

**S. C. MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION MEETING**  
**SCDMH Administration**  
**2414 Bull Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201**  
**September 8, 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, September 8, 2023, at 10:00 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 Levy called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

***By motion duly made and seconded, the Commission approved the minutes from the March 3, 2023 Internal Audit Report.***

***All voted in favor to the above motion; the motion carried.***

Ms. Valarie Perkins presented the internal audit report, copies of which had been provided to the Commission.

Mr. Pearce announced the passing of Dr. Betty R. Guerry on April 2, 2023. Dr. Guerry worked as the Medical Director at Crafts Farrow in the mid-1990s. He also announced the passing of Dr. Ronald William Maris on August 21, 2023. Dr. Maris was a Professor Emeritus, researcher, author, and internationally renowned expert in the study of suicide, suicide prevention and forensic suicidology. His wife, Mrs. Beth Troy Maris, formerly worked at DMH as a social worker.

Chaplain Malcolm O. Simpson provided the invocation.

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

Chairman Levy welcomed everyone. Visitors present virtually were: Kathy Martin, Attorney, Disability Rights, SC, and Susan von Schenk, Capital Information Affiliates (CIA). Bill Lindsey, Executive Director, NAMI SC, was present.

**SPECIAL RECOGNITION**

On behalf of the Commission and the South Carolina Department of Mental Health, Chairman Levy recognized Mr. Pearce. Chairman Levy presented the following:

*“Greg Pearce – if you take the time to google Greg Pierce, the first thing you will find is Greg Pierce the playwright, lyricist, and fiction writer. Once you recognize that you misspelled his last name and then google Greg Pearce with the correct spelling, you find Greg Pearce, an Australian politician, a former member of the Legislative Council of New South Wales. At this point, it becomes apparent that it is crucial to be more specific, so by adding South Carolina in the mix, we are in business. Let me give you a little history about our Gregory Pearce. Mr. Pearce was appointed to the South Carolina Mental Health Commission, filling the seat for South Carolina’s second congressional district, in 2019. He began his career as a clinical counselor at the South Carolina State Hospital in 1970 and remained there for sixteen years in multiple clinical and leadership roles. In 1986, he was appointed director of South Carolina Department of Mental Health’s Crafts Farrow State Hospital and remained there until its doors closed in 1992. From 1999 until 2018, he represented district six on the Richland County Council.*

*Mr. Pearce received a bachelor of science degree from Presbyterian College and a master of arts in counseling from the University of South Carolina. He has been recognized by both the National Alliance of Mental Illness of SC and Mental Health America of SC.*

S. C. MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 8, 2023

*Mr. Pearce is truly a man of the people, giving more than fifty years of public service, clinical care and mental health advocacy for the people of South Carolina.*

*We have been fortunate to have him as a part of the Commission, and he has led us through challenging times, navigating us through the rough seas of the COVID Epidemic, the turnover of several different commission members, the hiring and the departure of a state director, along with transitioning in new leadership. Mr. Pearce has given much time and effort meeting with politicians, helping the Department maintain stable footing with the many changes and restructuring that may be ahead. He has been the welcoming committee for each new Commission member, which includes all of us that are present here today. He has been our main historian, our South Carolina Department of Mental Health Wikipedia when it comes to historical facts about our agency and did a wonderful job leading us into the Agency's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary this past year. He is faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to leap.....you get the idea!*

Mr. Mark Binkley and Dr. Robert Bank also expressed appreciation to Mr. Pearce for his leadership, dedication and commitment to the Department.

On behalf of the Commission members and the South Carolina Department of Mental Health, Chairman Levy presented to Mr. Pearce a chairman's award plaque in appreciation of his tireless dedication and endless commitment to the Agency. The award read as follows:

*Presented to  
L. Gregory Pearce, Jr.  
In grateful appreciation for  
4 Years of Dedicated Service as  
Chairperson  
S.C. Mental Health Commission  
2019 - 2023*

Mr. Pearce expressed appreciation for the recognition and said that serving as Chair of the Commission has meant a lot to him. He noted that he actually began his work in mental health in 1966 as a mental health specialist. The Mental Health Commission afforded him opportunity to attend graduate school and said that is really when he began to appreciate the work of the Mental Health Commission! He thanked the Commission members for their support and said the Commission has overcome some incredible challenges.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

*By motion duly made and seconded, the Commission approved the Agenda for today's Business Meeting.*

*All voted in favor to the above motion; the motion carried.*

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*By motion duly made and seconded, the Commission approved the minutes from the Commission Business Meeting of August 4, 2023.*

*All voted in favor to the above motion; the motion carried.*

**APPROVAL OF 2024 COMMISSION MEETING DATES**

*By motion duly made and seconded, the Commission approved the 2024 Commission Meeting dates.*

*All voted in favor to the above motion; the motion carried.*

**MONTHLY/QUARTERLY INFORMATION REPORTS**

Update on US Department of Justice's (DOJ) Report

Ms. Elizabeth Hutto, General Counsel, reported that an introductory meeting was held yesterday with representatives from the DOJ along with partner agencies and the Governor's staff regarding the DOJ report concerning their investigation of South Carolina's Use of Community Residential Care Facilities to serve adults with serious mental illness issued on July 6, 2023. Plans are to meet on a regular basis over the next several months. Ms. Hutto will keep the Commission informed.

Ms. Hutto, presented the items listed under Monthly/Quarterly Informational Reports, copies of which had been provided to the Commission.

Ms. Hutto reported for the month of August 2023 a total of three pending investigations for the Office of Public Safety.

Ms. Hutto reported that as of yesterday there were 35 pending SLED investigations. Four cases were assigned to SLED, of which the oldest is from April 2023; 24 cases were assigned to Long-term Care Ombudsman Office, of which the oldest is from June 2022; six cases were assigned to local law enforcement; and one case is with the Department of Social Services (DSS) Adult Protective Services.

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

- 80 calls to patient advocacy in July 2023; a total of 575 year to date.
- 83 complaints were resolved in July 2023; a total of 550 year to date.
- The number of complaints by category resolved is 109 (*complaints are broken out by category, a single patient complaint may have more than one category*).

**SEMI-ANNUAL COMPLIANCE REPORT**

Dr. Lynelle Reavis, Director of Quality Management and Compliance, Division of Medical Affairs, gave a SCDMH Compliance Program Review for the third and fourth quarters of FY23, copies of which had been provided to the Commission. There was discussion on the process that clinicians receive feedback from the audit findings. A copy of the report is on file with the minutes in the Office of the State Director.

Chairman Levy thanked Dr. Reavis for the presentation.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Dr. Bank reported the following:

- David Diana, Director of Marketing, is leading the Communication Education Committee (Public Relations Committee) to develop ideas and initiatives to effectively promote and inform the public about the services and service outcomes provided by the Department. Mr. Diana will bring a report to the Commission at the October Commission meeting.
- Dr. Bank reported DMH has received a 2023 award for outstanding use of digital communications by the South Carolina Chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators – SC (IABC-SC). The award was a result of the creation and delivery of the DMH podcast titled, "*A Look Within: Conversations on Mental Health and Well-being*." The podcast was started in June 2022 as an opportunity to lead important conversations around mental health across the state, to bring greater awareness to these issues, to help improve access to care, to reduce stigma, and to educate South Carolina residents about the scope and role of the Department.
- At its most recent meeting, the Joint Bond Review Committee (JBRC) approved the development of a new veterans home that will be developed in the western part of Lexington County and will be a replacement for Stones Veterans home. There was discussion.

S. C. MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 8, 2023

- Administrative Services continues to work closely with the Department of Administration (DOA) and the South Carolina Department of Veterans' Affairs (SCDVA) with the transfer of the veterans homes from DMH to SCDVA by the deadline date of June 30, 2024.
- The Boston Consulting Group, Inc. (BCG) performing the analysis of the state's public health system has visited some of the DMH facilities and various state care-giving agencies. BCG is to give an initial report on October 1, 2023 to the State Legislature.
- There was discussion regarding a request from Columbia Mayor Daniel Rickenmann about a proposal to address homelessness in the downtown Columbia area and property on the DMH Crafts Farrow complex. A meeting was held recently at the Governor's office to discuss the matter. DMH leases some units to WellPath. Dr. Bank noted that WellPath is willing to release the Shand-Davis lease. He said there will be a follow-up meeting at the Governor's Office in the coming weeks.
- Dr. Bank said that preparations have begun on the FY25 proposal. He shared the following funding priorities:
  - Forensic referrals continue to increase. Additional funding is requested to increase bed capacity and jail-base restoration.
  - The Department is working with DSS and other agencies to propose a pre-crisis team that will identify children and adolescents who are dealing with problems and provide preventive services.
  - Funding for transition teams to increase bed capacity.
  - Additional funding for embedded mental health professionals (MHPs) in law enforcement.
  - Additional funding for the Sexually Violent Predator Treatment Program (SVPTP).
  - The FY24 budget included a one-time allocation of \$4 million for alternative transportation. Funding will be requested again this year.
  - One-time funding for community bed efforts for patients who are uninsured in emergency rooms to be admitted to local hospitals.
  - Capital projects.

***DEPARTMENTAL OVERVIEW AND UPDATE***

Medical Services

Dr. Ralph Pollock, Acting Medical Director, presented the Medical Services report, copies of which had been provided to the Commission. Following are highlights from his report.

- DMH's board certified psychiatrists collaborate with the hospital emergency departments (EDs) to assess and treat psychiatric patients in the EDs. 30% of those patients are children.
- There were an average of 742 consults per month in 2022.
- Hours of operation are 18 hours per day, 364 days a year.
- DMH Telepsychiatry services are offered in a variety of settings from hospital EDs and community mental health centers to schools and RV mobile clinics.

Dr. Pollock talked about the benefits of long-acting injectables (LAIs) for DMH patients. LAIs lead to reduced hospitalizations, reduced suicidal attempts, and patients do better with taking their medications. He reported that on August 30, 2023, Forensics had 200 patients with 95 (47%) of those patients on LAI; Bryan Civil had 122 patients with 63 (51.6%) of those patients on LAI; Harris had 99 patients with 45 (45.9%) of those patients on LAI. He is collecting national data to highlight how well DMH is doing in providing LAIs to patients compared to other states.

Community Mental Health Services

On behalf of Ms. Deborah Blalock, Deputy Director, Community Mental Health Services, Ms. Louise Johnson, Director, Child, Adolescents and Family Services, presented the Community Mental Health Services (CMHS) report. The monthly CMHS Trends and Transparency Monthly Indicators (TMI) spreadsheets had been provided to the Commission. Following are highlights from the report:

- In response to Chairman Levy's request at the August 8, 2023 Commission meeting for a summary of what Mental Health Heroes does with the funds received from the Lowcounty Mental Health Conference, Ms. Johnson reported 33% of the profit from the conference goes straight to the Charleston Dorchester Mental Health Center to pay for items that meet direct needs for patients who receive services at the center.

S. C. MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 8, 2023

- As of August 28, 2023, the 988 Call Center has received a total of 1,185 calls; 1,056 of those calls were successful; 129 were unsuccessful.
- Ms. Johnson reported the Department services about 31,000 children a year. She talked about Project *FOCUS* (Family Options in Cherokee, Union, and Spartanburg Counties). The program was created to prevent children and adolescents with serious mental illness/emotional disturbance from being unnecessarily sent to the emergency department in these counties. Spartanburg Regional Hospital provides the building called Café (Child, Adolescent, & Family Engagement) Center to carry out the crisis component of the project.

Administrative Services & Financial Status Update

On behalf of Ms. Debbie Calcote, Deputy Director, Administrative Services, Mr. Lee Bodie, Director, Budget, reviewed the FY23 end of year budget, copies of which had been provided to the Commission. The Department ended FY23 with a balance of \$18.8 million.

Division of Inpatient Services (DIS)

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

- The July 2023 overall average daily census (ADC) for the psychiatric hospitals and Morris Village continues to reflect modest progress towards pre-pandemic levels. The July overall ADC for the psychiatric hospitals and Morris Village was 470 as compared to 587 in February 2020, reflecting a 20% decrease from February 2020. The July ADC was 8 points higher than it was for May 2023.
  - G. Weber Bryan Psychiatric Hospital's ADC in July 2023 was 122 compared to 123 in June 2023.
  - Patrick B. Harris Psychiatric Hospital's ADC in July 2023 maintained the same as June 2023 at 97.
- Dr. Bellamy presented the BPH and Harris Bed Turnover Report for October 2022 through August 2023, a copy of which is filed with the minutes in the Office of the State Director. During the month of August 2023, Harris had a total of 11 discharges with most of those greater than 90 days length of stay, and amassed a total of 2,370 bed days. BPH had a total of 5 discharges with a total of 2,321 bed days.
- As of today, there is a total of 118 individuals on the Forensic Ready for Admission Waitlist. Admissions slowed some due to COVID outbreaks.
- The demand by state's criminal and family courts for competency restoration continues to increase. The competency restoration legislation passed in 2022 extended the time of restoration treatment from 60 to 180 days. Dr. Bellamy reported the initial data is showing that defendants are being more effectively restored within that timeframe. Under the previous 60-day competency restoration period, 44% of the treated defendants were competent at their restoration period. Following the extension to 180-days competency restoration period, 52% were competent at their restoration period. Hospital inpatient competency restoration is at 77% within the length of stay of 66 days. National data shows that overall hospital restoration rates are 75% after 6 months. To date a total of 126 individuals have received services through the jail-based competency restoration program.
- The jail-based restoration and competency programs include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Psychosis (CBTP), an evidence-based treatment program. Dr. Bellamy reported less than 1% of individuals with a psychotic disorder across the country have access to this intervention. Only .1% of the country's mental health treatment workforce have been trained in CBTP. In contrast, 70% of DMH clinicians have been trained in CBTP. Dr. Bellamy commended the staff for the implementation of CBTP.
- Dr. Jones asked if there are any particular issues preventing the defendants on the forensic waitlist for over 120 days from being placed. Dr. Bellamy explained there are a number of issues such as defendants being out on bond or waiting for legal issues to be resolved. She will have Dr. Kelly Gothard provide a more specific breakdown.
- Dr. Bellamy distributed a list of the number of defendants on the restoration waitlist for each South Carolina County. A copy is filed with the minutes in the Office of the State Director.

***OTHER BUSINESS/PUBLIC COMMENTS***

A ceremony was held on August 9, 2023 to celebrate the reconstruction of the Babcock Building's cupola. Mr. Pearce shared pictures of the historic and memorable event with the Commission, copies of which are filed with the minutes in the Office of the State Director.

S. C. MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 8, 2023

There were no public comments.

**ADJOURNMENT**

*At 12:23 p.m. by motion duly made and seconded, the Commission adjourned the business meeting. Entered into the FOIA training session.*

*All voted in favor to the above motion; the motion carried.*

**ATTENDANCE**

**Commission Members**  
Dr. Elliott Levy, Chair  
Dr. Carl Jones, Vice Chair

Mr. Bobby Mann  
Dr. Crystal Maxwell  
Mr. Greg Pearce

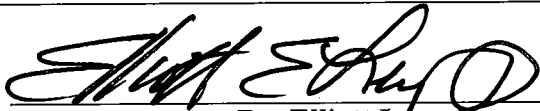
**Visitors/Staff**  
Dr. Robert Bank  
Dr. Versie Bellamy  
Mark Binkley  
Lee Bodie  
Rochelle Caton  
Elizabeth Hutto  
Louise Johnson  
Valarie Perkins  
Dr. Ralph Pollock  
Dr. Lynelle Reavis  
Tracy Richardson  
Bonita Shropshire  
Chaplain Malcolm Simpson  
Brett Williams

present virtually via Zoom  
Janet Bell  
Mirtha Brown  
Peter Camelo  
Akiko Dettorre  
Matthew Dorman  
Melanie Gambrell  
Dr. Kelly Gothard  
Darla Helms  
Dr. Maryjane Hicks

present virtually via Zoom  
Kathy Hugg  
Keith Jackson  
Tracy LaPointe  
Sarah Main Kathy Martin  
Allen McEniry  
Margaret Meriwether  
Linda Palmer  
Vickie Perry  
Sylvett Porter

present virtually via Zoom  
Vicki Redding  
Shawnta Reeder-Locks  
Dr. Kimberly Rudd  
Jessica Suber  
Irene Thornley  
Susan von Schenk  
Lindsay Walker  
Dr. Sheena Willis

**APPROVALS**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Elliott Levy  
Chair

  
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Kim Ballentine  
Recording Secretary