



Planning Council Meeting
Thursday, September 17, 2020
Zoom
4:00 - 6:00pm

Summary of Attendance

Members Present

Alison Kirchgasser
Barry Callis
Brian Holliday
Bryan Thomas
Catherine Weerts
Cindi Bell
Damon Gaines
Darren Sack
Ericka Olivera
George Diaz
Gertrude Lundy
Harry Shanmugam
Jessica Stewart
Jessica Tavarez
John Fabiano
Jose Sostre
Joey Carlesimo
Justin Alves
Kathy Lituri
Katie Keating
Kenneth Averett
Lamar Brown-Noguera
Lorraine Jones
Manuel Pires
Margaret Lombe
Melissa Hector
Michael Swaney
Patrick Baum
Richard Swanson

Robert Giannasca
Robinah Nakabugo
Serena Rajabiun
Stanley Flores
Stephen Batchelder
Stephen Corbett
Tad Bailey
Tim Young
Wendy LeBlanc
Zamir Mavo

Members Excused

Carolyn Smith

Members Absent

Mahara Pinheiro

PCS

Liz Rios
Masill Miranda
Tatiana Ramos

RWSD

Felipe Ruiz
Alexandra Zhang
Jonathan DeFreese
Sarah Kuruvilla
Fabiola Catulle

Topic A: Welcome and Introductions

Brian Holliday, Planning Council Chair, welcomed everyone, reviewed the virtual ground rules and led a moment of silence.

Topic B: Review and Approve Meeting Minutes

The minutes from the meeting of June 25th, 2020 were reviewed. Members went on Basecamp to look at the minutes before motioning to approve.

New members were briefed on process to approve, oppose, or abstain from voting. Robert's rules of order does not prevent a person from voting to approve minutes if they were not in attendance at the meeting in question.

Motion to Approve: Darren Sack

Second: Stephen Batchelder

Result: The minutes were approved with (10) Abstentions

Topic C: Knowledge Check & Basecamp Review

Liz Rios, PCS Manager led the knowledge check quiz and basecamp review. The purpose of the quiz to serve as a refresher of what they learned at orientation. In addition, the purpose of reviewing basecamp was to confirm with members where they can find important documents, folders, and calendar.

Topic D: Proposed Bylaw Revision

Liz Rios, PCS Manager, and Brian Holliday, Planning Council Chair, discussed with Council members *proposed* changes to the Planning Council Bylaws. These changes include addressing recommendations made by HRSA and a consultant in reviewing the Boston EMA bylaws. The changes address the nominations process, the appeals process, remote voting, and process to confirm the percentage of unaligned consumers on council.

An additional change that is proposed is:

- ***Removing the cap of 45 members (due to the current recruitment, PC may exceed 45 and it would provide more flexibility)***

Council members will have until the October PC meeting to review the proposed changes and VOTE.

Question/Comments

- DS: I'm not sure I would recommend an open-end number for council membership. Larger groups begin to become challenging to manage at times. I'd be willing to support a moderate increase perhaps up to ten additional possible members
 - HS/WL/ ZM/ DG/BT: Agreed

Topic E: Client Utilization and Spending Report

Katie Keating, RWSD Director, BPHC, and her team presented the Q2 utilization and spending report to the Planning Council.

Question/Comments

- ZM: I just wanted to comment that the term LatinX has not been approved by the Latin community. It is widely used by people from Puerto Rico, but Latin America does not use it
 - RS: Zamir brings up a good point IMHO, and I just did a quick google on the term LatinX and an interesting PEW Research poll shows it's not widely used at all... just about 3% use it. Maybe we should consider abandoning it? Or address how/why/when we use it??
 - Felipe Ruiz: I appreciate these comments and I'm happy to have a conversation about how we can be more inclusive of the community at BPHC.
- KA: I would like to see the list of all the agencies that receive funds to help with housing services
- SR: Do you know the distribution of service utilization between a 60 minute housing advocacy session vs financial rental assistance units across the 157 clients?
- RN: I did not hear anything about serodiscordant couples within the category of Health Education. How does the Planning Council/RWSD hope to connect with this demographic?
 - KK: Through case management, that is where the support is usually offered to both clients and their partners.
 - WL: Part A unfortunately is only targeted towards people living with HIV, though some categories by association can impact partners of PLWH.
- JA: It's striking that only one person received MAI EFA funding?
 - KK: Yes, we're looking into how we can address barriers (e.g. COVID-19, it being a new service, etc.)

- DG: Is there an option to fund additional housing-based agencies?
 - SB: I would like to see breakdown of those aged over 45, ie what % are over 60 and 65
 - LBN/WL: Part A funding is the payor of last resort and many agencies have several housing funds that they balance to make sure all are paid down and used in an allowable way.
 - DG: In my experience vouchers take more time to obtain and depending on client circumstances, they still may need to short-term housing. If clients are able sustain rent they that is a venue for clients as well.
 - SR: Yes that is my experience too vouchers are hard and sometimes harder to use and finding an affordable place so short term housing is a good way to fulfill a gap.
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Topic F: The Year Ahead – PC Timeline

Liz Rios, PCS Manager, provided a timeline of what to expect this Planning Council term. The timeline served as a summary of the workplan, by highlighting important projects, presentations, and charges.

Topic G: 2020 National Ryan White Conference on HIV Care & Treatment

Planning Council members had an opportunity to speak about their experience attending the conference virtually.

Questions/Comments

- WL: Per the Plenary Session with Dr. Brody, she explained how we need to focus more on those along the margins and that will impact those “in the middle”. An example includes recognizing a housing clinic, gender affirming care, racial/ethnic competency, etc. in addition to case management, etc. to target the margins but leads to a significant impact to those in the middle.
 - SR: Agreed, it was an important session.

Topic H: Announcement of Helene Bednarsh’s retirement

Planning Council members recorded short messages for Helene Bednarsh, the director of the HIV dental program who retired after more than 30 years in her role.

Topic H: Agency Reports

The representatives for Medicaid (Alison Kirchgasser), New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (NHDHHS) (Cindi Bell), Massachusetts Department of Health (MDPH) (Barry Callis), Mayor Walsh's Office (Melissa Hector), Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC)/Ryan White Services Division (RWSD) (Katie Keating) gave agency updates – SEE below.

**BOSTON PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION
INFECTIOUS DISEASE BUREAU, HIV/AIDS SERVICES DIVISION
REPRESENTATIVE: KATIE KEATING – DIRECTOR, RYAN WHITE SERVICES DIVISION**

- Wiona Desir, our CQM Coordinator, left BPHC for a new role with MDPH. The CQM Coordinator position is currently posted.
- We continue to monitor agencies adaptations and needs related to COVID
- RWSD received \$907,251.00 in COVID supplemental funding through the CARES ACT and has distributed these funds to agencies to support a variety of needs related to COVID including investments in telehealth infrastructure, safety supplies, Housing, EFA and Food.
- We continue to plan for the use of Ending the HIV Epidemic funds in coordination with the EHE Steering Committee and other EHE funded entities to ensure we are maximizing these resources across the system.
- We launched a new web page geared towards people who are looking for Ryan White HIV Services in the Boston EMA

<https://www.bphc.org/whatwedo/infectious-diseases/Ryan-White-Services-Division/Pages/Client-Information.aspx>

- RWSD is working on building a referral based shared eligibility module through a capacity building grant we received last year.
- We are working with partners to identify strategies to address a growing HIV cluster in the City of Boston that is largely among people who inject drugs and are homeless.

**MASSACHUSETTS OFFICE OF MEDICAID (MASSHEALTH)
REPRESENTATIVE: ALISON KIRCHGASSER – DIRECTOR OF FEDERAL AND STATE RELATIONS**

MassHealth continues to update its policies to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Please see <https://www.mass.gov/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-and-masshealth>.

Important member related information:

MassHealth Eligibility & COVID-19

MassHealth has made temporary changes to certain eligibility-related policies and processes to support public health efforts and improve access to necessary health care for new MassHealth

members and existing members. Many of these changes are listed below, and can also be found in this guide. [PDF](#) | [Word](#)

Getting access to food resources in your community during COVID-19

As a result of COVID-19, one out of every three families in Massachusetts is experiencing food insecurity. If you or someone you know needs food now or needs help paying

for food, there are resources available. This guide provides information about your options, including programs you may be immediately eligible for as a MassHealth member. [PDF](#) | [Word](#)
Spanish: [PDF](#) | [Word](#)

You can also visit <https://www.mass.gov/lists/covid-19-food-assistance> for more information on food assistance available during COVID-19.

Changes in Your Circumstances

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-emergency-related-waivers-for-members-and-applicants>

Hardship Waivers for Deductibles and Premiums

If you pay a deductible or premium, and this cost would cause undue hardship to you, you can apply online for a hardship waiver at <http://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-emergency-related-waivers-for-members-and-applicants>

You will not lose your MassHealth coverage during the COVID-19 national emergency

If you have received a notice in the mail that your coverage is ending on or after March 18, your coverage is protected and will not end during the national emergency. You do not need to send in any additional paperwork to keep your coverage.

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

BUREAU OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE AND LABORATORY SCIENCES (BIDLS)

OFFICE OF HIV/AIDS (OHA)

REPRESENTATIVE: BARRY CALLIS - DIRECTOR OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND INFECTIOUS DISEASE PREVENTION

- Status of the Ending the HIV Epidemic Plan for Suffolk County
- New Ending the HIV Epidemic Funding for Suffolk County (\$2.087M five-year annual award from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), coordination with BPHC, RWSD)
- CHWs, emergency housing, Correctional Linkage to Care (CLTC) expansion, innovative testing and linkage services in emergency departments and pharmacies, express testing models, and health promotion/education materials

- Support for Local Boards of Health (Chelsea, Revere, and Winthrop) to participate in EHE Steering Committee Meetings
- COVID-19 Community Impact Survey (MDPH)

NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

REPRESENTATIVE: CINDI BELL - MANAGER, NH RYAN WHITE CARE & TB FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, INFECTIOUS DISEASE PREVENTION, INVESTIGATION & CARE SERVICES

- NH CARE Program continues with interim guidance due to COVID allowing flexibility for clients around early prescription refills, enrollment extensions, etc.
- CARES Act funds are being used for housing, linguistics, transportation, and food
- CARE staff vacancies are a challenge to navigate alongside COVID priorities
- NH HIV Planning Group meets tomorrow with an update on statewide 2019 Funding Streams
- The NH Disparities Coalition Collaborative has begun new work targeting Youth – they meet again in September
- MAB meeting was postponed, next meeting is in January
- The HPG Advisory Committee and Prep Committee both met in August and mainly discussed planning to mitigate demands due to COVID, and difficulty optimizing the Prep Connect website
- Statewide Coordinated Statement of Need is progressing slowly and is moving toward launch of the client survey to be followed by a capacity assessment.

Topic I: Other Business, Announcements, Evaluation & Adjourn

Meeting to Adjourn

Motion: Richard Swanson

Second: Stephen Batchelder

Result: The meeting was adjourned.
