

Local Advisory Council (LAC) – North

St. Louis County

March 18, 2021

Present: Claudia Skalko, Michelle Long, Jeff McNickle, Jessica Meyer, Tod Swenson, Daniel Triestman, Ann Marie Lubovich, Jennifer Rich

Absent: Wendy Dickhausen, Lacy Podlogar

Our guest speakers were Commander Jeff Ronchetti from Hibbing Police Department and Deputy Chief Chad Nickila from Virginia Police Department.

Both officers state one of the biggest issues they have in dealing with the mental health population is a lack of resources. The following is a list of frustrations that our local police officers are dealing with:

-When they get a call and end up bringing someone to the hospital in the morning only to find out they are back out in the community by the afternoon.

-If they get a call on a juvenile, there is nowhere close to bring them for services. The juvenile either ends up in Fargo, ND or in the Twin Cities.

-Emergency Department Doctors vary in how they handle the patients coming in with mental health needs. Some are willing to work with the local Police Officers and understand what needs to happen and others just discharge the patient with no aftercare plan for that person. The officers are back at their person's home shortly after being released from the hospital and having to deal with them once again. Officers stated they wished the doctors could get on board and realize what the officers are dealing with in some of these cases.

-When the hospital does a 72 hour mental health hold, it seems like each hospital is different in how they handle things. Doesn't the hospital have to follow statute for a mental health hold?

-Housing and homeless shelters are limited. There are usually no openings at Bill House in Virginia and hard to get someone to CHUM in Duluth. Not a lot of places that can help assist clients. Lakeview Residence does have that help available but not too many other places like Lakeview.

-Virginia Hospital does not have a Behavioral Health Unit and Hibbing's unit is usually full.

-Transportation is an issue as due to State Law, police cannot transport a client. Either GSSC or the ambulance service needs to transport the person.

-If a client is aggressive and they are taken into local Emergency Department, it seems like other hospitals are unwilling to take a person and then that person is in the Emergency Department for 3-4 days and then released.

Here some other things discussed with both police departments:

Training has been better for police departments and younger officers have better training. It is tough at times to get training in due to budget constraints for training and not having the staff to cover while other officers are at training. Virginia PD is mandated to do 10 hours of mental health training. RMHC did provide CIT training. 2/3 of Virginia PD officers had the 40 hours of training, but due to budget constraints not all officers were able to get the training.

Hibbing PD does not do much work with the Crisis Response Team as they are from Virginia and by the time staff could get over to Hibbing, the officers have already handled the situation. Chad states the Crisis Response is not valuable to them either and Chad has spoken with Janice Allen from RMHC about this.

Chad states RMHC staff is going to have a person attached to the Virginia PD. They also have a Community Outreach Program – Lt. Swanson and Opioid Technician Jada Strumbell are located in the Thunderbird Mall in Virginia. There is also a Cahoots grant in Virginia where they pair a mental health worker and a paramedic. They have a 5 person team to discuss the people who are frequent their services.

Question was asked about hand cuffing a person dealing with mental health crisis? Chad stated for the safety of the officers and the person, they will hand cuff them but they try to take the hand cuffs off as soon as possible.

Brainstorming:

Anne Marie asked if there was enough data out there to get funding for a new facility like a group home or assisted living in order to house some of these people.

Could transitional housing be set up out of old buildings in the area? Somewhere like Mesabi Academy?

Need more beds, after care planning and places a person can go instead of the ER.

Sometimes it is hard to get staff to work at some of the facilities.

Next steps – draft up recommendations for County Board.

Can we do one topic at a time to the board or do we have to have all items at once. Sandy will check with supervisors at the next Follow Up LAC Meeting to find out if we the Council can work on one item at a time and submit recommendations or if all recommendations need to be turned in at one time.

Sandy will also be following up with the By-Laws that the South is working on so the North can make sure there are no changes they would like to see to the By-Laws. Both North and South need to agree on the By-Laws and not have separate By-Laws.

Sandy will send email to everyone to find out how long everyone would like to serve on the board. They can either serve for a 2 or 3 year period.

Tod will send do a fillable form about recommendations for Law Enforcement.
Help improve treatment with Law Enforcement

No guest speakers next month. It will be a working session. Next meeting will be Thursday, April 15th.

Below is the list of LAC North members and terms they were willing to serve:

Anne Marie Lubovich – 2 or 3 year term
Jeff McNickle – 3 year term
Lacy Podlogar – 3 year term
Wendy Dickhausen – 3 year term
Daniel Triestman – 2 year term
Jennifer Rich – 3 year term
Michelle Long – 2 year term
Jessica Meyer – 2 year term
Tod Swenson – 2 year term
Claudia Skalko – 3 year term

We will need to work on the terms at the next meeting so Sandy can get this back to the County.