

**S. C. MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION MEETING**  
**SCDMH Administration**  
**2414 Bull Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201**  
**March 1, 2024**

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, March 1, 2024, 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 Levy called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. Chaplain Malcolm Simpson provided the invocation.

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

Chairman Levy welcomed everyone. Visitors present virtually were: Gail Cordial, Director, Policy & Government Relations, Alkermes; Susan Feign Senior Recruiter, and Wanda McMichael, SCPS Program Manager, Liberty Health Corporation; John Fletcher, retired State DMH employee; Beth Franco, Executive Director, and Kathy Martin, Attorney, Disability Rights, SC; Priscilla Smith, Vice President, Program Solutions, Constellation Quality Health; and Susan von Schenk, Capital Information Affiliates (CIA). Visitors present in person were: Jake Barrett, Account Executive, SC & VA, Government Sales, SAS Institute Inc. (Analytics Software & Solutions); Bill Lindsay, Executive Director, NAMI SC; and Janie Simpson, Chairperson, SC Mental Health State Planning Council.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

*There being no amendments or corrections to the agenda, the agenda was approved as presented.*

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*There being no amendments or corrections to the minutes of the Center Presentation of February 2, 2024 and the Commission meeting of February 2, 2024, the minutes were approved as presented.*

**UPDATE – SC MENTAL HEALTH STATE PLANNING COUNCIL**

Janie Simpson, chair, South Carolina Mental Health State Planning Council talked about the work of the South Carolina Mental Health Planning Council. The purpose of the Planning Council is to ensure collaboration among various state agencies and provide opportunities for people with lived experiences with mental illness to give feedback and input to DMH. Specific state agencies are required to participate on the council. Each year, DMH receives a two-year grant from the SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) called the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant (MHBG).

Mr. Pearce announced that today the Commission is recognizing and honoring Ms. Simpson for her work on the Planning Council, and also for her work in mental health advocacy. On behalf of the Commission, Mr. Pearce presented her with the “Order of the Brick” award. The brick was inscribed with the following:

*This handmade brick was part of the original wall  
Which surrounded the S.C. State Hospital  
Presented to Jane B. Simpson  
Chairperson, S.C. Mental Health State Planning Council  
In appreciation of your dedicated services to the S.C. Mental Health Commission  
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Ms. Simpson thanked the Commission and expressed heartfelt appreciation for the award.

Ms. Simpson announced the passing of Professor Melissa Reitmeier, who passed away on February 13, 2024. Ms. Reitmeier was a member of the Planning Council where her involvement included serving as Vice Chair and chairing the Nominating Committee. It was also noted that she began her career at DMH as an intern at Columbia Area Mental Health Center. Before her passing, she was professor and Director of Field Education at the College of Social Work, University of South Carolina.

**UPDATE – OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES**

Jennifer Butler, Director, Office of Emergency Services (OES), and the following members of her leadership team talked briefly about their areas of responsibility: Jessica Barnes, Program Manager, Office of Suicide Prevention; Stacey Rowell, Program Manager, Mobile Crisis; and DeLynn Morgan, Program Manager, First Responders Support Team. A copy of the presentation is filed with the minutes in the Office of the State Director. Following are highlights from the presentation:

- OES is a team of 16 individuals that primarily work on the Crisis Care Continuum.
- South Carolina’s 988 Crisis Care Continuum consists of three primary components:
  - Someone to Talk to – 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
    - Direct access to trained contact responders 24/7/365.
    - Available to anyone thinking about suicide or needing emotional support.
    - Contact responders listen, support, and share resources.
    - Call, text, or chat.
  - Someone to Respond – SC Mobile Crisis
    - Provide 24/7/365, community-based response across all 46 counties.
    - Available by phone, telehealth, in-person, and onsite, as appropriate.
    - De-escalate crisis, support, and connect to mental health recourses.
  - A Safe Place to Be – Crisis Stabilization Units
    - Provide voluntary short-term psychiatric stabilization service.
    - Alternate treatment option to divert from unnecessary emergency department visits, hospitalization, or jail.
    - Can be used as a step down from higher levels of care.
- South Carolina has one unified mobile crisis system - one call center that can deploy in all 46 counties. The SC Mobile Crisis average response time is 48 minutes, which is below the national average response time.
- Crisis Stabilization Units (CSU): located in Charleston and soon to be in the Columbia area.
- There were a little over 31,000 calls in 2023 compared to approximately 25,000 in 2022. About 30% of the calls that come into the call center are crises calls that require some level of de-escalation. There was discussion about the types of calls, nature of calls, location of calls, etc. Ms. Butler will follow up and provide the Commission a report on the types of calls received
- The DMH First Responder Support Team (FRST) provides mental health services to first responders and their family members. This program originated in Charleston following the 2007 Sofa Superstore fire that resulted in the death of nine firefighters.
- FRST Clinician Training and Collaboration:
  - EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)
  - Works closely with SC Law Enforcement Assistant Program (SCLEAP), SC First Responder Assistance and Support Team (SCFAST), and Lowcountry Firefighter Support Team (LFST).
  - Assists with debriefings and Post Critical Incident Seminars
  - DMH has a total of 27 law enforcement embedded clinician positions with 20 of those positions filled.
- FRST Services include trauma-focused therapy, substance use disorder treatment, medical consultation, couples counseling, family therapy, and crisis support.
- Locations of the FRST Teams: Aiken, Charleston, Columbia, Florence, Greenville, Greenwood, Spartanburg, and coming soon to Myrtle Beach.



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Mr. Pearce expressed heartfelt appreciation for the information provided and talked about how proud he is of the progress the Department has made in expanding access to mental health services to individuals dealing with mental illness, as well as the Department's transition programs. Ms. Blalock said that with the proposed restructuring she expects the crisis continuum will become more robust and we will be able to reach out and touch even more people.

**MONTHLY/QUARTERLY INFORMATION REPORTS**

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

Ms. Hutto reminded the Commission that the annual Statement of Economic Interest (SEI) report is due by noon on March 30, 2024. The report must be filed electronically (<https://ethicsfiling.sc.gov/filing/home>).

Ms. Hutto reported for the month of February 2024 a total of two pending investigations for the Office of Public Safety.

Ms. Hutto reported that as of yesterday there were 26 pending SLED investigations. Five cases were assigned to SLED, of which the oldest is from April 2023; 12 cases were assigned to Long-term Care Ombudsman Office, of which the oldest is from July 2022; eight 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:

- 109 calls to patient advocacy in January 2024.
- 85 complaints were resolved in January 2024.
- The number of complaints by category resolved in January 2024 is 104 (*complaints are broken out by category, a single patient complaint may have more than one category*).

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Ms. Robin Crawford, Director of Governmental Affairs, reported the following:

- The Senate version of the bill (S.915) that restructures the state's healthcare agencies under a newly created *Executive Office of Health and Policy*, led by a Gubernatorial appointee in a newly created position of Secretary of Health and Policy, passed the Senate, and the similar House version (H.4927) has passed the House. Both bills combine DMH and the Department of Alcohol and other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS) although the bills have different names for the newly created mental health and substance use disorder division. In the Senate version, DMH becomes the Department of Behavioral Health and Substance Abuse Services, and in the House version, DMH becomes the Department of Behavioral Health. Both bills abolish the Mental Health Commission and instead create an advisory board with a member from each Congressional delegation appointed by the Secretary of Health and Policy. Both bills require the Secretary to develop a state health services plan. The Senate version takes the Olmstead Supreme Court decision into account and creates the position of Director of Community Living Integration, appointed by the Secretary. It also creates an ADA coordinator position selected by the Director of Community Living Integration. The House bill takes effect upon approval by the Governor. The Senate bill takes effect July 1, 2024.
- The House Ways and Means Committee has passed their first version of the state's FY25 budget. This version included approximately \$2 million to DMH in recurring funds for the healthcare campus relocation and \$5 million from the capital reserve fund for Stone VA Nursing Home capital improvement projects. The budget will be debated on the House floor the week of March 11, 2024. DMH will give their budget presentation to the Senate Finance Healthcare budget subcommittee in a couple of weeks. The Senate Finance Committee will convene to pass their version of the budget the week of April 9<sup>th</sup>. The Senate version will be debated on the Senate floor the week of April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Budget Conference Committees will meet the week of April 29<sup>th</sup> and the conference



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committee reports will be delivered to the Governor the week of May 7<sup>th</sup>. The legislative session will adjourn sine die on May 9<sup>th</sup> at 5 p.m.

- Ms. Crawford reminded everyone that Mental Health Advocacy Day is Wednesday, March 6, 2024, at the State House beginning with a rally at 9 a.m. followed by remarks at 10 a.m.
- There was discussion on the Act 301 pass through funds whereby funds for drug and alcohol services pass through DAODAS to the service providers throughout county agencies statewide. Ms. Crawford reported the Senate voted to allocate \$5 million of those funds to the new Secretary of Health and Public Health.

***ANNOUNCEMENTS***

Dr. Bank presented the Departmental Overview and Update reports to the Commission, copies of which had been provided to the Commission. There were no comments or questions; the reports were received as information.

Approval of Minutes of the Governing Body for Inpatient Facilities of January 10, 2024

Dr. Bellamy presented the January 10, 2024 quarterly Inpatient Facilities Governing Body minutes, copies of which had been provided to the Commission.

***By motion duly made and seconded, the Commission approved the Inpatient Facilities Governing Body Minutes from the January 10, 2024 meeting.***

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

Update from Acting State Director

Dr. Bank talked about the legislation that is near passage in both Legislative bodies which will change the structure of the state's healthcare agencies. He said the opportunity for better collaboration with other healthcare agencies is a plus and will give opportunity to help patients who have multiple problems and often have a difficult time finding treatment. He said that for the past 18 months, he and senior leadership have been discussing internal restructuring to ensure that DMH is fiscally sound and continues to provide quality care.

Dr. Bank presented the following:

*Just to review, this process began as I became Acting State Director. The Governor had directed the Commission to enlist the Department of Administration (DOA) to review DMH's HR and finance practices and correct deficiencies. As a result of that study, DMH has undertaken corrective steps to improve the budget accountability of our inpatient operations/facilities and other areas, and has made major changes in Human Resources, which was part of that study. However, we continue to run deficits in our inpatient facilities, as we know they don't earn a tremendous amount of money and are not given enough recurring funds to keep those services without using reserves.*

*Concurrently, Senior Management was advised of the recommendations of the Chisholm report, initiated by Dr. Rogers [former State Director], to recommend changes to the organizational structure of DIS. That report recommended the creation of more autonomous divisions and facilities to promote fiscal accountability and operational efficiencies. An additional report was done by another consultant also engaged by Dr. Rogers and made similar conclusions regarding the need to simplify the structure of those areas.*

*Additionally, at the end of the last legislative session, S.399 legislation was passed moving all the Veterans' Nursing Homes from DMH to the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA). The nursing homes that are contracted will be transferred to DVA on July 1, 2024, and that will also include nursing homes under construction or plan to be under construction. The Stone Pavilion will move to DVA the following year, July 1, 2025. That same legislation launched a study on healthcare agencies to make structural and operational changes to service delivery across the state and across the agencies.*

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Dr. Bank explained DMH will become a component department under the Secretary of Health and Policy along with other healthcare agencies. DAODAS will come under the new Department of Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorders, reporting to the current director of DMH. The state statutes that outline the mission of DMH call for a Division of Substance Use Disorders and a Division of Long-Term Care, reporting to the DMH Director. He announced the following changes on the structure of inpatient services:

- There will be two divisions as outlined in the statute: Division of Long-Term Care and Division of Substance Abuse Services. The directors will report to Dr. Bank.
- Two Psychiatric Facilities: G. Werber Bryan Psychiatric Hospital and Patrick B. Harris Hospital. The directors will report to Dr. Bank.

The changes will be effective on March 18, 2024. Dr. Bank said these changes will not lead to any employee terminations.

**OTHER BUSINESS/PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

**ADJOURNMENT**

*At 11:40 p.m. by motion duly made and seconded, the Commission adjourned the business meeting and entered into Executive Session to select the 2024 Hassenplug Outstanding Clinician. Upon convening in open session at 11:59 a.m., Chairman Levy noted there was discussion on the selection of the recipient of the 2024 Louise R. Hassenplug Outstanding Clinician Award. There was no action taken.*

*At 12:00 noon by motion duly made and seconded, the Commission adjourned the business meeting.*

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

**ATTENDANCE**

<b>Commission Members</b>	Mr. Bobby Mann
Dr. Elliott Levy, Chair	Dr. Crystal Maxwell, virtually
Dr. Carl Jones, Vice Chair, Virtually	Mr. Greg Pearce

<b>Visitors/Staff</b>	<u>present virtually via Zoom</u>	<u>present virtually via Zoom</u>	<u>present virtually via Zoom</u>
Dr. Robert Bank	Tara Alexander	Darla Helms	Linda Palmer
Jessica Barnes	Debra Boone	Dr. Maryjane Hicks	Valarie Perkins
Dr. Versie Bellamy	Dr. Robert Been	Kathy Hugg	Vickie Perry
Jennifer Butler	Jackie Brown	Dr. Mahri Irvine	Dr. Lynell Reavis
Debbie Calcote	Jennifer Brush	Keith Jackson	Shawnta Reeder-Locks
Robin Crawford	Peter Camelo	Charice Jones	Tracy Richardson
Elizabeth Hutto	Dr. Trey Causey	Eric Jones	Logan Royals
Bill Lindsay	Gail Cordial	Tracy LaPointe	Dr. Kimberly Rudd
DeLynn Morgan	Matthew Dorman	Christine Latham	Angie Salley
Dr. Chad Pollock	Michele Dreher	Ashley Lloyd	Kellie Silveira
Stacey Rowell	Susan Feigin	Sarah Main	Priscilla Smith
Janie Simpson	John Fletcher	Kathy Martin	Eric Turner
Chaplain Malcolm Simpson	Beth Franco	George McConnell	Kathryn Vacchio
Brett Williams	Brandon Gaffney	Allen McEniry	Susan von Schenk
	Melanie Gambrell	Wanda McMichael	Lindsay Walker
	Dr. Kelly Gothard	Tracy Meeker	Lisa Wilson
	Cynthia Helff	Margaret Meriwether	Kevin Woods

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**APPROVALS**



**Dr. Elliott Levy**  
Chair



**Kim Ballentine**  
Recording Secretary