

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

March 3, 2009
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Stout, Commissioners Beighle, Hoople, Huenefeld-Gese, Plaskon, Seltzer

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Yantis

STAFF PRESENT: Emily Leslie, Alex O'Reilly, Joseph Adriano, Warren Leyh, Department of Parks and Community Services

GUEST SPEAKERS: Debbi Halela, Bertie Conrad, Youth Eastside Services; Mike Rynas, Erica Horn, HERO House, NAMI Eastside; Yoon Joo Han, Asian Counseling and Referral Service; Amnon Shoenfeld, King County Mental Health Chemical Abuse and Dependency; Susie Winston, Sound Mental Health

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Stout who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Huenefeld-Gese, who arrived at 6:37 p.m., and Commissioner Yantis who was excused.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. February 3, 2009

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Seltzer. Second was by Chair Stout and the motion carried unanimously.

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Rex Rempel with Downtown Emergency Service Center, a mental health program in Seattle, introduced himself and said he was present to listen and learn.

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Hoople said he continues to regularly attend the Veterans and Human Services Levy Oversight Board meetings. He said both boards recently reviewed the homeless capital projects in the works, and communication opportunities.

Commissioner Hoople reported that he attended the funeral service for former Commissioner Lynn Stafford-Yilmaz. He said the service was well attended, very moving and very sad.

Chair Stout said she spent half an hour with Mayor Degginger recently talking about the work and goals of the Commission. Mayor Degginger asked to have a report provided to the full Council sometime near the end of March or in early April.

5. STAFF REPORTS

Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly said staff has been seeking time on the Council's agenda to provide them with a report on the Needs Update. Time has tentatively been found on the March 9 agenda.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Mental Health System and Mental Illness Drug Dependency (MIDD) Funding – Panel Presentation and Discussion

Ms. O'Reilly introduced the panel members.

Mr. Amnon Shoenfeld, Director of the King County Mental Health Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division, explained that King County is one of 13 regional support networks within the state of Washington. The state has a Medicaid waiver which allows it to have a managed care mental health system under which all medically necessary mental health services must be provided for anyone on Medicaid who meets the access to care criteria. The state provides a certain amount of money for every person on Medicaid in King County, and with that money everyone eligible for services must be covered. King County is at risk of having to either pay more to the providers or the hospitals for in-patient costs. The providers are at risk if the payment given them for each person they enroll for services is less than required for those services. The risk is managed by the fact that some will require less care than others.

Mr. Shoenfeld said there are 16 primary agencies with which the county contracts to provide mental health services, along with many subcontractors. There are also specialty providers that focus on cultural competency and specific population groups; some agencies are given special rates in order to help them manage their risk.

King County mental health also receives non-Medicaid funds from the state which are used for crisis and commitment services, crisis intervention services, hospital payments, residential services, specialty services, and if there is money left over outpatient services for people not covered by Medicaid. Revenues from the Mental Illness Drug Dependency action plan sales tax are used to provide for mental health outpatient services for people who are not on Medicaid.

Ms. Yoon Joo Han said the mental health program at Asian Counseling and Referral Service is one of many programs offered by the agency. The program provides mental health services to about a thousand Asian and Pacific Islander clients each year. Of those, about 150 are from the Eastside, and 90 are from Bellevue specifically. Services are provided through some 35 bilingual and bicultural staff to mostly immigrant and refugee clients, most of whom are low-income or no income. About 95 percent of the clients do not speak English very well and are mostly illiterate.

Ms. Han said the agency provides many different kinds of services ranging from individual services, family and group services to case management and psychiatric evaluations. Key to the success of the agency is the fact that it combines Eastern and Western approaches to meet the needs of clients.

The agency serves a large number of non-Medicaid clients on the Eastside, most of whom are not eligible because of their immigration status. Funding from the city has been used to cover those who have no other means to pay for needed treatment.

Ms. Erica Horn with NAMI Eastside's HERO House said the program has been in operation for three years but is in its first year of receiving funding from the city of Bellevue. She said the agency subcontracts with organizations such as Sound Mental Health and CPC to provide psychiatric rehabilitation services for adults living on the Eastside. The services center around employment, education and socialization by following the International Center for Clubhouse Development model, a proven psychiatric care model operating in some 32 countries around the world. Individuals taken into the program become part of the community; those who participate are called members rather than clients or patients, and they are encouraged to take an active role in their recovery, greatly improving the outcomes. Everyone is given work to do, with members and staff working side by side. The members participate in preparing the reports that are sent regularly to King County, and in developing the statistics and outcomes data analysis.

Ms. Horn said particular attention is given to working with the members to set goals that make sense. The members are not told what they should be doing, rather they

are gently guided and opportunities are provided at every turn. All policies and procedures are created through a consensus model.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Plaskon, Ms. Horn said the members who participate in the program have diagnoses ranging from depression to schizophrenia and everything in between. Members must be 18 or older, and they must have a diagnosis of mental health. Safety in the community in the recent past is also a prerequisite for admission to the program. There is an average daily attendance of 30 individuals. The 90-day attendance rate is close to 90 different individuals, and the overall membership topped 200 at the beginning of the year.

Chair Stout allowed that while HERO House has only 3.5 FTEs, the individual jobs needed to make the model work are divided up among the staff and members. It is the division of labor that gives purpose to the members who spend time at the facility.

Mike Rynas with NAMI Eastside said the agency began in 2001 with a grant from United Way and follow-up grants from the City of Bellevue. The volunteer organization offers programs for adults with serious mental illnesses, including peer support groups and peer-to-peer classes that teach coping skills. Classes are also offered for adults who have children, siblings or other loved ones who have serious mental illnesses, and for parents who have children in school. The two-hour classes run for about 12 weeks each and are followed by support groups. A monthly forum focused on different topics is held at Evergreen Hospital, and the organization publishes a newsletter that covers various disorders. The office has an information and referral service that tracks all incoming phone calls. Crisis intervention is occasionally required and the staff end up at a local jail helping someone with mental health issues; the focus is always on helping the person obtain wraparound services for when they leave the court system.

Debbi Halela with Youth Eastside Services said the agency offers a general counseling program in addition to a focus on substance abuse. The counseling program is primarily focused on school-aged children aged six to 21 and their family members. The children served are primarily in the Lake Washington School District, although referrals are accepted from outside. Individual and family therapy is provided, as is group therapy. For many years group therapy for the teenage survivors of sexual abuse has been offered, and there are parenting classes offered. In the chemical dependency program there are several staff members who are certified for both mental health and chemical dependency. Medicaid and non-Medicaid clients are accepted, and the organization accepts insurance payments and private pay clients on a sliding scale that goes down to zero.

Ms. Halela said the agency has been seeing an increasing number of Hispanic clients, so the agency has increased the number of staff who are bilingual English and Spanish. Close to half of the general counseling services provided are provided in the schools, and the range of services is wide. A large percentage of the staff are

specifically trained to work with trauma issues given the increasing number of kids who have faced domestic violence and/or emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

Bertie Conrad said she supervised the school-based counseling program for Youth Eastside Services. The program began in 1996 shortly after King County began using the Medicaid model. The program was initially offered in about five schools but now is in 17 schools: five high schools, four middle schools and junior highs, and eight elementary schools. The concept is to go where the kids are. In the beginning the focus was on the schools identified as having the highest number of Medicaid-eligible students.

The school-based counselors typically see between 16 and 20 clients per week, eight to ten of them at the schools. The counselors work collaboratively with the school staff and with the families. The clients bring every imaginable issue to the table, from conflicts at home to ADHD issues. In all, there are about 140 kids served through the school-based program.

Ms. Susie Winston with Sound Mental Health said the financial support offered by the city of Bellevue makes a big difference. The large mainstream community mental health agency served 14,405 clients in 2008 countywide. The counseling programs offered are mainstream as well; they include individual psychotherapy for adults, family therapy, treatment groups, and play therapy and other activities with children. The staff have masters degrees in psychology and social work; some have Ph.D degrees.

Some 600 clients are served annually on the Eastside in the Bellevue office, of which close to half are Bellevue residents. An older adult program is offered at the Bellevue office as well and it is seeing an increasing number of Russian and Eastern European immigrants with mental health or chemical dependency issues.

Ms. Winston said the counseling programs include parent/child interaction therapy as a specialized program. The focus is on improving the relationship between the parent and the child. The agency coordinates with Eastside Domestic Violence Program on a program called Kids Club. The agency also offers vocational services aimed at helping clients get back into the workforce; the agency has the ability to weave vocational services throughout all of the programming.

Ms. O'Reilly asked the agency representatives to comment on how the current economic downturn is affecting them.

Mr. Shoenfeld said his agency is very concerned about the prospects for the emphasis on getting people back to work. The fact is as unemployment increases throughout the population, jobs will be more challenging to obtain for those with mental health issues. With regard to funding, he noted that almost all of the money received by King County Mental Health comes from the state. The supplemental state budget included cuts that were to be implemented on February 1; fortunately

most of those cuts were reversed due to the federal stimulus package. The reality is, however, the state is facing an \$8.1 billion funding deficit and legislators are saying they will need to cut \$100 million from mental health for the next biennium. There is hope that the federal percentage paid for Medicaid will increase through the stimulus package; if the requirement for the state to match federal funds is reduced, there will be a call for legislators to keep the freed funds in the mental health system and not shift them elsewhere, thus reducing the level of cuts necessary.

The Medicaid rate for King County is at the bottom of the rate scale. Other regional support networks have higher rates for complicated reasons and will potentially face greater cuts. Most of the non-Medicaid funds are used for essentially services that cannot afford to be cut back.

Funding cuts for the chemical dependency system will be just as bad if not worse. Most providers offer both services because most of the clients served need both. Those agencies will be doubly hit by cutbacks in both areas.

King County provides very little general fund dollars to the mental health division; most of the funds received go to the criminal justice area. Sound Mental Health is the primary provider for criminal justice programs, and unless the state allows King County to collect additional taxes, all human services funding that currently comes from King County will be lost within the next two years.

Mr. Shoenfeld said the MIDD is a tremendous new source of revenues that are funding new programs. Tax collections are down considerably, however, because of the economic slump. The projection of \$51 million in sales tax revenues in 2009 has been scaled back to \$46 million. The programs being funded tally up to at least \$48 million.

Ms. Han said the funding picture for Asian Counseling and Referral is not good given that most of the funding comes from King County in the form of state Medicaid and non-Medicaid. The county has been working hard to set up an adequate funding system, but the providers are still operating below their unit costs. The agency is very concerned about the non-Medicaid side of the ledger. Some MIDD funds are received by the agency, but there are far more clients in need of services than can be served with the limited funds. The agency engages in fundraising activities, but there is increased competition for fewer dollars. The clients themselves are presenting with far more complicated problems, including gambling, substance abuse, and criminal activities.

Ms. Horn said HERO House has been seeing an increase in the number of referrals from area providers. That could be because the program has been able to establish a track record, or it could be because the agencies have a high case load. The economic downturn that is resulting in job losses is affecting the ability of the agency to implement its job development programs. Members who are in entry level positions could see their jobs disappear. The cuts in the innovative services grant

dollars with only a 30-day notice meant a \$75,000 loss for the annual budget; fortunately those cuts were later restored. Individual donations are slowing as well.

Mr. Rynas said in 2008 NAMI Eastside served about 3,500 people. For 2009, the expectation is that the agency will serve more than that. The classes and support groups that are offered for free to the clients cost the agency around \$40 per person. There is a great need for housing on the Eastside for folks with serious mental illness and other types of disabilities, and NAMI Eastside is involved in that arena. The agency is also keenly aware that the mental health courts do not function in the cities of the Eastside, only in the unincorporated areas of King County; NAMI Eastside is hoping to see some integration in the near future.

Ms. Horn added that the agency is starting to see a large increase in the number of veterans coming through the door, especially older veterans. A meeting with agency representatives and the Veterans Administration is scheduled at which ways to increase partnerships will be discussed.

Ms. Halela said Youth Eastside Services anticipates seeing an increase in requests for reductions in fees for private pay clients. Furthermore, the number of private pay clients increases when parents lose jobs and along with their jobs their insurance coverage. The staff in the schools are also reporting that often when parents lose their homes the resulting move leaves the students in a different school, which disrupts school-based counseling services. The kids are feeling the stress and issues of anger are increasingly being seen.

Ms. Winston agreed that incidents of family conflict and anger among children are increasing. She said she is seeing children in such pain and distress that they are out of control and difficult to manage. Some are being placed in foster care because their family cannot manage them. Along with that, the impact of increased unemployment on clients with mental health and chemical dependency problems is significant; many turn to alcohol or drugs as a way to cope, while others seek solutions that involve criminal activities. Divorced parents are coming back together in some cases for monetary reasons, though the interpersonal problems have not been resolved. Changes in the Medicaid system have caused many to lose their coverage, and clients with insurance co-pays are finding they cannot afford to pay them and are dropping out of services. There is a huge push to address the needs of veterans; unlike in the past, the Veterans Administration is expressing a willingness to form new partnerships.

Answering a question asked by Chair Stout, Mr. Shoenfeld said the non-Medicaid persons being served in the system are those who are mentally ill and who, because of their level of functionality, are at the same level as people who are on Medicaid but for one reason or another cannot qualify for Medicaid. In all cases, those served meet the requirement of being at or below 200 percent of the poverty level. Many who are on GAU are not eligible, though a pilot program in King County is covering some of those people with mental health services.

Ms. Horn said revisions to the Medicaid system are needed. There is almost an addiction to keeping people sick as shown in the way providers have to justify their actions in order to continue receiving Medicaid for an individual or to be allowed to continue authorizing services for that individual. It is unfortunate that a person cannot get better and still stay in the system.

****BREAK****

7. DISCUSSION

A. Status Report on Data Collection for Human Services Needs Update

Ms. O'Reilly said she received an email from the phone survey contractor who indicated all of the surveys have been completed.

Ms. O'Reilly passed around a sign-up sheet for Commissioners to participate in upcoming community conversations. She also provided the Commissioners with copies of questions posed to providers.

Commissioner Beighle asked if the document will include updated information on teens and STDs. Ms. O'Reilly said there will be, noting that intern Warren Leyh previously interned at Public Health in the HIV/AIDS unit, and said he will be updating that section of the report.

Ms. O'Reilly said the Network on Aging has been active in developing an approach for getting input from older adults. Several conversations with seniors are in the works.

8. OLD BUSINESS - None

9. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie said the March 17 agenda will include an update from DSHS, including anecdotal information regarding trends their clients are encountering. Consideration is also being given to inviting representatives from emergency assistance agencies. She said she heard earlier in the day that mini City Hall in Crossroads is being inundated with people in need of assistance.

Mr. Adriano said the federal stimulus package will benefit the local area. Specific information can be found at www.hud.gov/recovery. He said it appears at least \$38 million, not including state funds, will be coming to King County in various categories, some of which will be allocated as CDBG funds. Once the funds become available, local jurisdictions will have about 120 days to establish contracts. Bellevue is

expected to receive about \$191,000 in CDBG. A revision to the action plan will be required.

Ms. Leslie said the required public hearing will be conducted on the date advertised, but the agendas for other meetings will need to remain fluid as the process of working in the new CDBG funds is determined.

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Stout adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date