Substance Abuse Committee
October 13, 2021

Present: Brian Hart, Bailey O’Rourke, Nicholas Moffe, Glenn Jarvis, Erin Doyle, Jennifer Emery, Anthony Alvernaz, Breanna McCartney, Denna Santacroce

Excused: Kate Lewis

Minutes:
Approved without changes.

Director of Community Services Report – Brian Hart

➢ Opioid Reversal Update: Brian stated Chemung County is 30 behind last year’s total. Our year to date so far is a total of 68. We have been seeing a trend of an increased number of people refusing care (almost 20). We are continuing to see an increase use of commercial properties, retail stores, and gas stations. There have been 2 noted as suicide attempts. A significant change is the amount of Narcan used to assist someone. We have seen that some individuals are needing 4 to 5 doses of Narcan before being transported to the hospital. One person refused more doses after his/her fourth dose. With all of these cases they said that Xanax was their drug of choice. There have been 2 or 3 individuals who are repeaters of OD’s and reversals. There have been next to none repeat address’s used. Other Counties are reporting increases in overdoses during the pandemic. Kudo’s to everyone involved in Chemung County in getting the word out there. We would rather have individuals go to the hospital after and OD, than have a death. Year to date there have been no reported fatalities, but we do not have data from the hospital if someone dies from an OD while in the hospitals care.

➢ Commissioner: Our new Governor (Kathy Hochul) is making some changes in leadership. Arlene Gonzalez-Sanchez who is the Commissioner of the NYS Office of Addiction Services and Supports is being replaced. No word on who the replacement will be, but Brian will let you know when he has been notified.

➢ Funding Opportunities: There are currently some opportunities through Federal Block Grants for workforce and stabilization of Substance Abuse Agencies. If your agencies would like more information on what is available you can contact Brian.

➢ Vaccine Mandate: Currently schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and homecare have mandates. We are starting to see some impact. Very soon it will include your agencies as well. They are allowing for medical and religion exemptions. The mandate is another hit to the workforce issue. Some services have diminished or closed. A committee member stated that it is very frustrating, when they are so short staffed. They had an applicant who refuses to get vaccinated, so they did not even interview the person. Brian stated that it is going to get to a point where it is going to be mandated everywhere. They can either choose to work in this field or choose another path. A committee member stated that any time there is any authoritative guidelines and there is a union involved there is always pushback. They don’t see unions agreeing to the mandate. They are
struggling with manpower as it is and they can see why the State is pushing the mandate, but they can also see the battle with the unions as well.

Brian said that when you are working with the public you could get it from one of the clients and/or have it and give it to other. Brian is concerned that it is getting to a point where we aren’t going to be able to serve people. We will have to triage who has the highest need and they will receive services first. We may see some individuals find other alternatives for their needs or ignore their needs.

A committee person noted that as a first responder they are just baffled that individuals are against being vaccinated. When push comes to shove, anyone working with the public should be vaccinated for the greater good. The vaccine keeps you out of the hospital and helps stop the spread. They have a list of the people who refuse to get vaccinated, so they know how to plan staffing and social distancing. If anyone has ideas on how to get through to these individuals they would like to hear about them.

A committee member said that their HR is using an incentive that if you provide documentation that you are vaccinated they will give you 5 extra days off, and it has been well received. A committee member stated that their agency lucked out with the staff wanting the vaccine. They even took the burden off staff and had one-person schedule everyone for their shot, and they all got paid during the time it took them to get the shot. They see that their inpatient services will most likely be mandated first before their outpatient services. A committee member stated that they do not have any incentives for individuals to get vaccinated at their agency. Moving forward they are requiring that all new employees to be vaccinated. The number of people who are not vaccinated is minimal, as many chose to get the vaccination. They didn’t lose as many staff as they thought they would, but still it had a huge impact because they are already short staffed.

A committee member stated that they lost two new employees due to refusing to get vaccinated, and one of them has already been replaced. They are seeing that the Per Diem LPN’s are refusing to get vaccinated. Brian stated that it is concerning that the Homeless Shelter is closed. The children/adolescent at EPC is temporarily shut down, and they are putting a hold on new adult admissions. The BSU has been reduced to 10 beds, and ARC is looking at consolidating 24/7 homes. A committee member they have seen fatigue in the clinicians. A couple have left, and do not want to do this kind of work anymore. Others have left while dealing with their own mental health issues. It is becoming another level of burn-out, and trying to encourage staff to take care of themselves and stay well.

➢ Sharing by Community Members: Nothing to Share

The next meeting is scheduled for December 15, 2021 via ZOOM.