

**MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE GUILFORD COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
(MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES STEERING COMMITTEE)**

Greensboro, North Carolina  
June 1, 2017

The Mental Health Services Steering Committee appointed by the Board of Commissioners, met in a duly noticed meeting on June 1, 2017 at 3:30 PM in the J. Harry Weatherly Conference Room, located on the second floor of the Old Courthouse, 301 West Market Street, Greensboro NC.

**PRESENT:** Committee Chair, Commissioner Alan Perdue; Commissioners Kay Cashion and Jeff Phillips

**ABSENT:** None.

**ALSO PRESENT:** County Manager Marty Lawing; Health and Human Services DSS Division Director Heather Skeens; Major C. Williamson Sheriff's Office; Emergency Services Director Jim Albright; DSS Division Manager Sharon Barlow; Cindy Simpson, DHHS - Public Health Division; Billie Pierce Mental Health Services Advocate; Robin Keller, Clerk to Board and members of the media.

Committee Chairman Alan Perdue welcomed those present and called the meeting to order at 3:35 PM. Perdue provided introductions of all present and shared committee goals of re-evaluating Guilford County's Mental Health service provision.

Billie Pierce shared her experience and qualifications with the committee members and her advocacy for clinical service provision. Ms. Pierce shared that she served as the previous Mental Health Department Director prior to state divestiture of Mental Health services. Pierce stated that the County's current LME – Sandhills is an exceptionally hard working group; however, they are a rural group tasked with taking over an urban Mental Health program. She remarked that Guilford has existing resources interested in and qualified to support bringing Mental Health services back to Guilford County management.

Pierce shared that Guilford County has the third largest financial contribution to Mental Health care in the state. She recommending the county look into selling the current county facility

housing mental health providers as the building was not designed for adequate clinical care provision.

County Manager Marty Lawing reviewed information from a staff organizational meeting on mental health services. He shared that staff were asked to prepare service delivery flow charts for review of access points to services and to help identify gaps in service needs.

Major Chuck Williamson reviewed the intake process for the Detention Centers. Williamson shared frustrations in the Mental Health evaluation processes with existing vendors, particularly those issued by court ordered for assessments for mental health competency. He noted the challenges with timely evaluations and out of county travel for assessments.

Perdue questioned the volume of per month travel out of county for assessments.

Williamson indicated that they average between 5-10 per month; however, have had months with over 20 assessments. He discussed the staff time out of county for each assessment. Williamson reported that with the opening of the new jail facility in Greensboro; the new facility provides a safer holding area for inmates with mental health needs.

Cashion questioned if evaluations could be handled via tele-medicine for competency evaluations.

Major Williamson stated that they could; however, it would require support of the Administrative office of the courts.

The committee discussed the value of mapping service delivery to help better pinpoint needs.

Williamson reviewed the additional in house staff added through Sandhills to help with assessing mental health needs of inmates and expanding services for those individuals detained in the jail.

Albright reviewed EMS care and intake. He shared that the transition of inmates of jail without an adequate placement plan typically places a burden on EMS to transport for inpatient psychiatric admission. He indicated that this gap in the mental health continuum of care places many individuals exiting the jail system with no direct access to medications other than through emergency services. Albright reviewed law changes that have created issues to transport to lower level medical care if someone is initially admitted into an emergency room. He stated that there is no psychiatric screening in an urgent care setting in Guilford County. Albright reported that they are transporting 12 or more patients per month due to mental health needs. He stated that many patients with mental health needs are admitted to emergency rooms rather than Mental Health care providers such as Monarch, as the MHL providers cannot provide internal medical needs such as a MHL patient who is also diabetic and requires insulin injections. He also noted challenges in securing mental health care for adolescences and children.

Albright discussed the mental health mobile crisis care services, which has a two-hour response time. He stated that patients in crisis will often call EMS rather than wait two hours.

Sharron Barlow expressed concerns with the evaluations performed through mobile crisis care.

Albright shared his concerns with the rapid turnover of mental health providers in Guilford County.

The committee reviewed the number of available beds for substance abuse treatment and detox. The committee reviewed the restrictive admission requirements that do not allow for immediate entry for acute patients. Albright shared with the board the online self-assessment tools that Sandhills offers. He indicated these are very valuable and useful tools for citizens; he went on to discuss the increase in narcotics related calls.

Phillips shared his support for a more effectively managed Mental Health services. Phillips emphasized the good work of current LME based upon the confines of their role and posed a question as to what the county's authority or options are for additional evaluation of the system of care.

Ms. Pierce reiterated that Sandhills LME is the best LME provider available in the state.

Phillips shared that while the committee is still early in the review stages that additional operational needs should be looked at as well as all of the county's options for mental health service provision.

Alan Perdue recommended that the county look more closely at reviewing data to measure effectiveness of services provided.

Albright spoke to the need for additional navigation of existing vendors and entry requirements. He stated that it is difficult for his staff to ensure penitents get to the right resources.

Phillips reiterated that the existing system makes it challenging for citizens and needs a better means of effectively communicating resources and how to access them.

Cashion spoke to the continuum of care and a 24/7 crisis center pilot program being developed in an adjoining county. She also noted that current legislation requires Mental Health Medicaid and Medicare funds pass through a LME.

The committee discussed system constraints and state budgeting levels.

Perdue cautioned Medicaid funds being a decision point driver and shared that if needed the county could lobby for legislative changes if it was in the best interested of better care provision for citizens.

Albright shared the need for an acute care service and triage provider.

Cashion reviewed that the majority of Mental Health dollars in Guilford County are through Medicaid and Medicare pass through funds, with approximately 7% being local dollars, 10% being state dollars and the remaining dollars attributed to federal funding.

Lawing noted a successful program in New York called a “stabilization center” designed for acute care services.

The committee discussed the concept and asked staff to be preparing needs assessment and review of legal options for Mental Health Care.

There being no further business the committee adjourned by unanimous consent at 5:05PM

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Committee Chairman, Alan Perdue

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Clerk to Board, Robin Keller