

Executive Director Board Report – January 2021

Item 10

Submitted by Mark A. Witte, MSW, LMSW, Executive Director
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1. COVID Response Update

- a. Ongoing Management of COVID-19 Response Activities – Despite the arrival of vaccines to the COVID-19 fight, as of the date of this report no ACCMHS staff have been immunized (though some are scheduled soon). Our Health Department reports it has been hindered by a lack of vaccine supplies. The next delivery is not scheduled until January 24, though they said yesterday (1/7) that they will be able to access the Pfizer vaccines soon – which will help. Our understanding is that our ability to return to some semblance of normality will depend on the achievement of widespread vaccination in the community. So, we continue in the same operational posture as we did before vaccines were approved. We've had ten staff report positive COVID-19 tests; I'm thankful it's not been more. None of these cases involved workplace exposure (to our knowledge). We believe that all were the result of other kinds of community transmission. All of us are eager to know how gradual resumption of direct services and operations will happen. We will do all of that planning in alignment with Allegan County Health Department/MDHHS/MIOSHA/CDC guidance.
- b. Health & Safety Team – Our response to COVID has been led and supported by an incredible team of staff who serve on our internal Health & Safety Team. They have done the heavy lift work of creating and revising our official response plan, staying on top of episodes of illness experienced by staff and clients, managing our supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE), and advising staff on needs for isolation and quarantine in response to their voluntarily submitted personal travel plans. The members of this team are:
 - *Brenda Polmanteer, Clerical Support Supervisor*
 - *Cathy Haas, Customer Services*
 - *Dan Welburn, Quality Improvement Director*
 - *Geniene Gersh, Clinical Director*
 - *Leah Stickels, Human Resource Assistant*
 - *Leanne Kellogg, Director of Integrated Health & Substance Use Services*
 - *Nannette Lawrence, Human Resources Director*
- c. Emergency Operations Center Participation – As Allegan County continues through the COVID response experience, we remain regularly involved in the county-wide collaboration that assures coordination and potential opportunities to be of service to the broader community.

2. Lakeshore Regional Entity

- a. Transition Manager – Former director Greg Hoffman is now serving in the role of transitional manager until his retirement which is scheduled to take effect next month.
- b. Beacon Health Options contract negotiations – The work of negotiations with BHO for their future role with the LRE continues at a faster pace under the leadership of LRE's interim executive director Bill Riley. I would characterize this shift as one which concentrates their role to one of a supplier of specialized administrative services. The LRE is doing a good job of coordinating planning with the five CMH directors through this process.
- c. Executive Director Search Committee – I serve on the LRE's CEO search committee which is actively involved in recruitment, screening/narrowing applicants, and (soon) interviews of our most promising candidates. There is a perception that the status of the LRE's contract with the state is tenuous, which is somewhat factual due to it being a month-to-month arrangement at the moment. This seems to have suppressed interest of qualified candidates to a degree. My own conversations with others to encourage applications confirms that perception. Still, we hope to be able to secure the leadership needed for this important role in our key funding channel for the majority of our behavioral health services.

3. Major Developments

- a. Building – As you will read in Gary's report, we have reached a new and exciting phase in our mortgage application process with the USDA. After months of waiting which has impacted the project timeline significantly, we received notification on 12/22/2020 that we had basically been approved under a specific set of terms and conditions, pending the accomplishment of all of the remaining pieces of documentation required. These include significant pieces of work from our attorney relative to architectural contracts, but also include some very simple "assurance"

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documents. We are working with our architect to make some revisions to the intended internal usage of the building. These changes are intended to update the plan based on some programmatic changes (e.g., discontinuation of direct provision of autism services). However, we also are using lessons learned about remote work through the COVID-19 pandemic and capacities we have gained with increased deployment of technology. We are using that to change some of our plans for assigned office space and create options for more flexible “touch and go” workspaces.

- b. Branding – With the involvement of Julia Leos of Inspiration Studios, I am forming a branding committee. At first, this will include the Board’s Executive Committee, the Management Team, and a handful of selected agency staff. We will start our work by responding to a survey from Inspiration Studios as a first step in this process, and learn together what is involved and work to coordinate that with other plans (e.g., building décor, announcement timelines, etc.).
- c. Fundraising – With the details associated with our mortgage now more firmly known, we are ready to launch the fundraising efforts through our consultation with Keith Hopkins. The first step will be a feasibility study and the testing of a “case statement” to determine the degree to which our need will be seen as compelling.

4. **CMHA (Community Mental Health Association of MI)**

- a. Winter 2021 (Virtual) Conference – We’ve received conference registration information for this virtual conference that will be held four consecutive mornings from Tuesday February 9 through Friday February 12. Please let us know **by Friday, 1/15/2021** so we can discuss it with the Executive Committee and beat the early registration deadline.
- b. Alan Bolter Reset – When we cancelled our March 2020 board meeting due to COVID (before developing the Zoom options that followed), one of the victims of that action was Alan Bolter, Associate Director of CMHA. He was slated to join us and give us a briefing on some of the work of the association as well as the legislative agenda items of interest to us. I’ll be working to reschedule that – virtually or in person – in the coming months. If there are topics or issues you’d like to have me ask him, please let me know.

Mark Witte
Submitted 1/8/2021