

Macon County Mental Health Task Force
January 31, 2011

Members present – Sarah Altman, Ronnie Beale, Jim Bottomley, Jim Bruckner, Rhonda Cox, Jane Kimsey, Kathy McGaha, Mike Neidig, Andy Shields and Brian Welch

Guest – Nan Fein, Candace Rawlinson and Duncan Sumpter

Approval of Minutes – Jim Bruckner made a motion to approve the minutes of the last two meetings. Mike Neidig 2nd the motion, with a unanimous vote for approval.

Action Items:

Jim Bruckner welcomed the task force members to today's meeting. Mr. Bruckner asked everyone to introduce themselves and tell what organization they represented.

Andy Shields presented the task force members with involuntary commitment numbers. Mr. Shields stated that in 2010 they documented 100 involuntary commitments; this was down from 152 in 2009. But Mr. Shields said the average time per commitment had increased from 17 hours, 25 minutes to 18 hours, 48 minutes.

Andy Shields said two factors that have helped with the decrease in involuntary commitments is NAMI offering classes to people in the local community and the benefit of our officers having the Crisis Intervention Training (CIT). He stated that the officers are also more aware of all resources that are now available in our area.

Ronnie Beale questioned if and when the CIT training would be available for the local magistrates. Ms. Roberts said that hopefully there would be two CIT classes for magistrates in the near future.

Kathy McGaha asked if a modified version of the CIT training could be made available for groups like CARENET and school principals. Ms. Roberts said she would try to coordinate this. Mr. Neidig and Ms. Altman volunteered to help.

Ronnie Beale said he was also concerned about the long wait times for commitments needing acute psychiatric beds in the state. Mr. Shields agreed this is a big problem and doesn't see an immediate solution in solving it.

Rhonda Cox stated that Smoky Mountain Center hasn't had to use a large number of state beds.

Jane Kimsey (reporting for Paula Ledford) reported that Dr. Brigman and Paula Ledford had two meetings with Appalachian Community Services (ACS). Ms. Kimsey stated that Ms. Ledford had reported that the coverage for elementary schools is fine at the moment, but middle school, high school and Union Academy show some concerns.

Duncan Sumpter explained that ACS was very willing to partner with our school system and had made an offer, but have not received any response yet. Mr. Sumpter said some of the programs they offer have no cost associated with them. Mr. Sumpter said they have some programs currently operating in the school system in Clay County.

Ronnie Beale expressed his concern about opiates being a big problem in our area and asked about treatment options locally. Ms. Altman said the nearest treatment facility was in Asheville. Ms. Altman also said a physician must be specially trained for this type of treatment.

Jim Bottomley stressed that where there is a need for illegal drugs – someone will supply. Mr. Bottomley stated that it thought our next illegal drug problem for this area would be heroin.

Rhonda Cox asked if organizations in our county had looked at “Project Lazarus”. Ms. Cox said this program had originated in Wilkes County and the local contact was Patti Tiberi. Ms. McGaha explained that a group from Macon County (including Patti Tiberi) had traveled to Wilkes County and had met with Fred Brason and several others involved in this program. Ms. McGaha also explained that Healthy Carolinians Substance Abuse Task Force had worked on getting local pharmacies, physicians and dentists to use the North Carolina Controlled Substances Reporting System.

Rhonda Cox also updated the task force members on several other topics:

- ❖ Local Meetings – Ms. Cox said several local meetings had been occurred between local providers, DSS representatives and LME representatives.
- ❖ Divestiture – Ms. Cox said the divestiture process should be completed by July 1st.
- ❖ Medicaid Waiver – Ms. Cox warned with the upcoming health reform changes, more people will be Medicaid eligible.

Candace Rawlinson, with Meridian Behavioral Health, stated that Meridian had increased walk-in availability. Ms. Rawlinson said 600 unduplicated residents had been provided services so far. Ms. Altman stated that there had been good coordination between the local LME and Meridian.

Duncan Sumpter stated that with the Walk-In Centers and the Mobile Crisis Centers, more people are being seen. He also stated that offering these services helps with less visits to local emergency rooms. Mr. Sumpter said that ACS is also in the process of getting marketing materials.

Mike Neidig explained that Barium Springs took over on February 1st from Mountain Youth Resources. Mr. Neidig also said that the jail program and the drug treatment programs will continue.

Debbie Roberts, with NAMI, stated that education is an important component of dealing with mental health issues. Mr. Roberts explained that NAMI will be offering several classes in the near future.