

OHA Advisory Committee Meeting
July 28, 2020
12:00 p.m. to 12:30 pm
Via Phone
Minutes

Meeting convened at 12:08 pm

Attendance: **Members in attendance** – Lynne Ide, Mark DeWaele, Dina Berlyn
 Members not in attendance – Susan Halpin, Steve Wanczyk-Karp
 OHA Staff – Ted Doolittle, Valerie Wzykowski, Sean King, Denise
 Ramoutar and Sherri Koss

1. Welcome & Approval of Agenda and Minutes

- Motion to approve July 28, 2020 agenda; Mark DeWaele motioned to approve and Lynne Ide seconded; No discussion, no nays, motion carried unanimously
- Motion to approve April 28, 2020 minutes; Lynne Ide motioned to approve and Mark DeWaele seconded; No discussion, no nays, motion carried unanimously

2. Administration Report

a) **Budget**

- No changes – the State has a 2-year budget in place

b) **Personnel**

- Stable, no new employees, no employees left the agency

3. Data Reports

- Ted reviews the data report with the committee, cases are very low
- Ted attributes drop in case volume to COVID19
- Added a graph with a new data point – cases by care setting, Ted looked back at the 2019 data compared to this year; expected and saw a significant decrease in hospital cases, that accounts for a substantial drop in our cases
- Even though case volume is down, the savings per case have remained stable
- Mark regarding his work on the Stamford Hospital board has seen same decline at hospitals but now are back up to about 98% and flat out in terms of elective surgeries; are we seeing that same turnaround since mid-June 2020? Ted responds that we have not seen the uptick at this time, denials can be a lagging indicator, but no uptick in the last few weeks; Val says we haven't seen the uptick, it's been status quo as far as hospital referrals or denials. A little busier last week compared to other weeks but not for surgeries. Ted states we should revisit this discussion at our next Advisory Committee meeting. Lynne asks about issues relating to telehealth since there has been a big uptick of people using this. Are we seeing issues related to that? Lynne's second question is, last month a report released from Families USA from Washington DC, provides state-by-state data that the uninsured rate has potentially doubled in Connecticut up to 10% since the beginning of the year; are we getting any increased activity related to that. Ted responds when telehealth first hit there was quite a bit of confusion and a flurry of cases in particular some issues with Anthem. Those issues have been worked out and the inquiries have tailed off. Hoping this means payments have been flowing and the amounts paid for telehealth are at parity. Sean states that initially some lag time with certain carriers getting provider networks up to speed on how they will handle telehealth, we did see some small disputes regarding whether there would be payment parity or not; and also another carrier did not expand the list of services that it would cover through

telehealth as quickly as other carriers. The company made adjustments pretty quickly; payment parity and scope of services are up to speed with their peer carriers. There have been a couple of inquiries from providers or associations who represent providers wondering what the carriers' timelines were going to be on extending certain expanded benefits, for example we just learned that UHC/Oxford just extended telehealth coverage through October 2020 while most carriers extended through the end of September 2020. Lynne asks if the telehealth bill passes in the special session telehealth will be extended until March 15, correct? Ted responds that is our understanding.

- Lynne's second question: What about the uptick on uninsured people? Ted answers that this is top of mind for us, we are sensitive to that problem and we have put together some comprehensive resources on OHA's website to help consumers who may have lost coverage with their questions. Working with the Dept of Labor on this to have our link added to their website but have not been able to connect with them, probably because that agency in particular is under stress in these times. In terms of folks coming to us stating that they lost their insurance there have been a few but I don't see the flood I was expecting. Val adds that we have seen an uptick since the beginning of this with more uninsured using Medicaid services, mostly just needing education on Medicaid or eligibility. Feels our website has been beneficial to people using it and have shared with other state agencies and organizations to direct them to our website or contact us directly. Case managers have been providing a lot of one-on-one education because Medicaid is a new type of healthcare for many people and not sure about it. The last week or two have been less of these Medicaid-related queries than they were in the beginning. Ted feels OHA's services are not being maximized by the people out there that have lost insurance and may have a lot of questions, so OHA is working on ways to make the connection between us and those that need our services. Lynne feels our website is helpful. Are we making sure all the legislators know that we are a resource for people? We did connect with the leadership on all four (4) caucuses to try and get the word out and in particular the House Democrats were pretty robust on getting the word out to their caucus. We have been working on that but feels we can improve on this. Open to any thoughts the committee may have. Constituent services are out of sight busy these days. Ted acknowledged in particular Adam and Sean for their efforts on the website.

4. COVID19 Update – Office Status

- Last year before the crisis hit, the governor had loosened up the state rules around work from home but there was no equipment such as the state-required laptops for that. At that time you could only work from home with a State issued laptop. Only a small percentage of staff have State issued laptops. When COVID19 hit the guidelines changed making it so staff could use their personal computers from home.
- Ted was able to get DAS to move some of our money to purchase laptops for all staff. The machines have been received but not deployed at this time as this is relatively labor-intensive procedure. IT is extremely busy as they are shared between OHA and the Insurance Department
- Hopefully the new laptops when finally deployed will be beneficial in several ways: some people don't have microphones or cameras on their personal computers and the laptops do and laptops also include VPN capability which is good for the security of our work. Also hope that it will be a little more stable than the remote desktop capability we are using, which can sometimes be slow and/or unreliable. This has been a key challenge of OHA working remotely. But really not that bad..
- The other issue has been staff calling from their personal phones and staff appropriately and as instructed block their personal number from showing on the caller ID, and this causes issues for our clients who do not accept blocked calls. Lost a lot of elderly consumers who don't want to

answer blocked calls. We have a new capability (SoftPhone software) which will allow staff to use their work line from their personal lines – they can use personal phones, but it appears on the caller ID as their OHA work number. Val adds that our IT department has been beneficial in getting staff up and able to work from home. We have also been adding more tools to be able to work best from home. Some small glitches but are working those out.

- Ted's personal commitment to himself and the OHA staff to come out on the other end of this crisis with no one from OHA contracting COVID at work. Committed to keep staff at home as long as possible. Working well from home.
- Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and DAS requested, from all agencies, a reopening plan and Ted gave a tentative reopening date of January, 2021. Ted notes Google's recently announced a July 2021 timeline. Ted's posture, accepted by the Governor's office, is to keep staff at home until it is safe for their return to the office. Will return immediately if and when given direction to do so.
- Mark comments that it's good to be conservative, but may want to look forward that we are so far out that we are reflexively pushing it out a year, but we also want our consumers to know that we will get back as fast as we can to best serve their needs. We are a public service agency, and need to think of the optics of being available to our clients. He doesn't disagree and just wants both sides of the coin to be considered.
- Ted's thinking is shaped by the fact that back in 2019 our walk-in services were running less than one per month. Our services are mostly exclusively engaged via phone or email. Would have a different take if we had more in-person contact. Val agrees with this statement. Mark further comments that it's optics of the situation and we should continue to look at this.

Lynne Ide motioned to adjourn and Mark DeWaele seconded; no nays; no discussion motion carries unanimously

Meeting adjourned at 12:38 pm.

**The next meeting is scheduled for
Tuesday, October 27, 2020
12:00 – 12:30 PM**