

ARLINGTON COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD  
Mental Health Committee Meeting  
December 13, 2023

**Committee Members Present:** Judy Deane, Anne Hermann, Dori Mitchell

**Committee Members Absent:** John Mitchell

**Staff Present:** Asta Lynch, Carol Layer, Wendy Crawford, Anabel Majano

**Guests Present:** Binta Niambi Brown

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

**Welcome:** Ms. Lynch and Ms. Layer welcome the Committee members and guests

**Approval of Minutes:**

This was an informational meeting as the committee does not currently have a chairperson.

**Mental Health Committee - Recruitment and Interim Plan**

The committee addressed the absence of a chair for the Mental Health Committee and the challenges in recruiting members. Ms. Crawford acknowledged the patience required during this transitional period and the struggle to maintain robust participation across all committees. She highlighted efforts to reduce the meeting burden for potential chairs and emphasized the critical role of staff in supporting the committee's functions. Ms. Crawford proposed creating a flyer to aid in recruitment, like what was done for the Child and Youth Committee. Ms. Mitchell suggested casting a wider net within the community and leveraging case managers to inform clients and family members about the committee's existence. Ms. Brown offered to share the recruitment flyer on social media and suggested direct email and text messaging as effective outreach strategies. Ms. Deane recommended reaching out to NAMI Northern Virginia for potential members, and Ms. Lynch mentioned that a flyer had already been prepared and distributed, but additional outreach was needed. The discussion concluded with the committee agreeing to disseminate the existing flyer more broadly and to identify additional groups and contacts for targeted outreach.

**Behavioral Healthcare Division Director's Report**

Ms. Layer discussed the increasing challenges with housing and homelessness, particularly the impact of the suspension of COVID-related rental support funding. She mentioned the county's efforts to accommodate families in hotels and the need for better solutions.

Ms. Layer updated the committee about the recruitment for two key positions in the Behavioral Health Division. A candidate was selected for the Client Services Entry Bureau Director position. Salary negotiations are in process. Ms. Layer shared there was one candidate for the Medical Director position, the position will continue to be advertised in the hopes of having more applicants. The committee asked about the salary and Ms. Layer shared the amount and that it is quite competitive. Ms. Brown was surprised at the lack of applicants, especially given the advertised salary range and offered to share the job posting within her network. Ms. Layer shared that the position was advertised in various professional journals and organizations, emphasizing efforts to reach BIPOC professionals.

### **County and State Budget Updates**

Ms. Layer provided an update on the local budget forecast, which was less optimistic than desired. The department was asked by the County Manager to put forward budget reduction recommendations, However, she also shared that the DBHDS commissioner indicated the possibility of additional state resources for mental health and substance use disorder services. She mentioned the potential for one-time funding to start a second MOST team, which has been well-received by stakeholders. The committee discussed the importance of maintaining funding for such initiatives beyond the one-time allocation.

Ms. Crawford expressed her hope that changes to the state's requirements for in-person meetings would be forthcoming, which would greatly benefit the committee's operations.

### **Open Discussion**

The committee briefly touched on the confirmation of meeting dates for 2024, with the next meetings scheduled for January 24th and February 28th to be held virtually. The remaining dates for the year were marked as TBD, regarding whether they would be virtual or in person, pending the appointment of a chair to the MHC.

During the open discussion, Ms. Deane mentioned the Virginia Hospital Center's plan to add more behavioral health beds, which was seen as positive news. She also brought up the tradition of providing gift bags for the ACT team during the holidays and invited members to contribute.

A discussion about the distribution of holiday gift cards included explaining the County's rigorous accountability measures in place to ensure the gift cards reach the intended recipients, which can slow down and complicate distribution of the gift cards.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.