

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
**Behavioral Health Division Administration**  
**Inter-Office Communication**

**DATE:** August 14, 2023

**TO:** Maria Perez, Chairwoman – Milwaukee County Mental Health Board

**FROM:** Michael Lappen, Administrator, Behavioral Health Services

**SUBJECT:** **Report from the Administrator, Behavioral Health Services, Providing an Administrative Update**

**Background**

The purpose of this standing report is to highlight key activities or issues related to the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Services (BHS) since the previous Board meeting and provide ongoing perspectives to the Milwaukee County Mental Health Board regarding the work of the organization and its leadership.

**Discussion**

**Community and Partner Engagement**

- **Milwaukee Health Care Partnership (MHCP)**

Joy Tapper, the founding leader of the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership (MHCP), will retire in September. Joy has been a force in the Milwaukee Community over the past 16 years focusing on facilitation, collaboration, and awareness while pushing all Partnership members to fill gaps in local services and to partner in ways that have greatly improved access to health care in Milwaukee, including mental health/substance use disorder (SUD) services. Joy was a key contributor to the Behavioral Health Division (BHD)/Behavioral Health Services (BHS) re-design, especially the realization of the Joint Venture Mental Health Emergency Center. Joy will be staying on in a part-time role through the balance of 2023 orienting her replacement, Anne Christiansen. Anne was formerly the Director of the North Shore Health Department from 2015 to 2021 and most recently was the Vice-President of Community Health for Aurora Advocate.

- **The Mental Health Emergency Center**

After the retirement of Administrator Kevin Kluesner from the Mental Health Emergency Center (MHEC), Derrick Jordan, most recently a leader from the Roger's

system, accepted the position as MHEC administrator. Unfortunately, Mr. Jordan announced on his second day that he had accepted a different role out of State and immediately resigned. Aurora Advocate has reposted the position and has put into place an interim leadership team featuring Aurora staff who have been involved with MHEC since the beginning.

- **Ascension St. Francis**

Ascension St. Francis has hired Jason Gaurkee as the administrator for their inpatient psychiatric unit. He has committed to expand census there and has actively engaged BHS and MHEC leadership to return the St. Francis unit to where it is part of the community continuum of mental health care.

- **Disability Rights Wisconsin**

After many years at Disability Rights Wisconsin, Barbara Beckert will be retiring in August. I would like to thank Barbara for her passionate advocacy for people with disabilities over many years, as well as her support for the Mental Health Task Force since its inception. I had worked with Barbara for years before I came to BHD, and when she was quoted supporting my hire in the Journal Sentinel piece announcing a new BHD Administrator, her endorsement was a big help to me as I stepped into a challenging role. Barbara's partnership over the past seven years has helped BHS improve our standing in the community, and she has facilitated greater stakeholder participation in BHS endeavors.

- **UHS Granite Hills**

Universal Health Services has appointed Dr. Angela Sanders as the new permanent Chief Executive Officer at Granite Hills Hospital. Dr. Sanders previously worked for Outreach Community Health Center and is a familiar face well-versed in the continuum of mental health and SUD services in Milwaukee County. Additionally, Granite Hills now has a full-time Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Brandi Jackson, who started in July. Granite Hills now has a stable and local leadership team and has made great strides in their ability to meet the expectations of the BHS/Granite Hills contract to act as the receiving facility for indigent patients under Emergency Detention. Granite Hills plans to expand adult inpatient beds by at least twelve in September and will add another 12 beds of adult capacity in the months going forward. Currently they have 24 adult beds and 12 adolescent beds. There have also been discussions of looking at how they approach adolescent beds, as a recent dip in demand has left them with a very low census in that space. Being able to

shift resources to accommodate more adult patients when adolescent demand is low would be a positive for the Milwaukee Community.

- **Aurora Advocate**

Aurora Advocate leadership sent the attached notice informing us that they would be closing the St. Luke's South Shore Unit and consolidating staff to Aurora Psychiatric Hospital in Wauwatosa. **(See Attachment A)**

## **High Quality and Accountable Service Delivery**

- **Peer Specialist Academy**

Vice-Chair Neubauer expressed concern at the April Mental Health Board meeting because she was unaware of the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Peer Specialist Academy. This was a 2023 budget highlight where the RFP was significantly delayed as we sought guidance from the State on the scope of work. The RFP was let on June 9<sup>th</sup>, with an August 11<sup>th</sup> deadline for proposals. The description of the program from the RFP states:

*The Peer Specialist Academy is designed to increase and support the Certified Peer Specialist workforce in the Milwaukee County region. This will be accomplished by offering regular trainings to grow the Certified Peer Specialist workforce, offering assistance to prepare for the State of Wisconsin certification examination, developing an employment clearinghouse, providing continuing education opportunities, providing a means for mutual professional support, and by offering trainings to employers seeking to employ Certified Peer Specialists. It is anticipated that through these endeavors, upwards of 72 Certified Peer Specialists per year can be added to the Milwaukee County behavioral health system workforce.*

*Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Services is requesting proposals that target educational and supportive opportunities for individuals who have lived experience with mental health, substance use disorders, or both and wish to become Certified Peer Specialists and work in our system of care. When describing your program, please reference your organizational experience with Certified Peer Specialists, and any specific evidence-based components of your program that you intend to develop.*

The budget allocation for the Peer Specialist Academy is \$100,000. The scope of work is attached. **(See Attachment B)**

- **Individual Placement and Support Program**

At the June Board meeting, Board Member Forman had questions about the employment programs at BHS. BHS operates an Individual Placement and Support (IPS) program, which is an evidenced-based practice that is part of our Comprehensive Community Services (CCS) Service array. Beth Lohman was previously the leader of our IPS program but has moved into a new role leading CCS. An update on the program for the first half of 2023, along with Board Member Forman's questions inclusive of answers, is contained within the attachment. **(See Attachment C)**



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