

Children and Youth Behavioral Health Subcommittee (CYBHS)
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, July 10, 2024
 10:00 am – 3:00 pm
 Virtual

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Introductions

The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Subcommittee meeting was called to order at 10:05am by Sarah Fiorenza. Sarah provided a welcome to the members and invited all attendees to fill out a Qualtrics form 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 attendance for the meeting.

Table 1: The CYBHS Subcommittee member attendance.

MEMBER NAME	YES	NO	MEMBER NAME	YES	NO
Behavioral Health Advisory Council			Advocacy Organizations		
Yolanda Nelson	X		NAMI Texas		
Nicolas Sanchez	X		Greg Hansch		X
Cynthia Humphrey	X		Alternate: Hannah Gill		X
Victoria Rodriguez		X	Alternate: Lysette Galvan	X	
Nasruddin Rupani		X	Texans Care for Children		
Community Provider Representatives			Stephanie Rubin		X
Heart of Texas Center			Dept. of State Health Services		
Kristen Hejl	X		Kim Beam		X
Alternate: Jessica Jimenez		X	Alternate: Susan Bareis		X
Tri-County Behavioral Healthcare			Suicide Prevention		
Melissa Zemencsik		X	Josette Saxton	X	
Alternate: Shannon Miller		X	Alternate: Lisa Sullivan		X
Family Representatives			TCOOMMI		
Donna Fagan		X	Emily Eisenmann		X
Valencia Gensollen		X	Alternate: Lenny Colunga		X
Verlyn Johnson		X	Dept. of Family and Protective Services		
Youth/Young Adult			Jennifer Nichols (CPS)		X
			Alternate: Angela Roberts (CPI)		X

Rohan Satija	X		Brooke King (PEI)	X	
Health and Human Services Commission			Higher Education		
Behavioral Health Services Amanda Britton		X	UT Austin – Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health Molly Lopez	X	
Alternate: Liz Pearson		X	Alternate: Natalie Fikac		
Medicaid Kacie Cardwell		X	Texas Education Agency		
Alternate: Sheaffer Lapham	X				
Office of Mental Health Coordination Lillian Nguyen	X		Julie Wayman		X
Texas System of Care Project Sarah Fiorenza	X		Alternate: Tammy Gendke	X	
Substance Use Letisia Balderas MacDonald		X	Texas Juvenile Justice Department		
Family Health Services Daniel Gunter	X		Casey Koenig		X
			Alternate: Susan Palacios	X	

Yes: Indicates attended the meeting

No: Indicates did not attend the meeting

Also in Attendance: Glenn Dembowski, Laura Rushing, Stefan Cole, Ashten Wiedebusch, Victoria Kelley, Ashley Lilavois, Mckenzie Bentley, Molly Sanders, Heath Newton, Raven Garza, Sarah Stephens, Georgie Martinez, Chera Tribble, Angela Ott, Holly Gursslin, Jenny Baldwin, Deborah Valdez Gomez, Victoria, Fleming, Kendall Jones, Leah Kelly, Regine Mojica, Hector Pina Ibarra, Ophelia Jaushlin

Agenda Item 2: Consideration of April 10th, 2023, draft meeting minutes

Josette Saxton raised a motion to approve the April minutes, Tammy Gendke seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by voting members.

Agenda Item 3: Youth Experience Presentation

Nidia Heston introduced Deborah and Vanessa Gomez, a mother-daughter team, who shared their experiences navigating System of Care (SOC) services through Emergence Health Network. Deborah, a school counselor and Vanessa's mother, highlighted the accessibility and collaborative nature of SOC services, which allowed Vanessa to receive early intervention and comprehensive care, including crisis intervention and psychiatric referrals. She emphasized the importance of having these services available during difficult times.

Vanessa detailed her experiences with various SOC professionals, such as therapists and case workers, and the positive impact they had on her mental health, especially after traumatic experiences. She appreciated the convenience of school-based services but noted that many students are unaware of them or are hesitant to seek help due to concerns about confidentiality.

Both Deborah and Vanessa stressed the importance of educating parents and students about mental health services and breaking down cultural stigmas. Vanessa suggested that better advertising and clear communication about the confidentiality and independence of these services could encourage more students to seek help. She also expressed a desire for earlier education on mental health and abusive relationships, which might have helped her recognize and address her trauma sooner.

Overall, their testimony underscored the effectiveness of SOC services and the need for broader awareness and education to support students and families in accessing these resources.

Discussion

Debbie shared that counselors' caseloads could be 500-600 per student. They are not therapists, even though they do small groups or individual sessions. Involving families is important to understand that they need to seek outside help. Sometimes they refer out and its 2-3 months waiting list to be seen. Educating and early intervention from school counselors is vital.

Vanessa shared that there is stigma, and she used to see herself as weak rather than struggling with mental health. If students themselves helped to share their experiences, it makes it a lot less embarrassing to come forward and encourages them to seek help.

Agenda Item 4: Empowering Communities: System of Care Grant Updates and Insights

Sarah Fiorenza introduced 5 presenters who are all SAMSHA System of Care grantees. Integral Care, Emergence Health Network, and Pecan Valley Center receive funding through HHSC's federal grant. Tarrant County and the City of Houston (in partnership with Baylor College of Medicine) are funded through direct federal SAMSHA funding. Sarah elaborated that the goals of expansion and sustainability SAMSHA grants are to both provide direct services to children and build out infrastructure that can be sustained after the grant period ends. Each grantee was invited to share general updates about their work towards these goals, barriers they have faced when trying to build out local systems of care,

critical pieces needed to accomplish these goals, and important partnerships that have facilitated their progress.

Sarah introduced Heath Newton, the System of Care Project Director for Integral Care, who shared slides about their progress in Travis County. Heath shared the 10-year history of their school-based programming, which exists in the Manor, Del Valle, and Pflugerville school districts. In 2022, they benefitted from the SOC grant which has been very successful and provides services to 7 schools, including a family partner that provides services to all schools they work with. He went over the tiers of support provided, with Tier 3 where they are primarily working. Key partnerships were highlighted, including a point person in each district, HHSC, TIEMH, and internal partnerships. The peer specialist and family partner role can be isolating, so they tried to forge internal partnerships with to increase support. Summer groups allow them to engage with youth during field trips and marketing events have engaged the community. Kids Living Well, their governance board, is working on the children's mental health plan for Travis County. Barriers highlighted included funding, exploring effectiveness of wraparound services, coordinating school access and communication, logistics of collaboration across various requirements. Finally, he highlighted ideas for sustainability including reimbursement billing possibilities and other funding sources.

Krista Wingate, the Chief of Child and Adolescent Services at Emergence Health Network and Project Director for SOC in El Paso, TX, provided a general overview of SOC staff positions and school and local partnerships. She shared initial difficulty engaging with partners on their governance board, but a renewed focus when they regrouped to be more intentional. The Juvenile justice subcommittee of the governance board is an example of success. It was also important to integrate SOC staff into LMHA staff. Barriers shared include navigating clear communication with schools, providing services in a border city when experiencing push back and stigma against services, and increasing caregiver engagement. In response to these, they have coordinated opportunities for meetings and feedback from the schools, planned meetings with teachers about how to promote services, and encouraged their family partner to explain the need for action with caregivers. They look forward to increasing their youth peer support services, engagement with the school community, sharing SOC values, and emphasizing sustainability while district funding is not available.

Ashley Lilavois, the SOC Project Director at Pecan Valley Centers a.k.a. Project T.H.R.I.V.E., provided an update on their staffing, efforts to collaborate with PVC as a whole, and referral process. She reviewed Tier 1 peer support services including groups and one on one sessions both in and outside of school. They have focused on school relationships throughout each campus, identifying specific staff members as "champions" to invite into partnership meetings, sending out newsletters, and hosting events like youth mental health trainings. Based on a

community survey, they built up their governance board with essential stakeholders and have since planned and executed advocacy related programming, hosted events for school staff, and created a strategic plan. Their barriers include space and schedule limitations, school attendance, stigma and lack of engagement, and school funding.

Amanda Cobb is the System Director of Family Leadership and Voice for Help Me Grow/Help Me Thrive (My Health My Resources Tarrant County), a direct recipient of a SAMSHA grant that serves families from prenatal to 17. She presented the history of their grants and projects that created Help Me Thrive North Texas, which serves youth ages 6-18 in 18 counties. She shared their implementation model, including 5 different subcommittees, leadership structure, and youth advisory committee, which is their governing body. Their system framework covers promotions, prevention, intervention, and crisis services. Their SAMSHA grant serves 10 of their 18 counties, with a focus on vulnerable more rural counties. Amanda shared specific programs supported by the grant including their call center, family advisory council, and family resource centers.

Hector Pina-Ibarra, with the Baylor College of Medicine SAMSHA Project Director, presented on two grants: Be Well, Be Connected and The Next Day Project. He presented the grant profile for Be Well, Be Connected, which was granted to the city of Houston, delivered by Baylor College of Medicine, and evaluated by the Mental Health Policy Institute. This grant filled a gap to serve kids with Severe Emotional Disorders (SED) by increasing service clinicians, expanding services, and coordinating systems. He shared the goal of screening youth for SED at school to provide further services or referrals and the outcome of working with over 6,000 youth and 38 different school districts/charter schools. The second goal of this grant was to provide emergency mental health assessments through the Child Psychiatry Access Network (CPSN), they provided 2,875. The third goal was to provide home and community-based services for kids with SED and their families and they served 80 families. They also aligned with policy initiatives and community resources. They trained 1100 staff across 250 campuses in emotional backpack programs and 72 other mental health providers in other areas. They partner with NAMI to provide peer-to-peer support and Texas Children's to provide suicide prevention training. Texas Children's also created the Bipolar/SED clinic. The Next Day project was awarded in September 2023 and focuses on addressing suicidal ideation and behavior (SIB), and non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) with the goal of creating a lasting clinic. He shared many goals related to screening, assessment, treatment, consultation, training, and awareness. He shared 10 essential stakeholders and partners for the project.

Discussion

Josette listed barriers she heard, including accessing schools and getting buy in with school partners, navigating school logistics and schedules; workforce turnover; stigma with engaging youth, families, and district partners; diverse school cultures; recognizing school ability to fund is often unavailable.

Josette listed solutions she heard: establishing intentional partnerships with school leadership, counselors, and staff with consistent and clear communication beyond MOUs; engaging partnerships with governance boards; helping people become aware with SOC framework and values which increases buy in; engaging the community outside of schools; unique forms of intervention which addresses stigma and increases awareness such as peer support groups; when approaching schools, focusing on how partnerships benefit both sides.

Members participated in a brainstorming session asking what we can do as a group to move the SOC community forward. Notes from this can be found in the meeting [share folder](#).

Agenda Item 5: Early Childhood Mental Health Recommendations

Molly Lopez shared two draft recommendations that were developed from the last CYBHS meeting to advance the early childhood mental health system. Group discussion, summarized below, was reflected in changes made to the recommendations. After Sarah established quorum, Josette motioned to approve both recommendations. Yolanda seconded this motion and the group unanimously voted to approve both recommendations which will be sent to BHAC for further approval. The recommendations are:

The Child and Youth Behavioral Health Subcommittee recommends that the Texas Health and Human Services Commission establish a staff position to provide subject matter expertise and state leadership for early childhood mental health, focused on birth through age five. Since responsibility to respond to mental health concerns for this age group is distributed across multiple agencies and systems, this position should be housed within the Office of Mental Health Coordination and be a member of the Texas Early Learning Council. The Early Childhood Behavioral Health Lead should be responsible for oversight of early childhood behavioral health promotion, prevention, and intervention activities in the state and provide leadership to the development of coordinated systems of care for young children and their families across health, behavioral health, education, child care, and child welfare systems.

The Child and Youth Behavioral Health Subcommittee recommends that the Texas Health and Human Services Commission conduct a study to identify the availability of evidence-based early childhood mental health interventions provided within the Local Mental Health or Behavioral Health Authorities

(LMHA/LBHAs) for children 3-5 years old and Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) for children 0-3 years old, provider qualifications and available professional development in these interventions, and recommendations for ensuring access to high quality mental health care for young children (birth through age 5) who experience mental health challenges.

Discussion

Someone asked if there is an opportunity to include support for caregivers experiencing substance use disorder in either of these recommendations. They identified that there are best practices focused on social determinants of health, risk factors across systems, and family support, and other experts could add in insight related to this. Josette added that there may be opportunities to look at this through DFPS and that family needs can be incorporated by changing mental health to behavioral health.

Agenda Item 6: Children's Mental Health Strategic Plan Update

Diana Busler updated that they spent June and July reviewing the proposed recommendations from five work groups. Each subgroup has been differentiating items for immediate action and future action. They are evaluating workforce capacity to achieve potential actions and create awareness around potential barriers. The workgroup had their final meeting on July 8th and are now revising and consolidating 50 items that they've deemed as important.

Josette Saxton and Verlyn Johnson conducted two focus groups and shared high-level strategies that they encourage the planning committee to consider. The first themes were supporting the development of a robust mental health workforce to serve children and families by focusing on improving services in rural and underserved areas and then expanding out to more children and families. Additionally, expanding state efforts to deliver mental health services in primary care and school settings was highlighted along with strengthening youth substance use prevention and treatment services. They also recommended developing robust aftercare and reentry services to support youth transitioning out from restrictive settings (hospitals, residential treatment, or justice facilities); increasing access to intensive behavioral health services to youth at risk of entering foster care or the juvenile justice system due to their mental health needs; helping community organizations work together to address the needs of children and youth with complex concerns; and expanding the use of prevention and intervention strategies amongst children and youth. They will share the document detailing these themes. Diana confirmed that there is a lot of alignment of these themes with the draft strategic plan.

Agenda Item 7: HHSC Children's Mental Health Team Program Updates

Amanda Britton shared that the RTC project now has 18 contracted providers, facilities that they can refer children to. Their system navigator program is looking to expand through an item request in the next legislative session. Their children's crisis respite program has expanded from 4 to 8 LMHAs currently providing or preparing for services: Bluebonnet Trails, Heart of Texas, Hill Country, Tarrant County, Integral Care, North Texas Behavioral Health Authority, Pecan Valley Center, Center for Healthcare Services. They have executed all contracts for youth crisis outreach teams and the various pilot programs, including mobile outreach, will be starting by the 4th quarter of this fiscal year. Their multi systemic therapy program has all contracts executed and expanded from 7 LMHAs with one team each to 16 LMHAs with 22 teams. Their behavioral health partnership program finished a role project and now LMHAs and educational service centers can hire a behavioral health partnership liaison with an LPC associates or an LMSW.

Agenda Item 8: SAMSHA Grant Updates

Sarah shared that Children's Mental Health Acceptance Day was a success with 500+ attendees, a great partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of Austin, and an inspiring guest speaker panel including Sheriff Sally Hernandez. Over 600 participants submitted artwork to the art contest surrounding the theme, "Why does mental health matter to you?" A reception for the contest in May included HHSC leadership and words from the artists. Here is a link to the [winning artwork!](#)

Sarah shared that we are in year 3 of our 4-year grant and submitted a request for continuation for fiscal year 25 and received a request for additional materials earlier this year that we responded to and expect a response in the coming weeks. All national system of care grantees will attend a meeting in Bethesda, MD the week of July 15th and will share their experiences at the next meeting. The System of Care x CRCG conference will be held in the summer of 2025, so information on opportunities to join a planning workgroup will be out before October.

Molly shared that Raven is working on "micro-lessons" that are focused on sharing SOC values surrounding 10 topic areas. They are meant to inform stakeholders across the state of SOC values, about how we work with children and families, and how to use shared language. Raven shared the first micro-lesson, which is about defining what it means to be "strengths-based" and encouraged the group to submit feedback for it [using this link](#). They would like to consult the group on how to distribute and use these moving forward. They thanked Tammy and McKenzie for helping with the development of this!

Agenda Item 9: Behavioral Health Advisory Committee Update

Cynthia Humphrey shared the committee will review multiple recommendations before their next meeting in August regarding improvements to 2-1-1, shifting peer services under one HHSC umbrella, and other topics.

Agenda Item 10: Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Agenda Item 11: Meeting Evaluation

Molly asked the group to complete a meeting evaluation and asked the group what worked well and what did not during this meeting. People enjoyed the presentations, online format, hearing from families with lived experience, liked generating and evaluating ideas. People felt that the meeting could improve by having more opportunities for input, holding roll call until after youth/parent/family experience presentation, simpler way to take attendance, more opportunity for questions to presenters.

Agenda Item 12: Next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for October 9, 2024.

If have anyone has agenda items for the next CYBHS meeting, please email them to info@txsystemofcare.org.

Location for presentation slides and handouts -
<https://utexas.box.com/s/p01vgpu5nzzgymto7hyjseluv19jekyy1>