

**GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MENTAL ILLNESS AND
THE CORRECTIONS SYSTEM**

MINUTES

**October 30, 2020
10:00 a.m.**

**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS CONFERENCE ROOM
COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE
105 PLEASANT STREET
CONCORD, NH
Held remotely by Zoom**

Commissioner Helen E. Hanks called the Commission Meeting to order at 10:00 am.

Participants:

Helen E. Hanks, Commissioner New Hampshire Department of Corrections, Chairperson
James Boffetti, Associate Attorney General, Department of Justice
Julianne Carbin, Director of Mental Health Services - DHHS
Cassandra Hoyt, MLDAC, Sullivan County House of Corrections
Emily Rice, Manchester City Solicitor
Thomas Velardi, Strafford County Attorney
Sarah Blodgett, Executive Director, Judicial Council
Tom Sherman, Senator and Physician
Ken Norton, Executive Director of NAMI
Dean Christon, Executive Director, NH Housing Finance Authority
Leslie Bartlett, Program Assistant, Commissioner's Office

This Commission was formed to examine and make recommendations on issues facing individuals with mental illnesses in the corrections system. Executive Order 2019-02

A discussion occurred regarding finalizing the report due in November 2020, Commissioner Hanks informed the group that she added further information to the recommendation section of the report. She looked to others to provide additional language that centers on the now while diving in more deeply together to outline further opportunities for recommendation regarding area such as tele-resources to achieve goals in this new world we are navigating. The commissions' efforts continue to work on key areas such as safe and affordable housing and have included a section relative to Medicaid and diversion programs.

Commissioner Hanks reported that through grant resources, we have advanced the access of mental health & telehealth services through grant funded dollars, which will include access to telehealth resources.

Committee Member Update:

- Julianne Carbin, Director of Mental Health Services at DHHS updated the commission regarding SAMSHA Grant funding and provided an update on the mental health grant award to provide training and technical assistance in order to identify priorities and activities relative to training in the provider community. The funding received in the amount of \$181k total is available through September 30, 2021. Recommendations and ideas for training opportunities to provide resources and training assistance to support individuals who suffer from severe mental illness and emotional disorders. Areas of interest discussed by commission members were:
 - Crisis Intervention Training for law enforcement agencies
 - Mental health training in county/state facilities to identify mental health issues
 - Suicide prevention training
 - Mental health court staff training
 - Trauma training for court personnel and prosecutors
 - Housing support programs and community resources for property owners
- Director of NAMI, Ken Norton, spoke on the efforts with the DOC & PTSC to bring mental health training to the Corrections Academy. This is the first year we are embarking on this training effort, which includes an overview of mental health and de-escalation. Additionally, a proposed opportunity for Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), which will provide 40 hours of intensive training for law enforcement on how to respond to individuals with mental illness. Director Norton also suggests that a training on suicide prevention for law enforcement would be beneficial to officers in the field.
- In follow up, Cassandra Hoyt MLDAC, Sullivan County House of Corrections, reported from the mental health side and agreed that corrections officers would benefit from staff training surrounding mental health. She suggested a type of training to identify the behaviors associated with mental health crisis and how to respond in those situations.
- Thomas Velardi, Stafford County Attorney, commented that frontline responders are essential in receiving training relative to responding to mental health crisis. Staff in community corrections who provide case management, or staff who are in the capacity of having a client, are necessary to participate in an integrated training to maintain the turnovers in staffing changes.
- Ken Norton, Director of NAMI, shared his recent testimony on HB 705 at the Committee for Victims of Crime and speaks to the blurred line between perpetrators and victims, particularly when it comes to trauma and adverse childhood experiences. Director Norton explained the need for resources relative to his recommendation for trauma training for court personnel and prosecutors.
- Commissioner Hanks facilitated the conversation surrounding the elements of trauma, emotional and physical trauma, including sexual violence. She informed the group that among the population of incarcerated women, the percentage of reported trauma is

greater than the trauma reported by the population of incarcerated men. In order to create a sustainable model of practice and to be trauma informed to effectively support individuals, she suggests embedding the training into annual practice.

- In response to the conversations surrounding the use of grant dollars, Julianne Carbin thanked the group for the input and ideas and would like to speak with a follow up with specific people individually who supported the recommendations. Commissioner Hanks recommended a preliminary meeting on how to proceed, which should include the county facilities and superintendents.

Commissioner Hanks addressed the group on the last version of the annual report and asked commission members for their feedback.

- Dean Christon, Executive Director, NH Housing Finance Authority, addressed the topic of targeted housing resources and opportunities available to safely house individuals who are transitioning out of correctional facilities. Community housing programs provide the necessary support to individuals in order to access a variety of supports for those transitioning back to the communities. In response, Commissioner Hanks reported that as a commission we should continue to explore those types of programs. Commissioner Hanks further recommended that the model be examined as an opportunity to create a more long-term system for those who are justice involved and do not have stable housing plans upon release.
- Strafford County Attorney Thomas Velardi stated that in his review of the report, it captures the intersection between the topic of mental health and the limited, but meaningful, role that prosecution plays. The collaborative effort that our commission has engaged in surrounding areas of mental health and addiction has been successful in carrying this message forward.
- Attorney James Boffetti added to the conversation by stating that in his review of the report, he found that the document captures the mission of the group.
- Director Ken Norton of NAMI, delivered his review on and suggests that mental health court be more directly tied into the report, as it tends to be prioritized less relative to drug courts. Additionally, the importance of training to include corrections, law enforcement and courts as an approach to diverting people from the criminal justice system and to reinforce positive outcomes to those who are justice involved.
- Julianne Carbin echoed the group discussion and updated them on the access of services as it relates to concept of prevention. Director Carbin further informed that the state has released a request for proposal for a state wide integrated access point to feed into a state wide integrated mobile crisis response system and added that it this a critical component to support diversion efforts.
- Sarah Blodgett, Executive Director of the Judicial Councils, reaffirmed that the report captures the mission of the group and thanked the commission members for the efforts and for crystalizing everything that the group has collaborated on.

- Cassandra Hoyt, MLDAC Sullivan County Corrections, echoed the sentiments of the discussion and reported that a challenge in county corrections is based on the availability of community mental health services. Most often, community mental partners prefer the higher risk individuals in order to qualify for programming and then what we run into is individuals become too stabilized and get stuck in the in between with availability of community mental health providers. The concern is when we implement some of the discussed topics as if the support in the communities exists.
- Senator Thomas Sherman, shared his thoughts surrounding the importance of budgetary requests for corrections that meet the discussed needs. From a legislative side, Senator Sherman added that any budgetary needs that we have been discussed as a commission, should be included in the report as a reference to meet the goals of the commission. Additionally, the continuum of care post release should also be considered as an addition to the report relative to the 10-year Mental Health Plan. Providing information to the public regarding mental illness and the incarcerated population is a benefit to marketing the need for support in corrections. Secondly, the understanding in order to support individuals on release with accurate public information would also have an effect on recidivism.

In closing, Commissioner Hanks thanked the members for their participation and addressed the importance of the completion of the report due in November and asked for any additional feedback. Further review of usage of grant funding for programming will be followed up in a discussion with Director Julianne Carbin, Director of DHHS Mental Health Services.

Commissioner Hanks advised that agenda items for discussion can be sent in advance of the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Leslie Bartlett on 2/8/2021 (edited and revised)