



Niagara County Community Services Board
Minutes
Regular Meeting
Date: Monday – May 19, 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
Donald Jablonski, Board Member		X
Rev. Francis Kadryna, Board Member		X
Robin Stevens, Board Member	X	
Kelly Biehls, Board Member	X	
Niagara County Mental Health Administration		
Laura Kelemen, LCSW-R, NCDMH Director	X	
Myrla Gibbons Doxey, LMFT, NCDMH Deputy Director	X	
Kimberly Hubert-Bickel, NCDMH Confidential Assistant	X	
Gillian Henry-Game, NCDMH Home and Community Based Services Supervisor AOT Program Coordinator	X	
Kyle Dietzen, NCDMH Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) Community Mental Health Aide	X	

- 1) **Burt Marshall, Board President, called the Community Services Board (CSB) Meeting to order at 6:01 PM.**
- 2) **Meeting Minutes**
 - A. Dr. Annette Dobraz motioned to approve the April 21, 2025 Minutes as presented, Dr. Thomas Gerbasi seconded the motion; the Minutes were unanimously approved by the Board.
 - B. Informational: Joint Subcommittee and Provider Meeting Highlights:
 - Great turnout in subcommittee members and provider agency representatives.
 - Transitional-aged youth population unmet needs around residential, housing and supportive services in the community were discussed as a high need area to address in the Local Services Plan update for 2026.
 - Continued strategies are needed to increase awareness of the Niagara "Well Niagara" app.
 - Agency representatives noted concerns regarding systemic challenges with the current licensed professionals who are unable to diagnose under their scope of practice without supervision and obtaining their diagnostic privilege (LMSW, LMHC, LMFT). Although NY State Education Department's Office of Professions created a new pathway for LMHCs and LMFTs to obtain their diagnostic privilege, many that graduated prior to 2010 have additional graduate course credits (up to 15 credit hours) to obtain before being eligible for their diagnostic privilege. Not only are few colleges / universities currently set up to fill this need, it places additional demands on working professionals to pursue this and for some it is not feasible. Agencies are strained with ensuring proper supervisory oversight is available for those unable to independently diagnose.
 - Director Kelemen shared that there is a bill/legislation proposing to allow LMHCs who have their diagnostic privilege to provide supervision to licensed professionals other than LMHCs; currently only LCSWs can supervise LMSWs, LMHCs, LMFTs, while LMHC-Ds and LMFT-Ds can only supervise others within their profession.
- 3) **Membership Review**
 - A. Membership Review –
 - Welcome back to Robin Stevens and Candace Butcher.
 - There are two vacancies currently on the Community Services Board Roster.
 - Several members, including Burt Marshall and Dr. Thomas Gerbasi, are completing mandated terms requiring a year off.
 - Members encouraged to consider candidates with lived experience for future vacancies.
 - B. Sub-committee Review –
 - Application process for subcommittees discussed. Director, Laura Kelemen and Confidential Assistant, Kimberly Hubert-Bickel to coordinate review of this process.
 - Dr. Annette Dobraz provided two names for consideration.
 - Discussion on improving the Incident Review process to make it more meaningful.
 - Redaction requirements and paperwork coordination discussed.
 - Candace Butcher agreed with Dr. Thomas Gerbasi on technology challenges.
 - Need to refresh most subcommittees.
 - Quarterly meetings continue: two individual subcommittee meetings and two joint subcommittee meetings with plan to continue to hold at Orleans/Niagara BOCES Sanborn Conference Center.

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.
 - Letter sent to County Manager and cc'd to request: Presence of Assistant County Attorney Chris Bopst at quarterly CSB when Compliance Report will be given; engagement of an outside firm for annual compliance risk assessment; and tighter coordination with departments. To date, there has been no response from the County Manager, however, Assistant County Attorney, Christopher Bopst confirmed willingness to participate in quarterly meetings. Upcoming meeting Thursday to discuss external audit process.
- **Certificate of Need (CON) / Prior Approval Reviews (PAR)**

***CON – Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey presented:**

Heritage Christian Services (CON IRA-050125-2-WS) relocate all 5 supervised IRA opportunities from 4441 Tonawanda Creek Rd., N. Tonawanda, NY to 7237 Townline Rd., N. Tonawanda, NY
Approved Prior

Heritage Christian Services (CON IRA-050125-3-WS) Establish new supervised IRA located at 7237 Townline Rd., N. Tonawanda, NY 14120, increase capacity by 1 bed
Robin Stevens made a motion to approve the application, seconded by Dr. Annette Dobrasz. The Board approved the motion unanimously.

People Inc (CON IRA-042925-4-WS) Relocate 3 Free Standing Respite (FSR) opportunities from 6828 Townline Rd, N. Tonawanda, NY 14120 to 80 Acacia Dr., Amherst, NY 14228 and suspend Operating Certificate and 2 remaining FSR opportunities.
Dr. Ronald Barstys made a motion to approve the application, seconded by Robin Stevens. The Board approved the motion unanimously.

***EzPar – None**

Informational –

BestSelf Behavioral Health Specialty Mental Health Care Management Program: Closure of Program effective 4/30/25. Because there has been no communication with the LGU regarding this closure, Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey will reach out to BestSelf leadership- Marjorie Stanton or Kevin Beckman regarding this and any potential service impact to Niagara County. Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey noted that BestSelf has ceased participation in Adult and Children's SPOA for some time since staffing changes occurred in the care management programs.

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 (*members not present at the April meeting when this was previously reviewed/signed).

Discussed recent audits conducted and safeguards related to new electronic health record system. Team continues to work diligently on training and compliance adherence.

- **Programs / System Updates, provided by Director Kelemen –**

- **2024 AOT Annual Report** presented by Gillian Henry-Game, Home and Community Based Services Supervisor/AOT Program Coordinator – Processes, referral sources, statistics related to age, gender, ethnicity and diagnoses, number of court orders by month, voluntary contracts,

discharges, average length of stay at discharge, trends, goals and achievements within the program.

- **2024 Court Annual Report** presented by Director Kelemen – Review of Criminal Court Evaluations (CPL 730.20 and CPL 390.30), Competency Evaluations, Criminal Court Confinements, Need for Treatment Evaluations, etc.
- Director Kelemen provided Crisis Services and Care Management Staffing Update: Legislative approval to change job titles from Crisis Services Phone Aide to Crisis Counselor I and Community Mental Health Aide to Case Manager. These changes require increased qualifications and responsibilities reflected in the new titles, increases in salary, new probationary periods due to new job titles. The proposed changes will ensure that the department is able to recruit and retain staff who are well qualified for the current responsibilities.
- Shaw Relocation: New site is 99% complete. Administrative staff to move in after punch list is finalized. OMH site visit required before clinic move.
- Hospital Systems Update:
Under Mental Hygiene Law sections 9.41 and 9.45, youth are being transported to NFMHC ED for evaluations.
Streamlined admission process with ECMC based on psychiatric assessment.
New leadership at Niagara Falls Memorial fostering collaboration.

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; Candace Butcher seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 7:33 pm.

Next CSB Meeting Date: Monday, June 16, 2025 at 6:00 pm; location to be determined

***voting items**

Distributed Items at Meeting:

- A. Agenda
- B. *CSB Draft Meeting Minutes for April 21, 2025
- C. Current 2025 CSB Membership Roster
- D. *CONS – Heritage Christian Services, Inc. and People Inc.
- E. 2024 AOT Annual Report
- F. 2024 Court Annual Report

Niagara County Community Services Board
Correspondence Listing, Agenda Item - Director's Report
Meeting Date & Time: Monday, May 19, 2025 at 6:00 pm

A. Niagara County Community Services Board Meeting Notices:

1. Niagara County Community Services Board Monday, May 19, 2025 Meeting Notice - dated, May 13, 2025.

2. Notifications to two County Newspapers regarding May 19, 2025 Meeting scheduling Notice - dated, May 13, 2025.
- B. Correspondence from Burt Marshall, President, Niagara County Community Service Board, to Richard Updegrove, County Manager, regarding OMIG and Corporate Compliance program requirements, dated April 25, 2025.
- C. Correspondence from Myrla Gibbons Doxey, NCDMH Deputy Director, to Maria Torgalski, Director of NYS OPWDD, regarding application to convert NYS ARC Inc, Cattaraugus Niagara Counties Chapter (Niagara Falls, NY) to a supervised IRA, dated April 22, 2025.
- D. Correspondence from Myrla Gibbons Doxey, NCDMH Deputy Director, to Maria Torgalski, Director of NYSOPWDD, regarding application to convert NYSARC Inc, Cattaraugus Niagara Counties Chapter (Sanborn, NY, NY) to a supervised IRA, dated April 22, 2025.
- E. Correspondence from Laura J. Kelemen, NCDMH Director, to Mark Fuller, President, DePaul Properties, Inc., regarding Letter of Support for DePaul Properties' proposal to build and operate 80 units of supportive housing in the town of Wheatfield in Niagara County, dated April 24, 2025.
- F. Correspondence from Jerry Witkop, NCDMH, Issuing Officer, OMH, to Molly Carr, Ph.D, CEO, Jewish Family Services of WNY, regarding award letter, dated April 30, 2025.
- G. Correspondence from Gina Bae, Director OMH, to Laura J. Kelemen, NCDMH Director, regarding administrative action # 10974: Change in optional services, dated May 1, 2025.
- H. Correspondence from Paul Beakman, Sr., Board President, Western NY Independent Living, Inc., to Niagara County Department of Mental Health, regarding leadership change, dated May 5, 2025.
- I. Correspondence from Dena Holmes, Director OASAS, to Erin DiGirolamo, EEO, Horizon Health Services, Inc., regarding Operating Certificate # 280311662, dated May 2, 2025.

Newspaper Articles:

1. Buffalo News, "Sudden funding cuts warrant denunciation", by Douglas J. Usiak, dated 4/29/25
2. Buffalo News, "Trump budget draft ends \$56M Nrcan program", by Jan Hoffman, dated 4/30/25