

PATH Meeting

Minutes – 7/11/17

Location: Lewis Gale Hospital Pulaski

Present:

Harvey Barker, co-convener	Marya McPherson	Carissa South
Cassie Mills	Ashley Hash	Rhonda Seltz
Deena Flinchum	Stephanie Spencer	Noelle Bissell
Joanna MacQueen	Katie Hundley	Dave Nutter
Cheryl Coleman	James Pritchett	Holly Lesko
Angie Nichols	Juli Dellorso	Anthony Akers
Maggie Bassett	Massey Whorley	Rebecca Marshall
Mary Lough	Bob Suddarth	
Nick Bilbro	Vicky Collins	

Introductions: Harvey introduced himself and announced that Michelle Brauns was unable to attend the meeting due to an impending grant deadline. He encouraged everyone to sign-in and add to the PATHways Sharing list.

Harm Reduction Standards and Protocols: Dr. Noelle Bissell with the New River Health District announced that the Health Department will now be dispensing Naloxone. Those interested in obtaining the overdose reversal medication must complete REVIVE training in order to obtain a kit through VDH. She also informed the group that three of New River Health localities will be beginning a comprehensive harm reduction pilot program consisting of a needle/syringe exchange, but in order to implement the program, NRHD needs support from the community and local law enforcement. PATH agreed to participate as a subcommittee for the program.

Federal and State Updates from Richmond: Massey Whorley is a senior policy advisor in the Office of Governor of Virginia and serves as the liaison of secretariats of Health and Human Resources and Finance. He has served with the McAuliffe administration since 2016.

Massey agrees that the spotlight is on the opioid issue. He believes that everyone should have healthcare (not an option). He worked for the Commonwealth Institute to work on the Medicaid expansion campaign. It has been a long partisan battle. He believes that discussions have ‘left the realm of what is good for Virginians.’ From his experience, he has learned to ‘always fight the big battles, but figure out where you can make progress,’ and he feels that this year has been the year of progress for mental/behavioral health and opioid abuse. This year, there were 7 bills introduced that the Governor endorsed related to opioid abuse, Naloxone distribution being one. We have the data on the numbers of people who are negatively affected by the opioid crisis, but we do not have the numbers for those who are being saved, which are numerous.

As for harm reduction legislation, Massey said that he is amazed that it received the traction that it did because it is ‘an intersection of public health and public safety.’ He stated that people are making the realization that drug abuse is going beyond a purely law enforcement issue and shifting to behavioral and mental health issues; we're not

going to arrest our way out of this issue. Without focusing on how to prevent the spread of diseases via intravenous drug use, we open ourselves up to societal diseases, which we will inevitably have to pay for in the long run. He also spoke about licensing of peer recovery specialists. The idea is that Medicaid will pay for these services. Because these peer recovery specialists are people who are in active recovery, they bring a powerful perspective to the issues.

Another bill that was introduced was the Substance Exposed Infants bill, stating that if a pregnant woman engaged in an addiction recovery program, she was exempt from talking with Child Protective Services. The intention for this legislation is to help people identify what's going on and what we can do to help. Massey also touched on e-prescriptions for opioids. Paper scripts are easy to fake, so we need to have a secure system to combat forgery.

New Projects/Plans at NRVCS: James Pritchett spoke about new initiatives at the Community Services Board. They are working with new energy, new passion, new tools, on how to increase access. We are a high risk area. As such, they have received some funds in the form of OPTR funds for their efforts. The money they are receiving is allowing them to double their medication assisted treatment program. As far as prevention, they are working with their community coalition on multiple projects to address substance abuse prevention. James announced that they now have 8 peer counselors to assist with treatment and will be able to hire 2 more with the new grant. He also spoke about same-day access and just in time scheduling for psychiatric patients. He stated that people are more likely to engage in treatment and become successful in recovery. Since December, they have seen a tremendous drop in no shows. They have also expanded their drug court programs.

Panel Discussion: *The main issue with drug courts is with temporary housing, most of which are not conducive to recovery. Would there be grant funding available in the future to address this issue?* Massey responded that reentry is a huge issue, but he believes that the housing conversation needs to be elevated and associated with public safety, mental health, as well as housing community development in order to see positive results. Vicky Collins added that the housing committee received some funding and are in discussion on how to use them accordingly.

Workgroup updates:

Advocacy: Rhonda Seltz drafted a letter on behalf of PATH emphasizing the need to take time to address the new healthcare legislation. She also informed the group that she extended an invitation to Tim Kaine to attend and possibly speak at one of our future meetings. She spoke to Morgan Griffith's Aid about the ability to have older parents on healthy [adult] children's insurance; stating that we need more choices. Rhonda introduced Angie Nichols and Deena Flinchum who have both asked her for assistance, to speak about a couple of legislative topics.

Angie Nichols stated that McVee funding (covers high-risk) is at full capacity. It is set to end federally at the end of September of this year. Virginia has secured funding for one additional year (good through September 2018), but what is decided now will

impact us later on. Therefore, the state has asked for a call-to-action to push legislation to understand home visiting.

Deena announced that the State Health Insurance and Assistance Program (SHIP) is up for its annual review and there are talks of doing away with funding. SHIP is a program that has staff and volunteers, two of whom are a retired doctors and an HR specialists, that help people on Medicare to get the right start. Every year during open enrollment, SHIP sees an influx of traffic with people who need to make sure their drugs are covered appropriately and those who need help finding the least expensive way to pay for drugs (SHIP helped saved \$566,000 last year). More people are using this service due to the aging population, so it's very important to ask legislation to support SHIP and help get the word out about what it is they do.

PATHways Sharing:

Marya McPherson spoke about DePaul, a community based free service for adoptive families facing difficulty. She stated no insurance is required for their services and announced they now have sponsored residential homes, of which occasionally provide respite care.

Carissa South shared that Virginia 211 reps have started cataloguing back to school drives. If your agency is participating or hosting an event, contact Carissa to help get the word out.

Rhonda Seltz wanted to share with PATH members that pregnant women are eligible for comprehensive dental (which is medically acceptable 60 days post-partum). Those interested can go to [Smiles for Children](#) to find a dentist or call 1-888-912-3456 to find a provider.

Holly Lesko and Beth O'Connor have put together a proposal to look at workforce drug testing and screening programs and whether or not they are doing what they initially planned to do. They have found that industries are interested to work with them because they struggle to hire. Holly also shared that she will be starting a new job through the College of Engineering Education to do enhanced stem education in 3 middle schools in Appalachia. She will be working with students, teachers and administrators to encourage critical thinking among students.

The Next PATH meeting is October 10 at Carilion NRV Medical Center in the Fireside A Conference Room.