

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

MINUTES

**JUNE 27, 2019
9:00 a.m.**

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

Commissioner Helen E. Hanks called the Commission meeting to order at 9:00 am.

Participants:

Helen E. Hanks, Commissioner NH Department of Corrections, Chairperson
Sarah Blodgett, Executive Director, NH Judicial Council
James Boffetti, Associate Attorney General
Renny Cushing, Representative NH House
Tina Nadeau, Chief Justice, NH Superior Court
Robert Lynn, Chief Justice, NH Supreme Court
Heather Moquin, Chief Operating Officer NH Hospital
Robert Steigmeyer, President & CEO, Concord Hospital
Thomas Velardi, Strafford County Attorney
Joan Jepson, Administrative Assistant, Commissioner's Office

This Commission was formed to examine and make recommendations on issues facing individuals with mental illnesses in the corrections system. During the initial meeting, members suggested areas of focus to begin the examination according to guidelines put forth in Executive Order 2019-02

Steps that can be taken to reduce incarceration and improve mental health services for incarcerated individuals who suffer from mental illnesses.

- Individuals expressed concerns about decompensation during brief incarcerations and either release more ill, or do not release and escalate criminal activity by striking out at correctional staff. There is healthcare disparity between our ten county correctional facilities; however, the 1st Circuit Court of Appeals is mandating Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) in county institutions.

The use of restraints during transports to and from either mental health or corrections facilities.

- **SB177** -relative to the use of physical restraints on persons who are involuntarily committed.
http://gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_Status/billText.aspx?sy=2019&id=880&txtFormat=pdf&v=current

Methods for improving transitions between county and state institutions.

- Members of the United States Congress are discussing Medicaid exclusion during incarceration. If Medicaid remained available, it would set a minimum standard in all correctional institutions, regardless if county or state, and translate to the CMS healthcare standards already established.
- Concerns when discharging patients from NH Hospital to the community or a facility, will they receive consistency of care, medications and benefits to remain successful?

Reforms to support individuals with a mental illness who are transitioning from incarceration back into the community.

- Adhoc legislative workgroup reviewing Adult Parole Board Audit.
- Review parole practices to understand the opportunities offered through probation/parole officers to individuals supervised in the community.
- Use data collection to pinpoint the most effective programs and methods for successful re-entry.
- Consider mentorship initiatives, such as the Thread Program in Maryland, to provide a support system for those re-entering society who may be isolated from family and friends. Community volunteers partner with individuals offering support during this transitional period.
- Certificates of Employability opening doors to potential employers upon release.

Any other issues which the Commission deems relevant to its charge.

- Affect change so the NH Department of Corrections will no longer be the state's largest provider of mental health care.
- Revisit Justice Reinvestment opportunities.
- Early treatment and diversion as opposed to incarcerating individuals new to the criminal justice system.
- Reduce the stigma of mental illness and substance use disorders.
- Increasing capacity and timely access in the community mental health system. Current wait time for an evaluation is as long as four months.
- New Hampshire was once considered the mental health model for the country, work to recreate a strong community based system.

- Integrate behavioral health and physical health into a singular healthcare system. Provide behavioral health urgent care and mobile crisis units.
- Competency and restorability. Giving law enforcement another option other than arrest. Examine our current model and compare to other State's models to advance our state laws and processes regarding competency and restorability
- Review the prevalence of those with intellectual disorders incarcerated and make recommendations for appropriate alternatives to incarcerations as informed by the data.

Next Steps:

1. Meet the mission and decide the committee's path of recommendation.
2. Create a timeline of attainability for recommendations and actions.
 - Prioritize goals for short-term accomplishments and what might be added in the next legislative cycle.
3. Who is missing from the conversation that we might bring back to the Governor for consideration? Committee members were asked to forward names for potential partners to Commissioner Hanks' office.
 - Medicaid Office
 - Housing Representative
 - Transportation
 - County Corrections
 - Community Mental Health Member
4. Research national best practices and disburse them to the members of the commission.
 - Send them to Joan Jepson Joan.Jepson@doc.nh.gov who will share with the whole commission for review.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

The next meeting TBD

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Jepson