

**S.C. MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION  
S.C. Department of Mental Health  
Aiken-Barnwell Mental Health Center  
1135 Gregg Highway, Aiken, SC 29801**

**September 7, 2018**

**Center Presentation**

**ATTENDANCE:**

**Commission Members:**

Dr. Alison Evans, Chair  
Ms. Sharon Wilson, Co-Chair (via phone conference)  
Ms. Louise Haynes  
Mr. Bob Hiott

**Staff/Visitors:**

Tamara Smith	Mercedes Fabco
Lucille Streeter	Vanessa Aranda
Daisy Bing	Tangalen Sutton
Tecora Williams	Debbie Blalock
Lisa Davis	Dr. Gregory Smith
Lisa Hall	Tomeka O'Barnnon
Kelley Fletcher	Travis Wicher
Karlin Cummings	Dr. Bob Bank
Bianca Otterbein	Varney Hodge
Shamika Anderson	April Kitchens
Brigette Cuonzo	Captain Nick Gallam

The S.C. Mental Health Commission met at the Aiken-Barnwell Mental Health Center, 1135 Gregg Highway, Aiken, SC 29801, at 9:00 a.m. Dr. Alison Evans expressed appreciation to the Center for the courtesies extended to the Commission during its visit. Dr. Evans turned the meeting over to Ms. Tamara Smith, Executive Director.

**PRESENTATION:**

Dr. Greg Smith gave a presentation on “Breaking Down the Barriers to Access”, which focused on three **R**'s:

- **RESPECT** for:
  - Ourselves
  - Our Clients
  - The Process
  - The Institution
  - Our History

- **RE-EDUCATION**
  - Then: Old School Paradigms
  - Now: Evidence Based, Science, Assessment, Measurement, Progress, Goals
  - Rethinking what it means to be mentally healthy
- **RECOVERY**
  - Assessment, Diagnosis, and Treatment
  - Measurement and Monitoring (ongoing treatment)
  - Anticipation, Planning, Action, and Wellness –

Dr. Smith reported that Aiken-Barnwell Mental Health Center (ABMHC) participated in seventy-nine (79) public relations and community networking events in FY18, making contact with approximately nine thousand, four hundred fifty-seven (9,457) individuals. Some of the events that ABMHC has participated in were back to school events, festivals and fairs, health fairs, depression screenings, career fairs, and suicide and homeless coalitions.

Mr. Varney Hodge, who works from the local jail, presented information regarding “Collaborating to Increase Access”. Mr. Hodge stated that during a mental health crisis, individuals are more likely to have involvement with law enforcement and that two million people with mental illness are booked into jails each year. In many cases, incarcerated individuals do not receive the quality mental health care needed and their conditions worsen. He stated that incarcerated adults with mental illness tend to have longer stays and higher rates of re-offending than people without mental illness. In August, 2017, a review of current inmates at Aiken County Detention Center revealed that forty-four percent (44%) of the current population had previously received mental health treatment from ABMHC. On July 1, 2018, ABMHC was awarded a contract to provide behavioral healthcare services at the Aiken County Detention Center. This ensures continuity of care for existing clients and enables the ability to identify treatment needs for other inmates and assist with discharge planning. As a result of the collaboration, a mental health professional is onsite 37.5 hours per week, Monday – Friday. Also onsite, is a nurse practitioner (7.5 hours weekly), a Peer Support Specialist (approximately 2 hours weekly), and an Entitlement Specialist (approximately 2 hours per week). It was reported that in July, 2018, fifty-eight (58) inmates were provided with behavioral healthcare services, thirty-three (33) inmates that were seen were current clients of ABMHC, twenty-four (24) psychiatric assessments were provided, and eighty-seven (87) inmates were taking psychiatric medications. Mr. Hodge introduced Captain Nick Gallam from the Aiken County Detention Center and thanked him for his hard work in collaborating with ABMHC and the inmates.

Captain Nick Gallam thanked ABMHC for the tremendous and collaborative efforts that have made conditions better for the inmates with mental illness. Captain Gallam attends forums and is an advocate for Mental Health Courts, helping with the coordination of meetings.

Ms. Tecora Williams provided information on Peer Support Services and stated that the Peer Support Program began in 2004. There are currently two (2) Certified Peer Support Specialists at ABMHC, one (1) in Barnwell, and (1) in North Augusta. Over fifty-four thousand (54,000) contacts have been made since its inception in 2004. ABMHC was the recipient of the Eli Lilly Creative Program Award in 2007 and the MHA-SC Outstanding Program Award in 2014. The

program operates two (2) Peer Support Drop-In Centers, facilitates NAMI Connection Support Groups for the Community, provides 1-1 peer support services, and provides peer support at Aiken County Detention Center.

Ms. Cindy Smith's video was both informative and inspiring. Ms. Smith believes ABMHC's success is due to ABMHC's investments in the clients. She stated that ninety percent (90%) of the Peer Support Specialists originated from patients of the Center. The Engagement Center provides activities for children, music, and plants to provide patients with a safe, welcoming atmosphere. Some patients shared their success stories in the meeting and via the video, acknowledging gratitude for assistance in learning to manage areas of their lives. Coping skills and peer support were highlighted as areas that were helpful to the patients, making their lives healthier and happier.

Dr. Evans thanked all of the presenters for the excellent, informative presentations.

There being no further discussion, the center presentation concluded at 10:00 a.m.

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Alison Y. Evans, Psy.D, Chair  
SC Mental Health Commission

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Terry Davis, Recording Secretary  
SC Mental Health Commission