Local Advisory Council (LAC) North

St. Louis County

September 16, 2021 4:30 – 6:00 Via Zoom

Present: Melanie Smith, Jeff McNickle, Tod Swenson, Jennifer Rich, Ann Marie Lubovich, Daniel Triestman, Nicole Stone, Marjorie Holmstrom – Sabo, Claudia Skalko, Lacy Podlgar

Absent: Michelle Long, Marjory Johnson Wood

Guest Speakers: Jill Stark, Northwoods school counselor and John Townsend , Ely High School Counselor

* Tod and Claudia read the values of the LAC. Minutes from July and August are approved.
* Tod and Claudia speak about co-chairing board. Claudia can stay on, as co-chair, and warns that she is not as computer savvy as Tod. Tod needs to step down due to going back to school. Tod explains what being a co-chair entails. Claudia comments Tod on the good job he has done. Marjorie Holmstrom-Sabo asks how much time the co-chairs roughly put in. Tod estimates about 4 hours a month. This past month was a little more time, due to having to contact multiple schools regarding survey questions. Marjorie agrees to take the other co-chair spot with Claudia. Tod informs new co-chairs that he will share his Google documents with them.
* Tod talks about the questions that were sent out and the response he got back regarding school counseling services. Discussion ensued on how the data gets collected and documented. Melanie volunteered to put data together and asked board to send her the responses.
* Claudia shared about talking with medical professionals and how we have this LAC board that is addressing mental health issues. Jenn Wilson informed that she reached out to commissioner Jugovich, after last month’s meeting, regarding needs in Mental health that were addressed.
* Melanie informed the board that Gena Bossart would like to speak at the meeting next month and Marjorie, new co-chair, made a note of it for October’s meeting. Melanie also informed board that the platform for virtual meetings will now be through the Teams Meeting app and no longer Zoom.
* Ann Marie spoke about the responses she received from area schools. She told everyone that she tried to get the information out to the board in a zip file. She only received 11 responses back from the schools. Responses were all confidential and anonymous.
* 4:55 Guest speaker, John Townsend, spoke. Tom is a k-12 school counselor in Ely independent school district. Tom expressed that their resources are very limited, being they are at the “end of the road”.
  + He is the only school counselor in his school. Ely has 536 students. The status quo is 1 councilor for every 250 kids. Average in state is 1-746.
  + Tom asks if anyone is familiar with community care program. John explains that program. John explains that he has to concentrate on what happens in school with children and not necessarily at home. Having these other programs help with that.
  + Spoke about grants that were written to help students with skills of coping.
  + John expressed the frustration with lack of beds for children with mental health issues.
  + Amber wing has been a great asset and has been wonderful working with the kids.
  + The only frustrating thing with Amberwing is that the communication with the school is not that great. It may be a HIPPA issue. It would be nice to know how to support them when they come back to school after getting the care at these providers.
  + There is a problem with some families being able to pay for some of these services that may be available to children.
  + Need for more summer programs for children with mental health issues. School is their stable place but, in the summer, they don’t have that stable place. Children have shared with him the need. Aeoa has had some programs to help these children in the summer so that they did not have to stay home in an unstable home.
  + The suicide crisis is an issue. Treating and prevention is an issue.
  + John asked if anyone has any questions.
    - Claudia asks about mental health staff in his school and if they have been there for years or if they are new. John said that it has been a change up recently and they are short staffed losing two practitioners this year. Problems with documenting instead of actually sitting with the children. They are trying to find people to fill those roles. There is a therapist who comes a couple times a week that fills some of those gaps but there are more that need to be filed. The insurance is tricky.
    - Nichole asks if the practitioners are through range mental health. John confirmed that they are. It would be handy to have just one entity to deal with instead of multiple places they need to go.
    - Daniel addresses the lack of personal to the therapist to student ratio and lack of resources. John said that the personal now is top notch, but they could use more personal. An additional councilor or therapist would be great. Ely behavioral health network has been very helpful. There were volunteers from Ely family resource that helped out as well. They provided 3 volunteers in the junior high.
    - Lacy suggested that there be a release of information that they use at range mental health so that hospitals can alert their providers when they are released from the hospital. Minnesota counter alert.
    - John gave his contact info for any questions. 218-365-6166 xt 1748 [Jtownsend@ely.k12.mn.us](mailto:Jtownsend@ely.k12.mn.us)
* 5:18 Councilor Jill Stark introduced herself.
  + Tod asked about gaps that she sees with mental health services for children. Jill agreed with what John had said. There is a frustration about not being filled in with what type of treatment they got at other centers. There is no follow up with the school. Some children may not be ready to come back to school after being released.
  + Lack of available services such as counseling services in their area. Virginia or Hibbing are the closest providers and that is almost an hour drive. Parents can not afford to take off work. Telehealth has entered more into the picture lately and it is hard trying to get them to find a room to do that confidentially. That is better though so that the children do not need to miss a half a day of school.
  + Jill talks about Adapt. They are down to 2 people three times a week. It is a lot of change for the students. They did have one person 5 days a week. They have a school resource officer and a school councilor this year. They have a student support services room that children can utilize.
  + They try to have each child ,in the school, have at least one person that they can go to in the school. Tod asks how they measure that. Jill said it is hard that there is really no way to. It is just conversations amongst staff sharing their connections with students.
  + Claudie asks how many children are in her school. 550 between jr and sr high.
  + Lacy asks if they have peer support that is led by fellow students. Jill says that it is lead by staff and not student.
  + Tod asks if they would suggest one full time mental health professional, per building. John said that would be nice. Their therapist must turn kids down because there are not enough open slots for them.
  + Nichole asks if their teachers are trained in what to do when a child comes to them in crisis. Jill says if they are not sure how to treat it, they know who to send the child to. Nichole shared a training program for school staff to attend that may help. She can email Jill the info if she needs.
  + Jill shared her contact info in the chat. [Jstark@isd2142.k12.mn.us](mailto:Jstark@isd2142.k12.mn.us).
  + Daniel asks what the problem is that they see with retaining these professionals. Is it a money issue or lack of professionals? What can we do to improve the chances of getting and keeping the personal there? Jill mentions the paperwork and the insurance that the children have that keeps them from getting the help they need. John says having an extra person to help with that would help get it done. People have shared with him that the note documenting is an issue with people. He would rather be helping the child.
  + John says that there is a problem with some parents signing off for child to get help because some parents do not want children sharing personal things that go on at home and possible cps involvement. Lacy speaks to the problem with paperwork and parents. John shares that there is a barrier with parents understanding what paperwork they need to do to get the funding for their child’s services.
* Tod thanks both speakers for enlightening us on the issues they are experiencing with mental health for their students. Jill thanks the group for working on this. Guest speakers left meeting.
* Group spoke to the issue of getting the paperwork done to get the help these children need. Some parents have their own issues and can’t get it done or don’t want to get it done.
  + Lacy is frustrated that there are these empty buildings that are out there but where do we start getting money to get beds in them.
  + Marjorie wonders if there are people that we can get to just help with the paperwork.
  + Is there a possibility of an anonymous crisis line for people that can share a child needs even if they can not help them? Tod shares that range mental health will do that if they are called.
  + Nicole wonders if parents would need to sign off if they went to a nurse and the nurse could recommend the treatment.
  + Lacy suggests they come up with a list of other places for kids to go, ex churches. Some place that it will not go to cps.
  + Ann Marie expresses the frustration that some children need a TRAINED professional with situations like if they tell them they want to kill themselves. We need to separate the children that need lesser treatment and more treatment. Some kids can talk to other kids and get help and some need professionals.
* Ann Marie stated she will try to rework the recommendation and they can discuss them next meeting.
* 5:55 adjourned.