

BENTON-FRANKLIN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes | May 11, 2023

Call to Order: 2:00 PM

Jason Bill served as acting chair, with BJ Olson out of town for personal reasons

Introduction of Members: All voting and non-voting members introduced themselves.

Approval of April 13, 2023 Minutes: The committee members reviewed the April 13, 2023 committee meeting minutes. Chad Michael moved to approve the minutes as presented, Sindi Saunders seconded. Minutes were approved.

Public Comment: None

Discussion Items:

1.) Update on Contract with Comprehensive Health Care for CRC:

- a. Matt Rasmussen noted that he planned to reach out to Comprehensive tomorrow (Friday) to have a quick phone call regarding how the process will go and see what future contracts/services will look like and what the process will look like
- b. Chad Michael asked if previous concerns expressed by the committee have been discussed with Comprehensive. Rasmussen noted those concerns have not been addressed at this point, but Friday's phone conversation will be an opportunity to do so.

2.) Updated on Sobering Center

- a. Rasmussen said he was able to make contact with United Family Center. He noted they are still interested in providing services, so he will look at a building on the KGH [Kennewick General Hospital] property that is zoned for such a Sobering Center. Rasmussen added the facility already has several key components in place, such as sprinklers, which will make for an easier transition than converting the Tri City Herald building.
- b. Rasmussen noted he has reached out to the city of Kennewick to determine what it would take to update the KGH facility to get it up to maximum occupancy.
- c. He added progress has been made, which is encouraging.

3.) Discussion of top priority list from Mental Health and Substance Use subcommittee

- a. Sindi Saunders noted this effort is a carryover from April's meeting when the Committee agreed that the Mental Health subcommittee and Substance Use subcommittee should come together and agree on a priority of an effort that can be implemented relatively quickly
- b. Saunders noted several members of both subcommittees met on May 1, 2023, and discussed what the initial priorities were, and what everyone would like to see up and running as soon as possible

- c. Saunders noted for Mental Health component, they would like to get a Field Responder Program up and running as soon as possible. This would be a staff of two; one mental health councilor, one substance use councilor.
- d. Saunders noted that this team would respond when first responders are called. Assess individuals, deescalate situations as needed, etc.
- e. Saunders: We would ask the Committee to pay for the salary and benefits of those staff
- f. Saunders noted they have information on peak call times for fire (9a-9p) and would like to see similar information from law enforcement. Noted she thinks the time would be similar, but would like to see data.
- g. Then, she added, the Committee would need to determine coverage. For example, one team during the day, two during peak hours; what do we want the program to look like structurally, what's most beneficial to first responders, and then who would employ this staff
- h. "We thought as our own subcommittee," Saunders noted " that it would make the most sense for Comprehensive to employ this staff."
- i. But, Saunders added there are other options are possible
- j. She noted the subcommittee thought it was important for each team to have an individual trained in mental health and an individual trained in substance use because "you never know what you're walking into."
- k. Bliss asked if there were any questions, or anything to discuss before moving on to the Substance use element
- l. Chad Michael asked about demand, to which Saunders noted they will need more data from first responders to see what needs exist, but Saunders noted personally she thinks at least two teams are needed
- m. Michael also asked if these teams would respond with police and fire, and how that would be determined
- n. Saunders said her personal opinion is these teams would be called out rather than first responders, unless medical, fire, etc. need is expressed from the start; Michael agreed that could be a good fit; Saunders added the goal is to have these teams respond to acute needs
- o. Bob Gear expressed concerns that communications could be bogged down with differentiating calls, and needs
- p. Saunders also noted that these teams would help fill several gaps that currently exist; added a patient that visits the doctor may have heart issues, but they don't see the heart surgeon at that appointment
- q. Michael noted that performance expectations should be established with any selected provider to ensure everyone knows that will happen, or what will not take place
- r. The question of "what's the threshold of when a response team is activated" was asked; right now there is not a threshold, it's more of a question of where is the current crisis and who is available
- s. BJ Olson (via phone) asked who is currently determining the severity of mental health calls; is that by dispatch, those first on the scene?
- t. Saunders added in her assessment, at least 4.0 FTE would be needed for two teams, running Monday-Friday. But she noted if coverage is needed all seven days of the week, 6.0 FTE would be needed.
- u. Brian Ace asked what the actions steps are
- v. Saunders said we would need to type up the priorities and approach Comprehensive as well as Three Rivers Therapy to see what the cost could be; from there a following step was unclear
- w. A cost benefit analysis was proposed, however there was a concern that such an analysis would slow down the process and delay implementation of teams
- x. When asked if the Committee would need to move to a more formal RFP when it comes to potential services, Matt Rasmussen noted this process, unlike construction, does not need a

more stringent RFP process; but he noted having multiple conversations with multiple providers would be advisable

- y. Saunders asked if there were other providers the Committee would like her to reach out to; she noted that she had Comprehensive, Three Rivers Therapy, Lourdes Counseling, and United
- z. Kadlec was recommended
- aa. Is this a bi-county effort? Rasmussen said from Benton County's side, this is a bi-county effort. But he noted that is something Franklin County will need to decide.
- bb. Jason Bliss noted that similar programs in Spokane County have been struggling from the financial side and from the staffing side
- cc. Saunders added it's a "death spiral", when you can't keep staff, you can't take patients, which means less money, etc. And, she noted, this is happening across the state
- dd. It was asked if a motion was needed for Saunders to reach out to providers for information/details; motion was proposed and a second was offered
- ee. Because of the motion passing, the subcommittee will reach out to the mentioned providers about available services, costs, timelines, etc.

Public Comment:

Matt Rasmussen was asked what the current funds of the Committee look like. He noted that he had not looked at the exact dollar amount in some time. Noted that last time he checked Benton County had just under \$3 million, Franklin County had just under \$2 million.

Other Business:

Michele Gerber: When we chose the name Three Rivers Behavioral Health Center, we didn't know about Three Rivers Therapy (a private business). So, I would ask that this Committee comes up with suggestions for a different name to eliminate confusion. Our coalition receives e-mails and calls, about the confusion. Matt Rasmussen noted at this point, the recovery center is only called the Three Rivers Behavioral Health Center on paper (for grants). Jason Bliss encouraged anyone with a different name to present those ideas at the next meeting.

Michele Gerber: I request that Benton County dedicate a spot on its website dedicated to the recovery center. She noted that coalition members are getting questions about where information can be found on County's website. It was also recommended that Franklin County look at dedicating such a space on its website as well.

Michele Gerber: I would also like to address the workforce issue. She noted she's talked with several local legislators about the long periods of practicum that are required in the field of social work and the requirements to become an LMHC. I've also talked to some of the legislators on the other side of the aisle that have been our benefactors. And I think we can ask for a bill next session to look at potentially shorten some of those requirements.

Bob Gear: While I'm retiring at the end of May, the fire chiefs of Franklin County have asked that I continue to represent them on this Committee, as long as the Committee is OK with that.

Sindi Saunders: Can we come up with rough budget numbers so we understand how much is coming in, so we have a clear idea of what we can spend going forward. That, should reduce the amount of sticker shock. Chad Michael added that many feel "we're going car shopping, but we don't know what our paycheck is going to be."

Adjourned: 3:11 PM