

**Children and Youth Behavioral Health Subcommittee  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, April 14, 2021**

**Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Introductions**

The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Subcommittee meeting was called to order at 10:02 am by Barbara Granger (CYBHS co-chair). Ms. Granger welcomed members and invited all attendees to place their names and email addresses in the chat box for attendance tracking purposes. She also asked attendees to indicate in the chat box if they desired to offer public comment during that section of the agenda. Table 1 shows member attendance for the meeting.

Table 1: The CYBHS Subcommittee member attendance.

MEMBER NAME	YES	NO	MEMBER NAME	YES	NO
<b>Behavioral Health Advisory Council</b>			<b>Advocacy Organizations</b>		
Donna Fagan	X		<i>NAMI Texas</i>		
Shannon Hoffman	X		Greg Hansch	X	
Jordan Smelley		X	Alternate: Matthew Lovitt		X
<b>Community Provider Representatives</b>			<i>Texans Care for Children</i>		
<i>Heart of Texas Center</i>			Josette Saxton	X	
Ron Kimbell	X		Alternate: Stephanie Ruben		X
Alternate: Telawna Kirbie		X	<b>Suicide Prevention</b>		
<i>Tri-County Behavioral Healthcare</i>			Lisa Sullivan		X
Melissa Zemencsik	X		<b>TCOOMMI</b>		
Alternate: Shannon Miller	X		Emily Eisenmann	X	
<b>Family Representatives</b>			Alternate: Bettina Grant	X	
Barbara Granger	X		<b>Dept. of Family and Protective Services</b>		
Valencia Gensollen	X		Che'Vun Lane	X	
Alternate: Verlyn Johnson	X		Alternate: Nicole Weaver		X
<b>Health and Human Services Commission</b>			<b>Dept. of State Health Services</b>		
<i>Behavioral Health Services</i> Veronica Martinez		X	Claire Niday	X	
Alternate: Liz Pearson		X	Alternate: Cristell Perez	X	
<i>Behavioral Health Services</i> Suzanne Alley	X		<b>Texas Education Agency</b>		
<i>Medicaid</i> John Huffine		X	Julie Wayman	X	
<i>Office of Mental Health Coordination</i> Lillian Nguyen	X		Alternate: Denise Magallanez		X

MEMBER NAME	YES	NO	MEMBER NAME	YES	NO
Office of Mental Health Coordination Kisha Ledlow	X		<b>Texas Juvenile Justice Department</b>		
<b>Higher Education</b>			Susan Palacios		X
UT-TIEMH Molly Lopez	X		Alternate: Marie Welsch	X	
			<b>Youth/Young Adult</b>		
			Callie Dupree		X
			Calista Hughes		X

Yes: Indicates attended the meeting

No: Indicates did not attend the meeting

**Also in Attendance:** Alice Alvarez, Ari Acosta, Arnold Amador, Jessi Davis, Molly Davis, Glenn Dembowski, Debi Dickensheets, Natalie Fikac, Mary Beth Firsk, Julia Gonzales, Leah Gorham McCulley, Rebecca Helterbrand, Emma Howitt, Tanya Jopling, Jennifer Kliebert, Tracy Levins, Zatarra Lumen, Melissa Ann Luna, Linda Madrigal, Felicia Mason-Edwards, David McClung, Brianna Rodriguez, Molly Sanders, Leslie Sirrianni, Sarah Strang, Angie Tyler, Sarah Underwood, Adriana Valadez, Christine Vo

Barbara Granger introduced Jennifer Kliebert, presenter for the Family Experience.

### **Agenda Item 2: Family Experience (Jennifer Kliebert)**

Jennifer Kliebert began sharing her experience as the mother of three children with mental health diagnoses. While there was a history of mental illness in her family, they did not really talk about it or even know how to talk about it. Ms. Kliebert's oldest child was diagnosed with a mental health challenge when he was 6 years old. She described not having the knowledge of how to handle the situation and how the only thing she knew to do was to try to get him help and follow the recommendations of the providers. In the years that followed, her family encountered other roadblocks. Her son ran into some trouble with the juvenile justice department, and they made it possible for him to get tested. Ms. Kliebert discussed how she wished she knew where to go for information that would have linked her with additional resources to access services. After attempting to take his own life, her son received services at a state hospital and Ms. Kliebert engaged with the Family Partner there. The Family Partner encouraged and empowered her to help her son succeed with his mental health challenges. Ms. Kliebert continues to be very proud of the work with her son. He was able to go back to school and advocate for other students with mental health challenges. Ms. Kliebert acknowledged the support of her husband and how he has become an advocate as well. As a result of her personal experiences, her knowledge and skills grew over the course of the years and many trainings and have eventually evolved into her role as Family Partner assisting other families in their journey.

### **Agenda Item 3: Children and Youth Behavioral Health Subcommittee Business**

Barbara Granger confirmed that a quorum of members was present. Minutes from the January 13, 2021 meeting were sent to members before the meeting for their review. Suzanne Alley made a motion to approve the minutes; Donna Fagan seconded. The minutes were approved without changes. Josette Saxton noted that there is a nominations subcommittee working on choosing nominees for a co-chair to offer the membership.

### **Agenda Item 4: Introduction to Texas System of Care Strategic Planning**

Tracy Levins described the need to update the TxSOC strategic plan and invited participants to join a Thought Exchange, a way of gathering and prioritizing ideas and recommendations through crowd-sourcing. The group will reflect on the recommendations later in the meeting.

### **Agenda Item 5: Family Partner Panel and Discussion**

Barbara Granger gave an overview of the history of family partners, recognizing the enormous impact of Stephany Bryan on the growth of family voice in Texas. Ms. Granger asked each of the panel members to introduce themselves.

- *Donna Fagan.* Ms. Fagan is a Certified Family Partner (CFP) working at a local mental health authority to support families. She started work in mental health advocacy 10 years ago and has children and grandchildren with mental health challenges. Her daughter was diagnosed late in elementary school. Ms. Fagan currently provides family support, outreach, and education in the First Episode Psychosis (FEP) program, Youth Empowerment Services (YES), and HHS family services.
- *Angie Tyler.* Ms. Tyler is a CFP providing bilingual outreach and family support services with RA1SE, the first episode psychosis program at Integral Care in Austin. She loves to connect with individuals and talk about program and their potential family support. She connects by telling her story of having a child with schizoaffective disorder. She loves to help families find their voice and to help them feel supported through shared experiences. Angie provides psychoeducation for families and connects them to resources. She works with the transition-age youth (TAY) population and younger ages in clinical high-risk services.
- *Jaimie Mills.* Ms. Mills is the mother of an 18-year-old child with diagnoses of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and autism. She connects with families and finds resources for them. She works with families in school mental health as well, helping them walk them through common hurdles.

- *Jennifer Kliebert*. Ms. Kliebert works mainly with adults that have mental health challenges and shares her journey with them. She does not let diagnoses define her, her children, or the people with whom she works.
- *Verlyn Johnson*. Ms. Johnson is a CFP and came to be a family leader through the Child Protective Services. Her work helped drive policy changes with family members. She has lived experience as a family member of persons with mental health challenges. That lived experience lets her recognize what others are going through and has enabled her to offer an open-door policy for families she works. She has a great love and desire to help families navigate through their journeys.
- *Julia Gonzales*. Ms. Gonzales has been a CFP for 7 years and is with The Harris Center for Mental Health & IDD. She had a niece with mental health challenges who passed away, and Ms. Gonzales adopted her great nieces as a result. Her great-nieces have mental health challenges as well. She described the day to day struggles that families may face and how important it is to have support from CFPs as well as faith-based communities. These supports help families navigate to appropriate services and get connected to resources.
- *Antoinette Teague*. Ms. Teague is the mother of a child with behavioral health challenges. She talked about the importance of Family Partners and how helpful they would have been when she was going through difficult times. Antoinette is now the Family Partner at Waco Center for Youth. She loves her job and loves being able to help families.

### **Question and Answer:**

#### **What is special about services provided by a family partner? What keeps you going?**

- We augment what is being done by the counselor and the case manager. It is sometimes easier to meet families where they're at and at their convenience. We help them understand, provide psychoeducation, and learn what is going on with their child on a daily basis and what is going on in school (Jaime Mills).
- We share common values and stories with families through our lived experience. We can help families understand the need to take self-care seriously in order for them to take care of their children (Julia Gonzales).
- Family partner services enhance the broader picture of what's going on at home and empower families to be forthcoming in order to understand the home composition. We can share that information at staffings and this helps us help the family navigate through services. We can also shift gears with families and ask them what they like to do for themselves (Angie Tyler).
- We have opportunities to work with everyone in the community, across all levels and systems (Verlyn Johnson).
- Having been diagnosed and experiencing the stigma with mental health challenges keeps me going (Jennifer Kliebert).

- As a peer support provider, I do arts and crafts sessions with clients as a way of teaching self-care and this in turn, provides me with some self-care too. (Jaime Mills).
- Just knowing that there's another parent out there with needs and challenges who needs my skills and support keeps me going (Donna Fagan).
- Teaching families how to actively care for themselves keeps me going (Angie Tyler).
- Helping families in need make changes in their lives keeps me going (Verlyn Johnson).

## **Agenda Item 6: Texas System of Care Memorandum of Understanding**

**Kisha Ledlow:** HHSC is required to implement the SOC framework and to develop and monitor the Texas System of Care (TxSOC) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). At previous CYBHS meetings, the TxSOC MOU tracking sheet was presented and agencies were asked to provide a brief update about their progress on implementing system of care strategies, values, and principles. Ms. Ledlow asked each agency to provide a brief update.

**Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS):** (Che'vun Lane) DFPS has seen a lot of challenges in the last year with children in need of intensive mental health services. They are also having placement issues with regards to residential treatment centers. DFPS is in the process of receiving additional funds to hire more trauma-informed specialists.

**Texas Education Agency (TEA):** (Julie Wayman) TEA has been working closely with partners in the Project AWARE grant to provide training and resources to school staff. They are building partnerships with HHSC and local mental health authorities. TEA is also working on making data more accessible.

**Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments (TCOOMMI):** (Bettina Grant) TCOOMMI is looking at where enhancements for youth of all ages can be made. Families are part of the wraparound process and are included in those services.

**Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD):** N/A

**HHSC:** (Veronica Martinez) Family voice is extremely important to HHSC and the Children's Mental Health Team has facilitated monthly calls with all the CFPs in the state. These monthly calls have become a learning collaborative for the community. HHSC is working closely with centralized learning structure to identify best practices in the integration of peer support. Agency staff have regularly scheduled check in calls with Texas Family Voice Network and use them as a resource. They have also developed a SharePoint page to provide technical assistance to Family Partners.

## **Agenda Item 7: Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Services**

**Emma Howitt**, Clinical Director at Shalom Austin Jewish Family Service (JFS), provided a brief presentation describing cultural responsiveness from the perspective of the Jewish community. The mission of Shalom Austin is to strengthen the community by empowering all individuals and families through affordable and culturally sensitive social services. Shalom Austin serves people regardless of their race, religion, disability, gender, or sexual orientation. For more information, see <http://shalomaustin.org/>

Ms. Howitt began by defining what it means to be Jewish (e.g., religious affiliation, ethnic cultural heritage, diverse make-up across the country and the world, minority group membership). She talked about antisemitism as the longest running hatred dating back thousands of years and how safety concerns continue to impact the community. She provided an overview of the major movements within Judaism, including Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox. Ms. Howitt provided a brief description of the values inherent in Jewish communities with particular attention to the values of family and community, learning and education, Tikkun Olam (translated to repair the world), justice and charity, kindness and respect, and joy.

Ms. Howett noted that challenges and barriers related to providing culturally responsive behavioral health services to members of the Jewish community include the limited cultural competency for the Jewish experience among providers, antisemitism, affordability, and accessibility. Some considerations for providers include the recognition of beliefs, biases, and spiritual values; seeking out education about Judaism and related practices separate of the clients; including questions about religious and cultural identity in assessments to better understand clients' holistic experiences; avoid proselytizing to any client; and knowledge of generational trauma. Some considerations for agencies include engaging with local Jewish communities, recognizing Jewish High Holy days when scheduling events, and respecting any religious or cultural considerations with all staff.

### **Q&A:**

*How can we best tailor services to ensure services are culturally responsive?*

Ms. Howett advised clinicians to explore each family's culture. Provider organizations should make connections within the local community and help clients access those connections as well. COVID has allowed for easier connections to be made virtually.

## **Agenda Item 8: TxSOC Strategic Planning (continued)**

**Tracy Levins shared key thoughts from Thought Exchange. Some of the highest rated thoughts included:**

- We could decide to pay family peers a living wage instead of pennies on the dollar.
- We could create more diversity in the family partner workforce instead of only having older-aged white women.
- Provide specific line item funding for local mental health authorities (LMHAs) to hire family partners based on number of children served.
- Family Support Liaisons in schools.
- Fund Family Partner Services better.
- Increase incentives for agencies to have flexible days/hours to increase the ability for families to fully participate in services.
- Give incentives to families to participate and have meetings that allow for various ways to participate via video, calls, etc.

Participants discussed the crowd-sourced recommendations, adding the need to incentivize positions in order to draw more diversity. Participants also suggested looking to Black-owned business or Hispanic business organizations to help with recruiting family peer support providers. Finally, some participants noted the need for a campaign to recruit and retain more men in family peer support roles and proposed designing a campaign about fathers being able to build framework in helping families.

**Agenda Item 9: Behavioral Health Advisory Committee (BHAC) Updates**

**Donna Fagan:** Donna Fagan, family representative on the Behavioral Health Advisory Committee (BHAC) provided an update on the activities of the Committee. BHAC initiated a Peer and Family Peer subcommittee to make recommendations to BHAC related to families, youth, and adults in services. Ms. Fagan is a member of that subcommittee and noted that David McClung was also a participant in that subcommittee.

BHAC will also be conducting a structural and organizational report out on all subcommittees (including CYBHS). All subcommittees will be providing a yearly report (e.g., activities, recommendations, next steps, future projects) to BHAC, stakeholders and Health and Human Services. HHSC wants to BHAC to offer published information for legislators in advance of the next legislative session. Ms. Fagan also provided a brief overview of filed bills related to the residential treatment center project, child relinquishment, defining age of youth peer support, and maternal/perinatal mental health.

**Agenda Item 10: Project Updates**

**Texas System of Care.** TxSOC is collaborating with the state office of Community Resource Coordination Groups (CRCGs) to co-host a virtual conference July 27-

July 29. TxSOC team members have been planning for Children's Mental Health Awareness Day, scheduled for May 3, 2021, which will be hosted on [cmhaustin21.com](http://cmhaustin21.com). TxSOC staff and other committee members have finished final judging for the 2021 Texas Mental Health Creative Arts Contest. Winners will be announced soon. HHSC will be hosting a virtual reception for the Arts Contest on May 26, 2021. All are welcome.

**ACCEPT:** ACCEPT team members are developing a list of resources useful to young people and providers and are also actively exploring upcoming training opportunities. If you have recommendations of any youth or young adult that would be interested in joining ACCEPT, please reach out to David McClung.

**Texas Family Voice Network (TxFVN).** The next meeting of the TxFVN is Thursday, April 22 and will emphasize children's mental health awareness. All interested individuals are welcome to join. The HHSC Behavioral Health Unit has asked TxFVN to provide best practices on family support in a May meeting. There is a subcommittee that is planning family activities to accompany the TxSOC/CRCG conference in July. Finally, TxFVN is making good progress on their plans to incorporate as a non-profit and will likely be able to become a 501C3 by the end of the summer.

#### **Agenda Item 11: Public Comment**

No public comment.

#### **Agenda Item 12: Next Steps**

If have anyone has agenda items for the next CYBHS meeting, please email them to Barbara Granger.

#### **Agenda Item 13: Next meeting**

Next meeting is scheduled for July 14, 2021.