

ARLINGTON COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD  
Mental Health Committee Meeting  
November 08, 2023

**Committee Members Present (all virtual):** Judy Deane, Anne Hermann, Dori Mitchell, John Mitchell

**Committee Members Absent:** Bob Carolla

**Staff Present:** Asta Lynch, Carol Layer, Kelly Mauller, Suzanne Somerville, Bilal Nazam, Anabel Majano

**Guests Present:** Brad Haywood (Chief Public Defender and Board Member of Justice Forward Virginia)

**Others Present:** Naomi Verdugo, Shanna Pinkston, Wendy Crawford

**Call to Order:** 5:00 p.m.

**Welcome**

Ms. Lynch facilitated the meeting and coordinated introductions.

**Approval of Minutes:** This was an informational meeting as the committee doesn't have a chair or co-chair.

**Public Defender**

Mr. Haywood brought attention to the issue of criminalization of mental illness in Arlington, citing a high number of arrests among individuals with serious mental illness. He mentioned Arlington's high rate of sending individuals to Western State Hospital for competency restoration. Additionally, he highlighted the increase in the jail population with behavioral health issues and called for a shift in community understanding and budget priorities.

Mr. Haywood noted challenges with the bond diversion program, including staff resignations and a halt in new referrals. He stressed the importance of reentry planning and advocated for better compensation for critical positions. Also, he discussed the jail's role in managing a large population with serious mental health needs. Mr. Haywood urged advocates to focus on pressing issues and push for systemic changes.

Ms. Deane expressed concerns about deaths in the detention center, particularly among individuals with mental illness. She also inquired about new regulations affecting diversion at bond hearings and staffing changes.

**Jail Services-Bond Diversion Program and Staffing Issues** Both Ms. Somerville and Mr. Haywood emphasized the need for advocacy and communication to address issues, Ms. Somerville also highlighted the importance of communication between agencies and advocates for effective resource use and program implementation.

### **Discussion on Advocacy and Mental Health Services in Arlington County**

Ms. Verdugo raised concerns about advocacy and the non-utilization of funds for substance abuse and medical detox expertise. Ms. Somerville acknowledged a communication gap and explained that a nationally recognized expert was hired and is providing consultation and input for system and service improvement. The funding for the consultant was through another route. Ms. Somerville provided a thorough and extensive overview of mental health services and diversion initiatives in Arlington County, detailing various programs and their successes. She provided a history of the Mental Health Criminal Justice Review Committee and its focus on the sequential intercept model. She discussed the success of the Mobile Outreach Support Team (MOST) and other initiatives aimed at reducing incarceration and improving mental health services. The challenges of medication continuity and the impact of non-residency on diversion were addressed.

Ms. Somerville discussed the psychiatric bed crisis and the state's efforts to reduce competency restoration cases.

Ms. Layer and Ms. Somerville addressed the complexities of housing and diversion for non-residents.

### **VHC**

Ms. Deane provided updates on VHC's outpatient programs and the 14-bed unit commitment.

### **Director's Report**

Ms. Layer reported on recruitment for two key positions and the success of the MOST program.

Ms. Mauller expressed concerns about leadership vacancies in the CSB. Ms. Pinkston shared her personal experiences and interest in joining the CSB.

The committee voiced concerns about committee representation and the need for strategic thinking. The committee plans to discuss future topics, with Ms. Crawford expected to attend the next meeting.

**Org. Chart Review-BHD and OSB**

Ms. Lynch reviewed the outpatient services organizational chart and discussed team configurations.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 13, 2023. It will be an all-virtual meeting.