

**ST. JOHNS COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL
(HHSAC)
MEETING MINUTES
February 20, 2020**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Charles Daly, Chair; Tara Haley, Vice Chair; Chip Cover; Shannon Nazworth; Tina D'Allesandro; Thomas Nielson

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Shawna Novak, HHS Director; Tracy Dillon, Social Services Manager; Angie Cowling, HHS Staff Support; Mary Garcia, HHS Staff Support

BCC LIASON: Jeb S. Smith, County Commissioner
Joy Andrews, Assistant County Administrator - sent regrets

VISITORS: Judith Dembowski; Ellen Walden; Jake Quigley; Mary Hepler; Amanda Callahan; Melissa Witmeier; Sara Rutan; Sharon Gesek; Joyce Mahr; Betty Rehrer; Lee Ashlock; Jim Norman; Marissa Vetter; Emma Hayes; Patti Greenough; Dawn Bell

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL: Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Quorum was present.

MINUTES – December 5, 2019 Meeting (no January meeting): Shannon Nazworth **motioned** to approve the minutes. Chip Cover seconded the motion; minutes were **approved unanimously** by the Council.

REPORT FROM COMMISSIONER JEB SMITH: Commissioner Smith reported the Board of County Commissioners have begun preliminary work on the 2021 budget. Commissioner Smith advised there is 9.9% growth in gross taxable value. Commissioner Smith cautioned that while this won't be a negative budget year, there are some very pressing infrastructural needs that must be considered. Commissioner Smith also advised the County Commissioners will be considering HHSAC member Eric Colon's appeal to be reappointed to the Council and they will do this at the March 3 County Commission meeting. Commissioner Smith explained it is County policy to remove a board member should they miss three consecutive regularly scheduled meetings.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Dawn Bell suggested the Advisory Council consider meeting bi-monthly or perhaps even quarterly. Chip Cover said the HHSAC must follow the County's bylaws, which do state this Council will meet every month. Mr. Cover also

mentioned there have been occasions when meetings are cancelled due to lack of quorum or the absence of new business.

OLD BUSINESS:

a. **Homeless Workgroup Update:**

1. **Continuum of Care (CoC) Update:** Brittany Coronado was not present but Shawna Novak advised a strategic planning session recently took place.
2. **HMIS Lead Agency Support/Point in Time Update (PIT Count):** Angie Cowling said she believes the Point in Time figures should be available within the next couple of weeks.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Epic Behavioral Healthcare:** Melissa Witmeier explained the intensive care coordination program is embedded in the larger project, the “Jail-based Epic Transition” program or “JET”. Ms. Witmeier explained Epic was awarded a criminal justice/mental health/substance abuse reinvestment grant in July, 2019. Ms. Witmeier said 25 clients have been identified as candidates for the program since that time and they are being assisted through the program. Ms. Witmeier said the one year goal is to identify and assist 45 people in the care coordination program. Ms. Witmeier explained this transition assistance concept came from an evidence-based program called “Transition from Jail to Community”, through the Department of Justice. Ms. Witmeier stated there are many risk factors for an individual leaving jail and by putting services in place, they hope to keep these people from recidivating. Ms. Witmeier said the transition team identifies those individuals that have been in and out of jail and/or have significant behavioral health disorders. Ms. Witmeier said the care coordinators then step in to link the individual to the services they need and they work to ensure these services are available to the individual as soon as they leave the jail. Patti Greenough mentioned Epic already has staff embedded in the jail so engagement begins before they are released, which gives clients a measure of security as they have already interacted with staff by the time they are released. Ms. Witmeier discussed the origins of care coordination and how it plays an important role in ensuring successful outcomes and in reducing recidivism. Ms. Witmeier went on to quote statistics which illustrate the small percentage of individuals that receive mental health and substance abuse care while incarcerated, as well as the much higher suicide rate that is associated with incarcerated individuals that suffer behavioral health issues. Ms. Witmeier explained the much greater likelihood of client follow-up when a care coordinator is in touch with them 24-72 hours after release from a facility. Ms. Witmeier explained care coordinators assist in many facets of clients’ lives and are on call 24/7. Ms. Witmeier went on to say the care coordinators act as listeners, crisis responders and mediators and are available to take clients to doctor’s appointments, pick up prescriptions, get ID, assist with

housing, etc. Sara Rutan spoke in greater detail about the program and the day to day functions of care coordinators and other staff members. Ms. Rutan also talked about some specific scenarios and successes of the program. Ms. Witmeier closed by stating this is a pilot program but considering the great need and the tremendous amount of money this will save the community at large, it is one they hope to expand after the three year grant has come to an end.

REPORT FROM JOY ANDREWS, ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR: Ms. Andrews was unable to attend and sent her regrets.

FUNDED AGENCY UPDATES:

Alpha Omega Miracle Home: Mary Hepler expressed appreciation for quick reimbursement by the County and she reported they have moved onto their new campus and have renovated a home for use as their temporary office. Ms. Hepler said the campus will include thirteen two-bedroom apartments, with up to five people in each, as well as a community care center and day care center. Ms. Hepler also reported they will have a ribbon cutting at their new office at Collins Avenue on March 20th, and their biggest fund raiser, the Family Fun Fest, will take place on April 25th at Francis Field.

Council on Aging: Sharon Gesek reported they operate five senior centers and four congregate meals sites, where approximately 7,500 meals per year are served. Ms. Gesek reported approximately 63,918 meals were delivered by volunteers in 2019 through the “Meals on Wheels” program. Ms. Gesek went on to say approximately 12,000 of those meals are private pay and the rest are subsidized. Ms. Gesek also reported they started a “Grandparents raising grandchildren” group, which met for the first time in January.

Epic Behavioral Healthcare: Sara Rutan spoke about the Life Skill Coaching Program and the curriculum called “Living in Balance”. Ms. Rutan stated one of their peer counselors is teaching basic life skills, such as budgeting, to those coming from adult substance abuse treatment. Ms. Greenough mentioned a triage specialist embedded at the Recovery center and asked Ms. Witmeier to elaborate. Ms. Witmeier said they are moving toward an Access Center that will enable screening and triaging of clients so they may be taken into care immediately. Ms. Witmeier stated if Epic is at capacity then clients can be linked to LSF through this process.

Good Samaritan/Wildflower Clinic: No representative at this meeting.

St. Augustine Youth Services (SAYS): Amanda Callahan, Clinical Supervisor from the CAT team, reported they are doing very well and have been able to promote a case manager to therapist and add a position. Ms. Callahan went on to say the team has seen 42 clients in the last quarter and 100% of the youth discharged reported satisfaction with their services. The Mobile Response Team reported they performed 110 assessments and saw 129 youth in the last quarter.

St. Johns Welfare Federation: Jim Norman reported they are at capacity with 69 people in the facility currently and they plan to increase facility capacity to 80 people. Mr. Norman said 34 of the residents are subsidized and in order to increase capacity, they plan to convert some of the private rooms to semi-private. Mr. Norman said they currently have 5 or 6 people on the waiting list.

Betty Griffin Center (BGC): Joyce Mahr reported the shelter continues to be at capacity and 103 women and children came through the shelter last month. Ms. Mahr stated they will have a behavioral health counselor at their Julington Creek shelter 2 ½ days per week. Ms. Mahr also announced the Run for Peace event, which will take place on April 11th at 8:30 a.m. at the Pier.

Early Learning Coalition: Dawn Bell stated their providers were given what she considered much needed pay raises. Ms. Bell went on to say the Rhythm and Ribs event will take place March 27-29. Ms. Bell encouraged other agencies to make contact with Rotary club members and get their grants submitted.

Emergency Services & Homeless Coalition (ESHG): Betty Rehrer reported two new families have moved in and are adjusting quite well. Ms. Rehrer also reported that a single mother and her children went from transitional housing, to permanent housing, and now have their own Habitat home.

St. Francis House: Judy Dembowski reported they served 70 people in January; 62 people exited, 20 of those to permanent housing, which, she said, is a 61% success rate. Ms. Dembowski went on to say they served 181 individuals for day services in January. Ms. Dembowski said that number will begin shrinking as they have discontinued food boxes to the community to anyone that is not homeless. Ms. Dembowski said they are focusing their day program on getting housing for those that are literally homeless.

St. Johns Housing Partnership (SJHP): Marissa Vetter reported their foreclosure prevention program assisted a 90 year old resident who was in imminent danger of foreclosure. Ms. Vetter said they were able to get this gentleman a loan modification, bringing his monthly mortgage payment down to approximately \$650. Ms. Vetter said they have also assisted in linking him with other necessary services for elderly clients.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

Homeless Advocacy Council: Ellen Walden reported this group is not currently meeting, as they have started a new mentoring program with Memorial Presbyterian Outreach which involves building relationships and having those relationships build community. Ms. Walden stated the St. Augustine Film Society is working on a movie about homelessness and it will be at the St. Augustine Film Festival this year. Ms. Walden also said Wildflower has been working on Haven for Hope, which is a day of beauty and pampering provided for women who are homeless or are in transitional

housing/shelter. Ms. Walden reported this event will take place on March 6th at St. Cyprian Church. Ms. Walden concluded by reporting Home Again and Compassionate St. Augustine plan to sponsor a movie called "Community First", which will be open for viewing by the public. Ms. Walden said there will also be a panel discussion following the movie.

SMA Healthcare: No representative attended this meeting.

Florida Department of Health St. Johns: Jake Quigley reported the focus on Hepatitis A continues and through these efforts the St. Johns County Department of Health has reached 77% of their target population, exceeding the 52% reached overall in the State. Mr. Quigley also reiterated good hand washing practices are vital for preventing the spread of this and other diseases, including Covid19. Mr. Quigley said the Department of Health is closely monitoring the situation with Coronavirus and they are participating in all CDC phone calls.

Flagler Health +: No representative attended the meeting.

Health & Human Services Department: Shawna Novak reported a contract has been executed with the consulting group working on the 5 year strategic plan for all four of the programs that fall under the County's Health & Human Services Department. Ms. Novak said the consultants will make their first visit in March and she advised independent agencies and the Advisory Council members will be asked to participate in focus groups for their valuable input. Ms. Novak also stated an additional Quality Services Specialist has been hired to work with the Housing Department and will also be performing formal contract oversight for independent agencies.

Faith Based Community: No representative attended this meeting.

Public Safety: Lee Ashlock from the St. Augustine Beach Police Department reiterated information regarding the Run for Peace and said he expects to be working with a team at the Seafood Festival.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Executive Meeting: Thursday, March 5, 2020 at 3:30 p.m. at the St. Johns County Health and Human Services Building, Kingfisher Conference Room, 200 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, FL 32084.

Regular Meeting: Thursday, March 19, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. at the St. Johns County Health and Human Services Building, Kingfisher Conference Room, 200 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, FL 32084.

ADJOURNMENT - Meeting was adjourned at 5:09p.m.