



A Community Mental Health / Developmental Disabilities / Addictive Diseases Program

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**NEW HORIZONS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
2100 Comer Avenue – Conference Room B
Columbus, GA 31906**

Date of Meeting: May 9, 2022

Members Present: David Ranieri, Edwina Turner, Joseph Williams,
Sandra Gill, Karen Johnson, LaVerne Chaffin, and April Hughes

Members Excused: Damon Hoyte, Nancy Schroeder, Ed Harbison,
and Linda McElroy

Staff Present: Andrea Winston, Denise Wade, Susan Gallagher,
Karen Cotton-Everett, Cathy Thomas, Ada Thomas,
Randall Newberry, and Molly Jones

CALL TO ORDER: Due to Board Chair Damon.Hoyte being unable to attend today’s meeting, David Ranieri presided over the meeting. The meeting was called to order at 3:31 p.m. A quorum was established at that time.

RECOGNITION OF GUEST(S) ATTENDING TODAY’S MEETING: Mac Moye, Stewart County Manager and Board Member April Hughes’ infant son, A.J.

*** SECRETARY’S MINUTES (Approval of February 14, 2022 and March 14, 2022 minutes):** M/S/P Joseph Williams/Karen Johnson to approve the February 14, 2022 and the March 14, 2022 minutes, Board approved.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEAVE OF ABSENCE: Andrea announced that our CFO, Valerie Bowden, has taken a leave of absence due to her health needs. She has been undergoing treatment for ovarian cancer and is now at home under hospice care. While our staff is having a difficult time accepting this sad and devastating news, we are doing our best to support Valerie, stay in touch, and assist in covering her many duties as best we can. She continues to work from home on a more limited basis. Plans to borrow some CFO time from another CSB are being considered. With a few big projects underway, conversion to a new Electronic Health Record and Certified Community Behavioral Health Center Cost Study and Implementation, we are reaching out to other staff to assist in these and other areas. Board Members were asked to keep Valerie in their thoughts and prayers during this very challenging time.

FINANCIAL REVIEW: Andrea reported New Horizons had a surplus for the month ending March 31, 2022 of \$288,054 compared to the budget of \$49,879 and a year to date surplus of \$1,667,678 compared to the budget of \$159,881. There were no unusual items in the March financials. Days Cash on Hand (COH) at the end of April were 85.00 days. The COH is high because we have drawn down all of the DBHDD Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) funds, but it has not all been spent yet. We had to pay the payroll taxes and the tax withholdings in May on the lump sum and have 2 months of the COLA raise for May and June. The COH amount will drop down some in the next few months.

Andrea emphasized the importance of maintaining financial stability after the two large grants (CCBHC and CMHC) end in two years. Programs that are operating at a deficit are being looked at closely and tough decisions will need to be made on their future.

COST OF LIVING INCREASE: Andrea reported Governor Kemp signed HB910 in March of 2022. The Amended Fiscal Year 2022 budget included a \$5000 cost of living adjustment (COLA) for all NHBH full-time, benefit eligible, state employees effective April 1, 2022. While Community Service Boards are not state employees, thanks to advocacy from the CSB network by the GACSB, we were included in the eligibility. The raises were processed in two parts: First, full-time employee salaries were updated to reflect the approved cost of living adjustment effective April 1st 2022. The next step was to process a onetime supplement of up to \$3750 for employees based on the number of pay periods a team member was employed by the state between July 1st 2021 and April 1st 2022. Unfortunately, the COLA covered only current full-time NHBH employees, not our Health Care staffing team members or part-time/contract employees. Several Board members and many team members were understandably quite vocal in their response to this disparity as they felt unappreciated, that there was a dual system, and that they were not a valued part of the team. Our executive leadership team recognizes the value and commitment that all employees of the agency provide and offered enhanced compensation of \$1500 to full-time Health Care Staffing employees, \$750 to part-time Health Care Staffing and New Horizons employees and \$750 to contract employees. While this issue created a period of frustration for the agency and our team, strong advocacy from our Board, leadership, and team members and coming together as a united team resulted in creative, helpful ideas of ways we can improve in the future.

RESPECT INSTITUTE – ADA THOMAS: New Horizons' Peer Academy leader, Cathy Thomas, introduced Ada. Thomas, who has worked with New Horizons since November 2018 as a Certified Addiction Recovery Empowerment Specialist, also known as CARES. Ada has a Masters degree in Human Services/Addictions Counseling and is a recent graduate of the Respect Institute. She is a proud mother of one son and daughter-in-law with four grandchildren. Ada enjoys shopping at Goodwill, fishing, reading, and learning new things. One day she would like to pursue her Ph.D., and own a Resource Center and a transitional house for women coming out of prison.

Ada shared her compelling story of growing up in an abusive family situation and having the determination and strength to overcome much adversity, many hardships, and substance abuse issues to become an advocate and mentor to others. She is truly a survivor and we value her lived experience that inspires and encourages others who are struggling with mental health and substance abuse challenges.

The Peer Academy is the incubator for our Certified Peer Specialists that provides support and understanding to enable them to grow and learn while helping others through their challenges.

HOTEL/MOTEL & HARM REDUCTION/SUPPORT SERVICES GRANT APPLICATIONS:

Denise reported a renewal application was submitted on 5/6/22 for the Hotel/Motel Grant with a maximum of \$5,000 that covers our rural counties only. Funds are utilized to pay for hotel stays for individuals or families for a maximum of 30 days. The Harm Reduction/Support Services Grant was submitted by the deadline of April 29th with a maximum of \$50,000, based on the number of units. Case management, furniture, turnkey, and client assistance are eligible activities for these funds. Harm Reduction is a set of practical strategies that reduce negative consequences of drug use and mental illness and acknowledges that some ways of treating mental illness and using drugs are clearly safer than others and that recovery is an individual path. It also recognizes that persons with co-occurring disorders are the primary agents to reducing the harms of their own illness/drug use. Examples include safer/lower risk drinking (limits) and safer/lower risk drug use. These funds are attached to Permanent Supportive Housing in Harris County.

***SHELTER PLUS CARE OPTIONS:** Susan and Denise reported that in 2019 Cheryl Williams presented information to the Board on three Shelter Plus Care Programs, funded through the HUD Continuum of Care. In Muscogee County, we are currently contracted for 31 scattered site housing units for individuals and a matching component which we provide through Case Management Services. At the 2019 meeting, it was presented that the Muscogee County Program runs an annual operating deficit averaging \$150,000 per year. Individuals housed in the program are required to pay up to 30% of their income towards their housing costs. We consistently have had difficulties in collecting their portion of the rest and also incur costs involved when a unit is damaged, needs repairs or furniture, or has bedbugs or other infestations. We also fund a full-time position with benefits to administer the housing portion of the program. Neither the grant nor DBHDD fund this position. From 2018 to 2022, our average loss has been over \$136,000 annually. In April, a meeting was held with DCA to discuss releasing the Muscogee County Grant to another agency within the GA-505 Continuum of Care (CoC). DCA asked that we provide information on units under lease, persons in each unit, landlords, when each lease expires, and utility providers for each unit. The GA-505 CoC has indicated the local Salvation Army is interested in taking over the housing operations of the Grant. It is recommended that New Horizons enter into a MOU with the Salvation Army to continue providing Mental Health Treatment Services for residents and provide this information as the matching portion of the grant. DCA is in communication with Pat Frey, leadership at the GA-505 CoC, to move the process of transferring the grant ahead. Andrea indicated that we are seeking Board approval to proceed with the transfer of our Muscogee County units to another agency, but emphasized there will be no housing displacement or utility disruption to program participants. She added that should the transfer occur, it may be done a few units at a time. To remain financially stable in the future, this is one of the programs we have mentioned to the Board that is operating at a deficit and has for a number of years. Board members asked if this transfer would create any loss of jobs, but with 35 positions open currently, that is not an issue. M/S/P Edwina Turner/Joseph Williams to proceed with the transfer of Muscogee County Shelter Plus Care units, Board approved.

CERTIFIED COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CENTER UPDATE: Karen gave an update on implementation listing six goals of CCBHC including expanding access to care, expanding our Integrated Primary Care Program, improving Veteran engagement, establishing a trauma-informed care environment, elevating standards of care through implementation of an outcome-based treatment model, and providing nationally recognized I/DD services to include Care Coordination. DBHDD Goals and Expectations for Tier 1 sites were outlined along with a project timeline. Attestation was completed prior to the deadline and submitted to DBHDD with evidence documents and feedback from DBHDD expected by the end of May. Training on new and updated policies is underway as well as twice monthly technical assistance meetings with MTM and meetings with DBHDD and other CSBs in sub-groups. Filling CCBHC positions continues to be an issue for all. Board members commended staff on completing the attestation ahead of schedule and acknowledged the huge endeavor involved in becoming a CCBHC.

DEVELOPMENT, MARKETING, AND PUBLIC RELATIONS: Susan reminded Board members and staff that May is National Mental Health Awareness Month. She listed development plans and goals as continuing to seek and submit local, state, federal, and private foundation grant applications, continuing to partner with accountability courts to provide treatment, continuing to partner with Morehouse School of Medicine USDA Rural Health Care Grant, and to seek opportunities to partner with Mercer School of Medicine, especially in Harris and Muscogee counties. Marketing plans and goals are to develop new 30-second spots for website and television commercials, provide Spanish language brochures to use in the community, and to continue to use Facebook to promote agency activities. To enhance Community Relations, Georgia Apex Project brought a Motivational Speaker to 4 schools in Randolph and Clay counties. Susan reached out to school superintendents and principals throughout the outlying counties and was able to coordinate speaking events for those that were interested. Susan is scheduled to conduct virtual trainings on Suicide Awareness and Prevention and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) for AFLAC employees during their Mental Health Wellness activities. Susan was delighted to announce that Community Health Fairs are starting to return. She attended an event in Ft. Gaines recently and one at the American Legion Post 35. “Did you Know” information cards related to Spravato, a cutting edge medication for treatment resistant depression, were distributed to Board members. They were encouraged to distribute the cards in various locations in their communities to get the word out on services New Horizons offers.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Andrea asked if the August 8th Board Meeting could be changed to August 15th. The Strategic Planning Retreat for the GACSB is August 7th and 8th and she and Mr. Hoyte will be attending. All Board Members in attendance voted in favor of the change in dates for the August meeting.

Andrea also announced the following:

The CARF Intent to Survey is being prepared and will be submitted the end of May. We expect our CARF Survey to take place in September or October.

The Mental Health Parity Act, HB 1013, passed unanimously during the 2022 State Legislative session. HB1013 will help Georgians access affordable mental health and substance use disorder treatment for themselves and their children by ensuring that public and private health insurance plans cover behavioral health equitably with physical health.

In January 2022, it was announced that the State of Georgia had joined the multistate settlement agreement with Cardinal, McKesson, and AmerisourceBergen, three major pharmaceutical distributors. The final passage of SB500 legislation positions the state and its local governments to receive the full \$636,320,843.82 available for allocation under the \$26 billion multistate opioid settlement.

Coming in July of 2022, 988, a direct, national, three-digit line, will open the door for millions of Americans to seek the help they need while sending the message to the country that healing, hope, and help are happening every day in Georgia. Calls will be answered by the Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL) 24/7/365.

DBHDD site visits scheduled for May include the EMERGE program (May 5, 2022) and the MAT/SOR program (May 11, 2022).

Mr. Ranieri has been reappointed for another 3 year Board term through June 2025.

Two other Board members, Karen Johnson and April Hughes terms expire later this year. Both acknowledged they would like to continue to serve on the Board. Reappointment forms will be sent to County Commissioners in their counties prior to their reappointment dates.

New Horizons' annual financial audit is scheduled to begin August 22, 2022 with Garland Williams, CPA.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Mrs. Johnson inquired about the pay schedule for Developmental Disability Supported Employment individuals changing to once a month. Andrea responded that this was the result of the Department of Labor audit several months ago that necessitated some changes in the program.

Mr. Ranieri thanked Board members and staff for attending today's meeting and extended thoughts and prayers to our CFO, Valerie Bowden.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, M/S/P Joseph Williams/Edwina Turner to adjourn the meeting at 4:55 p.m., Board approved.

Damon Hoyte
Chairperson