

S. C. MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION MEETING
SCDMH Administration
2414 Bull Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201
April 14, 2023

A Business Meeting of the S.C. Mental Health Commission was held in Room 320 at the S.C. Department of Mental Health Administration Building on Friday, April 14, 2023, at 10:30 a.m. The meeting notice and agenda were posted prior to the meeting and notice made to all individuals and news media who requested information in accordance with State law.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Pearce opened the meeting at 10:32 a.m. He noted scheduling conflicts prevented there being a quorum of members present at today's meeting. Dr. Elliott Levy, Dr. Alison Evans, and Mr. Bobby Mann were absent, excused.

Chaplain Kynan Robinson provided the invocation.

On behalf of the Commission, Chairman Pearce expressed heartfelt condolences to the family of Mr. Jeffery Ham, Executive Director, Santee-Wateree Mental Health Center, upon the passing of his brother, Mr. Charles Ham, on Monday, April 10, 2023.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Chairman Pearce welcomed everyone. Visitors present virtually were: Kathleen Martin, Attorney, Disability Rights South Carolina; Wanda McMichael, Program Manager, Liberty Healthcare Corporation; Jon Siler, Regional Access Manager, Otsuka; and Susan von Schenk, Capital Information Affiliates (CIA).

MONTHLY/QUARTERLY INFORMATION REPORTS

Ms. Elizabeth Hutto, General Counsel, presented the items listed under Monthly/Quarterly Informational Reports, copies of which had been provided to the Commission. Following are highlights from her report:

Ms. Hutto reported a total of four pending investigations at the end of March 2023 for the Office of Public Safety.

Ms. Hutto reported that as of yesterday there were 26 pending SLED investigations. Seven cases were assigned to SLED, 13 cases were assigned to Long-term Care Ombudsman Office; five cases were assigned to local law enforcement; and one case is with the Adult Protective Services (APS) at DSS which was an allegation of verbal abuse. She reported that the staff member involved in that incident was terminated.

Ms. Hutto highlighted the following from the Patient Advocacy Report:

- 79 calls to patient advocacy in February 2023; a total of 159 year to date.
- 67 complaints were resolved in February 2023; a total of 148 year to date.
- The number of complaints by category resolved is 189 (*complaints are broken out by category, a single patient complaint may have more than one category*).

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Ms. Robin Crawford, Legislative Liaison, gave a legislative update. Following are highlights from her report:

- The South Carolina General Assembly adjourns sine die on Thursday, May 11, 2023. The House was on furlough this week. The Senate will debate the FY24 budget on the floor next week. The Senate Finance Committee's budget recommendation for DMH was similar to the House's budget, with funding for the Office of Suicide Prevention, State Veterans Nursing Homes, the Sexually Violent Predator Program, staff retention increases for nurses, mental health professionals, and law enforcement. It also includes funding to continue and expand the alternative transportation pilot program as well as additional funds for 988 call centers. The Senate recommends a \$2,500 salary increase for state employees making less than \$50,000 and a 5% increase for state employees making \$50,000 and over. The House and Senate will work together to arrive at a final budget for state employee raises.

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- The House has given a second and third reading to their version of the DHEC reorganization bill, H.4124, which crossed over to the Senate on April 6, 2023. The bill has been assigned to the Senate Medical Affairs Committee.
- The Senate Medical Affairs Subcommittee on S.399, a bill that would dissolve the Department of Health and Environmental Control and its Board, move its environmental responsibilities to existing state agencies, and move its public health responsibilities into a newly created Behavioral and Public Health agency, is scheduled to meet on Thursday, April 20, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. If S.399 passes out of the subcommittee, it will be on the agenda of the full Senate Medical Affairs Committee, which is scheduled to meet at 10 a.m. on the same day. S.399 did not make the April 10, 2023 crossover deadline, which means the House will not consider the bill this calendar year. The only exceptions are bills that are expressly identified in the Sine Die Resolution which would allow the Legislature to continue working on them past the sine die date.
- The Senate passed S.146, a bill that would make some changes to the Sexually Violent Predator commitment process, including changes to definitions, testing and assessment requirements, and the trial procedure. DMH worked with the Attorney General's office and the Commission on Indigent Defense on the bill which is now in the House. It has not been scheduled for a hearing at this point in time.
- Dr. Bank met with the House Ways and Means Healthcare Subcommittee Chairman, Representative Herbkersman, regarding H.4159, the telehealth modernization act, which expands the definition of telehealth and makes changes to current statutes. Dr. Bank discussed how the legislation could impact DMH and together they worked on ways to ensure that the bill supports the work of DMH psychiatrists and prescribers.
- DMH leadership continues to have productive meetings with legislators and staff to discuss Agency priorities and legislation that will impact DMH and mental health services. DMH leadership met with the following Representatives: Gilda Cobb-Hunter, Roger Kirby, Bruce Bannister, Bobby Cox, Sylleste Davis, Brandon Guffy; and Senators Brad Hutto, Ross Turner, and Danny Verdin.
- Advocacy Day was held at the State House on March 30, 2023. Legislator participation included: Senators Thomas Alexander, Marlon Kimpson, Katrina Shealy; Representatives Todd Rutherford, Gilda Cobb-Hunter, Heather Bauer, Bill Clyburn, Joe Jefferson, Jermaine Johnson, Annie McDaniel, and Heath Sessions.

On behalf of the Commission, Chairman Pearce commended Ms. Crawford for her excellent work and said she is doing an outstanding job.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Bank talked about the proposed salary increases for direct care staff and other essential staff. He said the proposed increase in the House and the Senate along with the general increase will be a tremendous help with building up and retaining experienced workers.

There was discussion regarding S.399.

DEPARTMENTAL OVERVIEW AND UPDATE

Division of Inpatient Services (DIS)

Dr. Bellamy presented the Division of Inpatient Services report, copies of which had been provided to the Commission. Following are highlights from her report:

- Dr. Bellamy said Forensic Services continues to explore ways to attenuate the waitlist and to address the growing demand for services. There has been an uptick in mental health concerns since the pandemic and because of this more awareness of mental health issues are being raised. There is some backlog being dealt with from when the courts were closed during the pandemic. The Department is mandated to comply with court orders for the evaluation of criminal defendants' capacity to stand trial, and the efficient and effective treatment of patients who are referred through the criminal justice system. As of March 16, 2023, there were 138 individuals on the forensic ready for admission waitlist. Currently, there are 213 committed forensic beds and plans are underway to make more beds available.
- Dr. Bellamy presented the BPH and Harris Bed Turnover Report for October 2022 – March 2023, a copy of which is filed with the minutes in the Office of the State Director. Discharges for chronic patients is trending upward, and length of stay is starting to trend downward, thus creating additional bed capacity through bed turnover. From October 2022 through March 2023, Bryan Civil discharged 29 chronic patients with length of stay greater than 90 days; Harris

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discharged 21 chronic patients with length of stay greater than 90 days. Dr. Bellamy said there is a notable increase in utilization of transition services for discharge planning and patient placement.

- Dr. Jones referred to the minutes of the Governing Body Committee for Inpatient Facilities from February 8, 2023, which were included in the Commission packet. He noted the NRI (National Research Institute) above national average ratings under “Inpatient Consumer Surveys” and said this is positive data to highlight in the Department’s efforts to increase awareness about the Agency’s services.
- There was discussion about nursing staff at DIS. Dr. Bellamy said it remains to be a challenge because of the shortage in nurses and the competing market. She said that an increase to an acceptable starting salary would be helpful in attracting early career nurses to consider mental healthcare nursing.

HR Report

Ms. Eleanor Odom-Martin, Human Resources Director, presented the HR report, copies of which had been provided to the Commission. Below are highlights from the report:

- Ms. Odom-Martin referenced a report from “*Becker’s Hospital Review*” (www.beckershospitalreview.com) about the critical nursing shortage nationwide. The report indicates the nursing shortage is going to get much worse stating that 800,000 more nurses plan to exit the workforce by 2027. The report provided that nurses left the profession due to pandemic burn out and retirement-related attrition. However, nurses younger than the age of 40 say they intend to leave the profession by 2027 saying they are burned out and a desire to improve a work-life balance.
- Ms. Odom-Martin reported the following comparison of filled FTEs:
 - March 2021 – 3,952
 - March 2022 – 3,527
 - March 2023 – 3,559
- In FY22 the Department had a total of 800 FTE hires and 1,080 departures; thus far in FY23 the Department has 688 FTE hires and 630 departures.
- Ms. Odom-Martin announced she will present to the Commission in the next few months information as to whether the recent salary improvement initiatives are making a difference in attracting and retaining employees.
- The 2022 Outstanding SCDMH Employee of the year will be announced at the May Commission meeting.

Community Mental Health Services

On behalf of Ms. Deborah Blalock, Deputy Director, Community Mental Health Services, Ms. Jennifer Butler, Director, Office of Emergency Services, presented the Community Mental Health Services (CMHS) report. Following are highlights from the report:

- Ms. Butler distributed pictures from the March 30th Advocacy Day at the State House. She talked about the great turnout from the mental health centers, the table displays, Mobile Crisis RV displays, the legislators who attended, and patients there with lived expertise and advocating for themselves.
- The Mental Health State Planning Council will meet on May 17, 2023. Mental health centers will bring Mobile Crisis RVs to the DMH grounds. Invitations will be extended to the media, legislators, and local advocacy partners.
- Ms. Butler presented the CMHS Trends and Transparency Monthly Indicators (TMI) spreadsheets, copies of which had been provided to the Commission.
- Ms. Butler announced that the second call center is close to being operational. Legal is reviewing the contract with Vibrant, which operates the national line. She noted the building renovations are incomplete, but everything will be in place to service calls.
- For the first time, the Senate Finance Committee’s budget recommendations included funding for the Office of Suicide Prevention. Ms. Butler reported that in 2021 the number of suicide deaths in South Carolina dropped to 802. That is the lowest since 2015. South Carolina rates 28th in the country for suicide deaths. She noted that DHEC and CDC are behind in reporting data due to the pandemic.

Administrative Services & Financial Status Update

Ms. Debbie Calcote, Deputy Director, Administrative Services, presented the Administrative Services and monthly financial report, copies of which had been provided to the Commission. As of February 28, 2023, the Department is projected to end FY23 with a balance of \$9 million. Ms. Calcote noted this is down from January 2023 by approximately \$590,000 and is attributable to spending and hiring for additional permanent FTEs and temporary FTEs.

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Ms. Calcote announced the following:

- Effective May 2, 2023, Lee Bodie will assume the role of DMH State Budget Director. He will manage the budget analysts and develop budgets for all DMH facilities and departments.
- Interviews have been completed and an offer has been extended to a candidate to fill the position of Financial Services Director. The person in this position will supervise procurement, accounting, reimbursement, payables, and the business office.
- Effective May 2, 2023, Ms. Tracy Turner will assume the role of Assistant Deputy Director of the Division of Administrative Services, overseeing Physical Plant Services and Financial Services operations as well as supporting the other departments in the Division of Administrative Services.

Major Construction/Renovations Update

Ms. Calcote will provide a report at the May Commission meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS/PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

Chairman Pearce talked about the meeting that he and Dr. Bank had with Governor McMaster on April 11, 2023. He said there was good discussion and a time to have the Governor meet and get acquainted with Dr. Bank as DMH Acting State Director.

ADJOURNMENT

At 11:45 a.m. the Commission meeting was adjourned.

ATTENDANCE

Commission Members

Mr. Greg Pearce, Chair
Dr. Carl Jones
Dr. Crystal Maxwell

Visitors/Staff

Dr. Robert Bank
Dr. Versie Bellamy
Jennifer Butler
Debbie Calcote
Robin Crawford
Elizabeth Hutto
Eleanor Odom-Martin
Brett Williams

present virtually via Zoom

Janet Bell
Mark Binkley
Lee Bodie
Pat Bresnan
Mirtha Brown
Jennifer Brush
Pete Camelo
Leigh Ann Chmura
Matthew Dorman
Melanie Gambrell

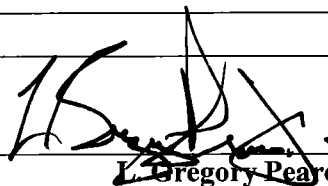
present virtually via Zoom

Dr. Kelly Gothard
Dr. Patricia Handley Dr.
Maryjane Hicks
Kathy Hugg
Keith Jackson
Tracy LaPointe
Sarah Main
Kathleen Martin
Wanda McMichael
Valarie Perkins

present virtually via Zoom

Dr. Ralph Pollock
Dr. Lynelle Reavis
Vicki Redding
Tracy Richardson
Dr. Kimberly Rudd
Jon Siler
Susan von Schenk
Lindsay Walker
Dr. Sheena Willis
Kevin Woods

APPROVALS



L. Gregory Pearce, Jr.
Chair



Kim Ballentine
Recording Secretary