

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

**MINUTES**

**May 15, 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 NH Department of Corrections, Chairperson  
Sarah Blodgett, Judicial Council  
Representative Renny Cushing, NH House  
Honorable Robert Lyn, Retired Supreme Court  
Honorable Tina Nadeau, Superior Court  
Kenneth Norton, Executive Director, NAMI  
Emily Rice, Manchester City Solicitor  
Senator Thomas Sherman, NH Senate  
Robert Steigmeyer, CEO & President Concord Hospital  
Thomas Velardi, Strafford County Attorney General  
Lois Monette, 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. Executive Order 2019-02

Commission Hanks welcomed everyone and asked if anyone had any comments or additions on the minutes, a formal rollcall will be held in June.

**Housing:**

- All agree that housing is the most acute issue for individuals struggling with mental illness and/or substance use disorder. Secure housing creates stability.  
**Action Item:** Commissioner Hanks to follow up with DHHS on MOU for Housing Grant.

**Telehealth/Telemedicine:**

- Has made enormous leaps forward since the onset of COVID-19, still issues with access in the state such as internet access and connectivity, ability to purchase tablets and smart phones.
- Drug courts are now using Telehealth/Telemedicine.
- Some people are engaging more, for people with severe anxiety it can work well for them.

- DOC has a UNH Grant to enhance Telehealth capabilities and we are working with other healthcare partners such as a Teleortho clinic.
- Some people will still prefer direct services.

### **COVID-19 impact:**

- What additional impact will the pandemic have on the mental health community and justice involved individuals?
- Already seeing an increase in homelessness.
- Fear that momentum will be lost on Forensic Hospitals, Mobile Crisis Response Teams and Community Health Services. Will resources for current programs be smaller or cut all together?
- What will be the impact on future crime rates?
- Domestic violence calls are down but the calls that are coming in are for serious offenses. Victims may not be aware that they can report an incident after it has happened.
- What additional impact will the pandemic have on the mental health community and justice involved individuals?
- Now thought of as a long lasting crisis.
- Currently a backlog in courts, admission rate in correctional facilities is down, once the courts open back up what will the population increase be?

### **Legislature:**

- What will be the financial impact on legislative activity with COVID-19 taking priority?
- Depending on the decision of Congress, the Cares Act funding may be used to backfill the state budget. If that is the case, there may be less impact on existing support programs. If Congress decides to use the funding for non-budgeted support, the impact on those programs will be huge.
- Medicaid for justice involved individuals, have we heard if that is moving forward?

### **DOC Initiatives:**

- Currently not a positive COVID-19 case inside the DOC facilities, we started screening all individuals in January, increased the level of screening after the CDC confirmed the symptomology.
- Tablet technology has been an incredible resource in getting information out to residents.
- Aligned movements in housing units to restrict contact. We have established guidelines for triaging symptomatic individuals into medical isolation versus quarantine. Increased access to soap and hand washing facilities. Two fabric face coverings have been handed out to all residents. Staff have been provided fabric, surgical, and N95 masks as outlined by PPE guidelines by CDC and the department.
- We stopped accepting individuals without a confirmed screening from other facilities.
- There is a COVID-19 page on our website with FAQ's and statistics that has helped disseminate information to the community.
- Programs inside are still running with modification, we took a longer break on our Education side.
- The Adult Parole Board has gone to Zoom meetings. It is working well. Next steps will be to advance their technology.

- On the question of low-level releases, DOC has streamlined the Administrative Home Confinement (AHC) process; Case Managers are working with individuals who meet the requirements to create a release proposal. The barrier has been the availability of adequate housing plan.
- CDC has released excellent information and guidelines for correctional facilities; we had meet most of the guidelines established in our facilities before the CDC released their guidelines. This was very validating for staff.
- We are working with an agency through a federal grant on a study to connect people on parole with an app on their smart phone that connects them to their provider for treatment services. The pilot will be in the Nashua District office and will be collaborating with Harbor Homes.

**Action Item:** Commissioner Hanks to send information on the study out to the committee members.

**Data Sets:**

- The 3 million dollar housing grant to provide services to the homeless is moving forward. As these funds are dispersed, we should work on collecting as much data as possible.
- Medicaid as a possible point to collect data has been discussed.
- Collect information from Homeless Shelters, if they have an intake form, what questions are on it.
- DOC Field Services has added a way to track if someone under supervision is homeless.

**Action Item:** Commissioner Hanks will reach out to partners at the Sununu Center and DHHS to see if we can formalize gathering information on justice involved youth.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted, Lois Monette

2020 meeting dates: usually every third Friday of the month.

All meeting are at 10:00am

<del>January 13</del>	<del>April 17 cancelled</del>	July 17	October 16
<del>February 21</del>	<del>May 15 Zoom meeting</del>	August 21	November 2
<del>March 20 cancelled</del>	June 19 Zoom Meeting	September 18	December 18