



Niagara County Community Services Board
 Minutes
 Regular Meeting
 Date: Monday – April 21, 2025
 Time: 6:00 pm

LOCATION: Dept. of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Administrative Offices, Shaw Building, Health Department Conference Room, 1st Floor, 5467 Upper Mountain Road, NY.

ATTENDANCE:

PRESENT

EXCUSED

Burt Marshall, Board President	X	
Annette Dobrasz, EdD, 1 st Board VP	X	
Stephanie Donovan, 2 nd Board VP	X	
Thomas Gerbasi, MD, Board Member	X	
Candace Butcher, Board Member		X
Ronald Barstys, PhD, Board Member		X
Suzanne Diez, Board Member		X
Richard Abbott, Board Member		X
Betsy Farkas, Board Member	X	X
Donald Jablonski, Board Member	X	
Rev. Francis Kadryna, Board Member	X	
Robin Stevens, Board Member		X
Kelly Biehls, Board Member	X	
<u>Niagara County Mental Health Administration</u>		
Laura Kelemen, LCSW-R, NCDMH Director	X	
Myrla Gibbons Doxey, LMFT, NCDMH Deputy Director	X	
Cindi Wilkins, Fiscal Administrator	X	
Kimberly Hubert-Bickel, NCDMH Confidential Assistant	X	
Michelle Abraham, LCSWR Outpatient Clinical Program Manager/CCBHC Project Director	X	
Kristi Dierolf, Supervising Licensed Clinician	X	
Lynn Mahoney, Account Clerical IV	X	
<u>Guests</u>		
Jaqueline West, Beacon Center – Chief Executive Officer	X	
Shannon DeSantiago, Beacon Center - Director of Compliance	X	

1) **Burt Marshall, Board President, called the Community Services Board (CSB) Meeting to order at 6:02 PM.**

2) **Meeting Minutes**

A. Donald Jablonski motioned to approve the March 17, 2025 minutes as presented, Dr. Annette Dobraz seconded the motion; the minutes were approved by the Board.

3) **Membership Review**

A. Membership Review – Nothing new to report.

B. Sub-committee Review –

Between now and the next meeting, there will be discussions regarding subcommittees, which are currently in need of members from the public who have a vested interest in alcoholism and substance use disorders (SUD), mental health, and people with developmental disabilities.

Director Kelemen review MHL 41.11, which indicates CSB Subcommittees shall have no more than nine (9) members appointed, three (3) of which shall be members of the CSB. CSB Subcommittee members have a vested interest in the specific area:

- Lists reviewed and updated during the meeting.
- Rev Kadryna and Ms. Biehls expressed interest in joining the Alcohol and SUD Subcommittee.
- Director Kelemen and Dr. Dobrasz will be meeting with Rose Siegarth, previous CSB member, and will inquire about her interest in joining the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Subcommittee.
- Director Kelemen noted that the Subcommittees meet quarterly and provide expertise, input and guidance into the Local Service Planning process.

Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey reminded the CSB of the scheduled Joint Subcommittees and local service provider meeting on Tuesday, April 29, 2025 from 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm at Orleans/Niagara BOCES Sanborn Conference Center. The agenda will be distributed this week.

▪ **Sub-Committee Assignments – CSB Members**

4) **Director’s Report**

- Director Kelemen highlighted Correspondences since last meeting.
 - Letters, Memorandums & E-mails: Correspondence listed on separate page, attached - there were no questions from CSB members.
 - Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey reported receiving a positive response from WNY OPWDD to her letter regarding the Department’s needs in order to complete timely reviews and responses to Certificate of Needs and related matters. There is a path forward.

▪ **Certificate of Need (CON) / Prior Approval Reviews (PAR)**

***CON** – None

***EzPar** – Beacon Center – EZ PAR application #4468 to establish a satellite MHOTRS clinic in Niagara Falls, NY.

Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey presented a summary of Beacon Center’s application to establish a satellite MHOTRS (Mental Health Outpatient Treatment and Rehabilitative Services) clinic at 417 Third Street in Niagara Falls, NY.

Jacqueline West/CEO and Shannon DeSantiago/Director of Compliance from Beacon Center were present to answer questions from the Board.

Ms. West noted that since the COVID-19 pandemic, SUD patient needs changed significantly, as they are presenting with increased mental health needs. In order to reduce transportation barriers, improve convenience and accessibility of both mental health and substance use disorder services in the same location, the agency is seeking to establish the MHOTRS clinic, co-located with their OASAS licensed clinic.

During CSB discussion on the application, a question was raised concerning the agency's submitted crisis plan, which referenced Erie County Crisis Services and related resources, but not Niagara County Crisis Services. Concerns were expressed that, in some cases, referrals out of the county can be problematic, as they can result in connections to services that are not relevant or appropriate.

Ms. West stated she was unaware that the crisis plan referenced Erie County and agreed to send an updated version for review as part of the application.

Dr. Annette Dobrasz made a motion to approve the application, seconded by Donald Jablonski. The Board approved the motion unanimously.

Informational –

- **Niagara County Department of Mental Health - CORE Community Psychiatric Support and Treatment (CPST) Program Closure** - Director Kelemen shared that the program began as the Adult Behavioral Health - Home and Community Based Services (BH HBCS) CPST before transitioning to CORE CPST. CORE CPST services are authorized under the 1115 Demonstration Waiver as a benefit for Health and Recovery Plan (HARP) enrollees. CPST is designed to provide mobile treatment services to individuals who have difficulty engaging in or did not fully benefit from traditional site-based programs, or who have not been previously engaged in services. The closure of CORE is the result of underutilization since the program began in 2018. The closure is effective April 1, 2025, and has approved for closure by the NYS Office of Mental Health.
- **Niagara County Department of Mental Health – Niagara County Counseling & Wellness Services change in operational services to relinquish DOH license.** Director Kelemen reported that the clinics have developed relationships with several primary care providers, facilitating referrals to care for clinic patients in need of primary care services through the clinic case managers. Provision of these services ongoing is not feasible or cost effective. The contracted Medical Doctor will continue to be utilized as needed for consultations per regulatory requirements.
- **Heritage Christian Services** – pending relocation of residential home located at 4441 Tonawanda Creek in N. Tonawanda, NY to 7237 Townline Road in N. Tonawanda, NY. Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey provided the update received from Matt Bovee, Property Accountant at HCS. HCS purchased a home at 7237 Townline Road in N. Tonawanda, NY, which it intends to use to house individuals with disabilities who currently live at 4441 Tonawanda Creek in N. Tonawanda, NY but need a new home due to their increasing needs as they age. The new home will be single story, so it will allow the residents to age in place going forward. The agency reports having already spoken with the Town about their plan. Renovations are underway to the home at 7237 Townline Road, and once they are completed, the agency hopes to transfer the residents around July 1, 2025. The LGU anticipates receiving a Certificate of Need from OPWDD in early May 2025 regarding this relocation.
- **Niagara County Department of Mental Health – Administrative Offices and Niagara County Counseling & Wellness Services Lockport Site relocation update** provided by

Director Kelemen. The new office site is nearing completion. A walk-through is scheduled for Thursday, April 24, 2025 to create a punch list prior to the building being officially handed over to the County. Pending review, NYS OMH will conduct necessary inspections, including fire safety, and issue a certificate of occupancy. Tentatively, the move is planned for the second week of May with the Administrative staff to move first, followed by the Clinic staff shortly afterwards. The new address will be 475 South Transit Road Lockport, NY

Discussion occurred regarding plans for the current office space at the Shaw Building. Director Kelemen shared that its future remains uncertain, as Cazenovia was initially planning to purchase it. However, recent newspaper reports suggest it may be turned over to the NORLIC land bank.

- **Community Missions, Inc. Canal View Community Residence Update** – Director Kelemen informed the CSB that Community Missions has developed a plan for the Canal View Community Residence in response to the current shared bedroom setup. The goal is to renovate the residence to provide single bedrooms for all individuals, in alignment with best practices. The proposed renovations would be significant, requiring temporary relocation of residents during construction. NYS OMH suggested the possibility of utilizing supportive apartments during the transition; however, concerns exist that the level of support provided may not be sufficient for all residents. Community Missions is actively working with People Inc. to explore the possibility of renting a home in Akron, NY for temporary use during the renovation period.

Corporate Compliance – The Annual review and completion of the NYS Justice Center Code of Conduct Acknowledgement for Custodians of People with Special Needs and NCDMH Corporate Compliance Outside Work or Association Declaration occurred by present CSB members.

- Director Kelemen reviewed the drafted letter prepared for signature by CSB President Burt Marshall, on behalf of the CSB, to be sent to the County Manager and County Attorney as a follow up to the last CSB meeting discussion. The letter includes a request to engage an external auditor to conduct the required compliance annual risk assessment and provide a report to the Department. Discussion occurred on the letter, which included the following points:
 - The possibility of putting out a Request for Proposals (RFP) for someone with Medicaid expertise to complete this assessment;
 - Request for Assistant County Attorney, Christopher Bopst, to be present quarterly at CSB meetings when the Corporate Compliance Officer reviews the reports to help broker any identified needs;
 - For the Department’s Director and Deputy Director to be included in regularly occurring, monthly meetings with other departments that have a role in Compliance, including Risk Management and Information Technology; and
 - To engage a training consultant who can provide billing training and technical assistance to support the development of the Billing Staff’s expertise as part of the Department’s annual training plan.

With the support of the CSB, CSB President Burt Marshall signed the letter regarding this matter; it will be mailed.

- ***Resolutions #2025-01 and 2025-02 Write-Offs and Adjustments** – Fiscal Administrator Cindi Wilkins and Billing Supervisor Lynn Mahoney presented the NCDMH Niagara County Counseling & Wellness Services Clinics 2023 Second Quarter and 2023 Third Quarter write-off and adjustments.
- **Programs / System Updates, provided by Director Kelemen** –
 - **2024 Clinic Annual Report Annual** report presented by Outpatient Clinics Program Manager Michelle Abraham and Lockport Clinic Site Supervisor Kristi Dierolf.
Key Points:
Enrollment has decreased from the previous year; however, both clinics are now fully staffed. Lower enrollment has allowed for increased training and other improvements.

The decrease in enrollment may be partially due to a more thorough process of assessing medical necessity to ensure that care is appropriate, in alignment with CCBHC standards, and that clients are receiving the appropriate services and linkages.

COPS appointments for post-hospital discharges have been higher.

A higher number of no-shows was noted, and further exploration determined that the referral process might be a concern. There will be a meeting with NFMCC to discuss this, as clients may not always be clear about their appointment details. The referral process may need revision to ensure better communication and consistency.

The clinic is also exploring a welcoming, warm hand-off process using clinic case managers to work with hospital diversion ensuring clients are properly linked to services and appointments.

Goals moving forward:

Improve access to treatment and establish a step-down pathway for care.

Continue providing youth services and investing in employee training to maintain high-quality care.

The CSB had no questions following the presentation.

- **2024 SPOA Annual Report** presented by Deputy Director Myrta Gibbons Doxey. Adult services continue to be more heavily utilized than children's services through SPOA referral. Updated guidance released from NYS Departments of Health and Mental Health to expand role of Children's SPOA licensed practitioners to be trained in the CANS assessment which assists in determining Home and Community Based Services Waiver eligibility and an appropriate level of care for children and adolescents discharging from psychiatric CPEP/emergency room and inpatient hospital settings and residential settings.

Cross-systems work continues, with a focus on collaboration with various agencies and services to meet the needs of high risk / need individuals. A meeting with representatives from Niagara County SPOA, WNY Office of Mental Health, ECMC (Erie County Medical Center) and others occurred in the fall of 2024 to further focus efforts on improving coordination of care for children and adolescents who present to ECMC CPEP.

Some hospitals have been reaching out to LGUs to determine appropriate points of contact and resources, and there is a concerted effort to respond and provide support.

The key to success in this effort is cross-system collaboration, which is essential for ensuring seamless care.

SPOA has also been engaged in increasing its visibility in the community, including participating in tabling events, providing training, and working to strengthen partnerships.

The CSB had no questions following the presentation.

- Navi Pilot - Implementation Planning with four (4) interested School Districts - Navi (formerly Mindly) is a mental wellness support app providing students with 24/7 evidenced-based support to navigation everyday problems through a single session sign-on. Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey reported that she is working with Navi and local school districts on its implementation within the next few months with target date by September 2025 in time for Suicide Prevention Month. Currently, Navi is working to get on the New York State (NYS) Education vendor list and completing requirements to meet Educational Law 2D as the company seeks to be available to all schools across NYS. Niagara County will be the first in NYS to implement Navi. <https://www.meetnavi.com/>

- **Niagara County Crisis Services** – Director Kelemen provided the CSB an update on positions. HR has created an MOU for review by CSEA related to the job title/position changes. CSEA is currently reviewing the proposal. HR, Civil Service and the Department have reviewed the proposed job titles, with updated duties and qualifications and commensurate with the responsibilities. All current staff will qualify for the new titles. The proposed changes will ensure that the Department is able to recruit and retain staff who are well qualified for the current responsibilities.
- **730 Competency Workgroup** - The issue of 730 competencies is a focus as the costs to the counties continue to rise and the numbers of individuals referred by the courts for 730 competency evaluations also continues to rise. Director Kelemen is advocating for the creation of a 730 workgroup to identify ways that we can intervene locally to ensure appropriate treatment and appropriate use of 730s For example, timing of evaluations is important. To gain an accurate picture, evaluations should be timed to ensure people have achieved initial stability (i.e substance detox and psychiatric evaluation) prior to 730 eval being conducted. The goal is to explore what can be done locally and potentially create a statewide workgroup focused on 730 reform, including possibly considering jail-based restoration. Director Kelemen has reached out to the County Manager to request support for this. The overarching goal is to effectively restore individuals while being mindful of the county taxpayer funds.

5) **President’s Report** – Nothing to report.

Executive Sessions – There was no executive session held during the meeting.

6) **Meeting Adjournment**

Dr. Annette Dobrasz motioned to adjourn the meeting; Dr. Thomas Gerbasi seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 7:54 pm.

Next CSB Meeting Date: Monday, May 19, 2025 at 6:00 pm; location to be determined

***voting items**

Distributed Items at Meeting:

- A. Agenda
- B. *CSB Draft Meeting Minutes for March 17, 2025
- C. Current 2025 CSB Membership Roster
- D. *Resolution #2025-01 and 2025-02 for 2nd & 3rd quarter 2023 Write-offs and Adjustments

Niagara County Community Services Board
Correspondence Listing, Agenda Item 4-1 - Director’s Report
Meeting Date & Time: Monday, April 21, 2025 at 6:00 pm

A. Niagara County Community Services Board Meeting Notices:

1. Niagara County Community Services Board Monday, April 21, 2025 Meeting Notice - dated, April 14, 2025.
2. Notifications to two County Newspapers regarding April 21, 2025 Meeting scheduling Notice - dated, April 14, 2025.

B. Correspondence from Myrla Gibbons Doxey, NCDMH Deputy Director, to Rita Cuda, Sr. Vice President of Children & Family Services at BestSelf Behavioral Health, regarding Letter of Support for plan to submit an EZPAR application to establish a school-based satellite clinic at Spruce Elementary in the North Tonawanda City School District, dated March 20, 2025

C. Correspondence from Myrla Gibbons Doxey, NCDMH Deputy Director, to Rita Cuda, Sr. Vice President of Children & Family Services at BestSelf Behavioral Health, regarding Letter of Support for

plan to submit an EZPAR application to establish a school-based satellite clinic at Cataract Elementary in the Niagara Falls City School District, dated March 20, 2025

- D. Correspondence from Myrla Gibbons Doxey, NCDMH Deputy Director, to Rita Cuda, Sr. Vice President of Children & Family Services at BestSelf Behavioral Health, regarding Letter of Support for plan to submit an EZPAR application to establish a school-based satellite clinic at the High School in the Niagara Falls City School District, dated March 20, 2025
- E. Correspondence from Myrla Gibbons Doxey, NCDMH Deputy Director, to Rita Cuda, Sr. Vice President of Children & Family Services at BestSelf Behavioral Health, regarding Letter of Support for plan to submit an EZPAR application to establish a school-based satellite clinic at Aaron Mossell Junior High School in the Lockport City School District, dated March 20, 2025
- F. Correspondence from Robert Goodenough, FSS Unit Leader at NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities WNY Regional Office, to Myrla Gibbons Doxey, NCDMH Deputy Director regarding response to letter dated March 15, 2025 regarding the Department's extension request in order to appropriately review the CON application and subsequent letter to close and decertify Site Based Prevocational Services for NYSARC Inc., Cattaraugus Niagara Counties Chapter (DBA: InTandem), dated March 18, 2025
- G. Correspondence from Myrla Gibbons Doxey, NCDMH Deputy Director, to Lindsay Sardo, Development Unit Lead at NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities WNY Regional Office, regarding response to letter dated March 18, 2025 regarding InTandem CON dated March 18, 2025
- H. Correspondence from Gina Bae, Director OMH, to Robyn Krueger, Pres. And CEO of Community Missions, regarding recertification of Licensed Programs, dated March 25, 2025
- I. Correspondence from OMH, to Laura Kelemen, Director NCDMH, regarding PIP for Spectrum Health and Human Services, dated March 28, 2025
- J. Correspondence from Dena Holmes, Director OASAS, to James Garvey CEO Catholic Health System, regarding Operating Certificate # 270411890, dated April 9, 2025
- K. Correspondence from Rebecca Vincheski, CEO Niagara Falls Boys & Girls Club to Laura Kelemen, Director NCDMH, Letter of intent to bid, dated April 10, 2025.
- L. Correspondence from Anton Mirtshev, Supervisor at OASAS, to Lindsay Herndon CEO at Cazenovia Recovery Systems, regarding Final Report AL-24007, dated April 14, 2025.

Newspaper Articles:

1. Buffalo News, "Potential Medicaid cuts would deal ECMC a devastating blow", by Jon Harris, dated 3/17/25
2. Buffalo News, "Gillibrand says state cannot "trump-proof" budget", by Robert Gavin, dated 3/31/25
3. Buffalo News, "A look at what we're getting right in fighting the overdose epidemic", by Lisa Jarvis, dated 4/2/25
4. Buffalo News, "Our children need cellphone-free schools", by Larry Scott, dated 4/3/25
5. Buffalo News, "Federal cuts lead state to let go 218 health care workers", by Jon Harris, dated 4/7/25