

**State of Connecticut**  
**State Board of Mental Health and Addiction Services**  
**May 20, 2020**  
**Conference Call**

**Present online:** Chairman John Hamilton, Paul Acker, Sharon Castelli, Michele Devine, Marcia DuFore, Kathy Flaherty, Allison Fulton, Ingrid Gillespie, Jennifer Henry, Pam Mautte, Manuel Paris, Brian Reignier, Thomas Russo, Margaret Watt

**Excused:** Dr. J. Craig Allen, Kevin Sevarino

**DMHAS Staff:** Commissioner Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, Deputy Commissioner Nancy Navarretta, Hal Smith, Yvonne Addo, Cheri Bragg, Marilyn Duran, Brenda Earle, Ana Florence, Marlene Jacques, Mary Kate Mason, Alice Minervino

**Agenda Item 1: Call to order and introductions**

The meeting was called to order at approximately 2:30 PM by John Hamilton.

**Agenda Item 2: Minutes of previous meeting review and action**

The minutes from the April 15, 2020 meeting were reviewed and accepted.

**Agenda Item 3: Commissioner's Update**

- COVID-19 - Commissioner Delphin-Rittmon identified critical areas that DMHAS has been working on:
  - Aggregate Data Across DMHAS Patients: 73 were diagnosed positive with COVID-19. Of which, 45 have recovered and are reintegrated back to their units.
  - COVID-19 Related Patient Deaths: Two (2) DMHAS clients from CVH
  - Aggregate Data Across DMHAS Staff: 86 diagnosed positive with COVID-19. Of which, 62 have now returned to work.
- Implementation of Microsoft TEAMS
- Testing: Focus on testing patients and staff: Last week, 243 patients at CVH were tested. Four (4) patients refused to be tested. Of the 243, 197 were negative and ten (10) people tested positive. Due to testing initiatives, we were able to group people according to their positive and negative results. The goal for the testing is to be able to do the cohorting.
- Commissioner Delphin-Rittmon continues to meet daily with DMHAS state-operated facilities CEOs, which is an opportunity for the CEOs to bring forward their needs. For example, a significant need area that the Commissioner has been working on is getting the PPEs in and giving them to staff and patients on the units. The Commissioner stated that has been an ongoing area of work to be able to make sure that everyone has the PPE that they need.
- Creating Social Distancing: DMHAS reduced capacity on some units. Again, the goal is to be able to spread people out to create social distancing. So, we did a temporary reduction in some of the beds as part of our re-opening.
- Teleworking for staff is another strategy that we implemented to create social distancing and to have fewer people in the building. We have right now over a thousand staff teleworking. "I also have a team that I am working with now related to re-open strategy, although we never fully closed". The ultimate goal is to have testing in place to have all staff tested weekly and people that we serve to be tested on a regular basis as well. In addition, if anyone develops symptoms, there will be additional testing.
- Contamination: We participate in a program that allows our N-95 masks to be decontaminated. That will allow us to have a continuous supply of masks.
- FEMA Hotels: We have some staff who are working on the units (including our COVID Units) that are taking advantage of the FEMA hotels, so they do not have to go home right away.
- Participation in The Re-Open Connecticut: Commissioner Delphin-Rittmon also participates in the Governor's Re-Open Connecticut Committee.

- **Legislative Session-** Mary Kate Mason and the Commissioner met with the chairs and ranking members of Public Health Committee related to the DMHAS electronic health records bill. A hearing was held and it was Joint Favorable out of committee. We are hopeful that if there is a special session this summer we will move forward any other bills we proposed are most likely dead as are most bills. Later in June we may have a deficiency bill to be voted on to address agency deficiencies statewide.
- **Budget-** Tabled

#### **Agenda Item 4: Quarterly Report – Whiting Forensic Hospital, Hal Smith, CEO**

This quarterly meeting report marks WFH's second anniversary as free standing psychiatric hospital. Even in the midst of COVID-19 public health crisis, we did a little bit of celebration. It also coincides with Hal's second anniversary as CEO of WFH.

WFH Response to COVID-19: We currently have inpatient services and no outpatient services or community services per se. Patients have been quarantine and not able to move around as freely. But they are coping well with these restrictions that resulted from the COVID pandemic. Temporary leaves in the community are also cancelled. We even restrict movement on campus to certain specific areas where we would not cross contaminate the CVH.

All WFH staff are designated as essential and we're also the overwhelming majority hazardous duty. So, WFH employees are not telecommuting or working from home. But, we developed a method calls "platooning" where half of the non-direct staff except clinical staff would be platooned either out of patient care areas or another building on the campus for a week and then they would swap with colleagues.

COVID-19 Specific to WFH: 10 patients were tested positive. WFH created a negative pressure isolation area. All 10 patients have since recovered and are back in their units. 18 staff were tested positive. Of which, 17 have since returned to work. Only one (1) individual continues to be out. On May 19<sup>th</sup>, in a joint effort with Hartford Healthcare, DPH and WFH staff, testing was done on 109 patients that volunteered to get tested.

Restraints and Seclusion: WFH has not had a need for restraints and seclusion this quarter. The yearly data report on seclusion and restraints has been posted on the bulletin boards at the lobby of CVH and WFH. Especially, for people with serious mental illness who are hospitalized to be able to tolerate an additional burden of being in restricted movement for health reasons. Hal is very proud of them.

There were 11 successful discharges back to home or community this quarter.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Presentation: Housing Initiatives**

Alice Minervino and Brenda Earle did the Housing presentation. Currently there are 4 full time staff working for the DMHAS Housing and Homeless Services Unit. The unit oversees several programs. There are currently 8 Coordinated Access Networks in Connecticut for entry in to homeless services in collaboration among State and Federal agencies, private non-profits, advocacy agencies and consumers. The unit provides community- based continuum of care. DMHAS leadership is in the application process for the 1951i waiver for Medicaid Services in supportive housing – CT Housing Engagement & Support Services (CHESS). The Housing Unit convenes quarterly to provide training and provider support. In response to the COVID-19 we convene biweekly or weekly instead.

#### **Agenda Item 6: General Updates and Announcements - Tabled**

**Agenda Item 7: Ideas for future meeting topics and presenters – Tabled**

**Agenda Item 8: Next Microsoft Team Meeting June 17, 2020**

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 P.M. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 17, 2020 beginning at 2:30 PM.