and young adults to access, but the Region can’t take on the burden of paying for this program and he asked that Medicaid fund this service to continue the evidence based program’s success in helping children. Richard also asked that the legislators look at the fixed reimbursement rates for direct staff wages and allow for a rate increase to pass through to the direct workers that need to be reimbursed for work being done on the front line; especially during the pandemic. Todd Noack shared the value of Peer Support, the warm line and the Peer Respite home and the need to reimburse staff and the program through sustainable funding from the State. Todd referred back to the number of people using the services in the Region and how they can expand even more if they have the funding available. Peggy Huppert from NAMI pointed out that the current system of funding for the services needs to be changed so that the Region and counties aren’t in the position of cutting services and not starting services that won’t be sustainable. Peggy recommended allowing the Region’s to levy the needed dollars to fund and sustain services long term. Amy Groth from Eagle View Behavioral Health echoed the need for telehealth services to continue so that they are able to connect with patients and assess their mental health needs. Amy pointed out that telehealth can expand into the other counties of the Region and reduce the transportation barrier to access the hospital. Amy said that peer support services will be added into the hospital and telehealth would be a great way to connect people with peer support. Cheryl Plank noted that community providers are having to pay higher wages in order to retain staff and they are having to compete with gas stations, Wal-Mart, and other businesses wages in order keep staff. She pointed out that there has not been a raise in Medicaid rates for some time and would like to see a change.

Moved by Smith, seconded by Irwin to adjourn the meeting. Ayes- Beck, Irwin, Smith, Sorensen, Willey. Absent: Cobb, Roome. Meeting Adjourned: 3:37PM



Dawn Smith, Secretary, Eastern Iowa MH/DS Region