

Community Living Committee Minutes

July 14, 2023 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. (Adjourned @ 3:16 p.m.)

Members Present: Rhonda Cox, Jonathan D'Angelo, Dr. Joshua Gettinger, Dr. Gary Junker, Jamila Little, Dr. Charlean Mapson (Chair), Dale Stephenson, Dr. Peggy Terhune

Members Absent: Senator Sydney Batch, Kelly Crosbie, Brendon Hildreth, Ryan Rotundo

Staff Present: David Ingram, Talley Wells, Philip Woodward

Guests Present: Lisa DeCiantis, Ginger Yarbrough (for Kelly Crosbie), Chandler, Casanda Hoekstra, Caroline Valand, Representative Terry Brown

Introduction:

Charlean Mapson welcomed the committee and made a motion to approve the draft May Community Living Committee minutes, and Bethany Smith seconded the motion. The motion carried with unanimous approval.

Proactive Approaches to Justice for People with I/DD Presentations:

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Lisa DeCiantis from the North Carolina Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services (DMH/DD/SUS) gave a PowerPoint presentation focused on 988. She said that the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline became the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in July 2022 with the ability to dial 9-8-8. She added that 1-800-273-TALK (8255) will still be active and that SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) put forward at the Conference of Crisis Continuum that they want to make sure there is always someone to talk to no matter who the caller is. She said less than one percent of calls are referred for an immediate response. She said that an average of 4,000 to 5,000 calls come in monthly, and the number of texts coming in has increased, too. She pointed out that the Lifeline can do better and listen to what the community needs as well as increasing training for call center staff.

Peggy Terhune asked how many calls come from people with I/DD involved in the criminal justice system, and Lisa responded that they can collect data only on what people tell them, but they do receive calls from family members of people with I/DD who may be in crisis. Charlean Mapson shared how when her son was in crisis, and she called 988, the operator said to hang up and call 911, but Secretary Kody Kinsley said

this was not how 988 was set up to operate. Bethany Smith pointed out that calls are routed to a call center in Greenville where the staff may not be the friendliest, and Lisa confirmed that is where the contractor for North Carolina is based.

Recognition & Evaluation of Autism Contact Training (REACT)

Dustin Chandler of the Interaction Advisory Group in Alabama gave a PowerPoint presentation on the REACT training that is designed to train law enforcement and first responders on interactions with people with I/DD and autism. He noted that he is a police officer with ten years of experience riding in patrol and that he is also the parent of a child with autism. He stated the desire to build a community where people who contact the police over and over again will not have to call the police. He emphasized the importance of cultural awareness and said law enforcement gets to the point where they do not have much empathy, but if they start to understand different people, then they will have more empathy. He shared that he is a big believer in building communities and community knowledge, and first responders make up part of the community. He said he has received funding from the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. He mentioned providing training to administrative teachers and shared how one student with autism set fire to a locker, and the educational administrators found a better option for him than arresting him. He said safety is the number one goal, and his vision is to create a sense of engagement.

Charlrean Mapson asked how REACT trains the self-advocate who is non-verbal, and Dustin responded that he wants to involve the caregiver in the training as much as possible while working with the self-advocate. He said the goal is to have the safest interactions possible between law enforcement and self-advocates with I/DD. Peggy asked if there are outcomes or outcome data for the program, and Dustin said yes.

Helping Enhance Autism Response Training (HEART)

Casandra Hoekstra, the Chief Deputy Secretary for the North Carolina Department of Public Safety (DPS), gave a PowerPoint presentation on the HEART. She said the goal is to promote safe and effective interactions between law enforcement and first responders and people with autism spectrum disorder. She pointed out that she has a 24-year-old son with autism who is non-verbal. The HEART has hired Dennis Debbaut, who has experience in law enforcement and as a private investigator, as the trainer. She said this training started virtually in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, and has trained approximately 400 first responders. She pointed out how this initiative has not received any funding and is organized by volunteers. Peggy Terhune asked if data from the presenter is available to show the impact that this four-hour training is having. Casandra replied that she was uncertain about data but that Dennis Debbaut has

anecdotal incidents to share. Charlrean Mapson asked how to obtain the decals for vehicles and homes that DPS distributes.

Adult Diversion Program in Charlotte

Representative Terry Brown joined the meeting to discuss the adult diversion program in Charlotte. He said that he, a Representative from Pitt County, and a Representative from Guilford County filed a bill to model after the Denver STAR (Support Team Assisted Response) program, which sends the right people to help with crises related to mental health, homelessness, and more situations. He said the Charlotte program essentially allows trained behavioral health professionals and licensed counselors and clinicians to go on certain calls with law enforcement to help de-escalate the situation and act as a resource. He said this program brings together two things: training for law enforcement officers and de-escalation. He said the training was rolled out in January 2022 and since December, they have responded to 100 calls with only two of the calls resulting in an arrest. He also added that the Charlotte City Council will provide additional funding for the program to help it expand in Mecklenburg County, and he mentioned the importance of law enforcement being able to identify and communicate with someone with I/DD. He said he obtained some data and some one-pagers from the first nine months that he can share with this committee.

Coastal Horizons Diversion Program

Philip Woodward shared how he, Charlrean Mapson, and Talley Wells met virtually in June with Jamir Jumoke at Coastal Horizons in Wilmington. Since their meeting, Jamir resigned from Coastal Horizons and obtained a job with United Way of Cape Fear, so Philip reported on what Jamir shared with them. He said Jamir worked with individuals with substance use issues who were about to be incarcerated, trying to help them find an alternative to incarceration. He also said Jamir said New Hanover County opened a mental health court, giving the county the ability to divert people away from the traditional criminal justice system and send them to mental health courts to make sure they receive the treatment they need. Philip also mentioned the informational handbooks for two of Coastal Horizons' reentry programs: their ReEntry Systems for Effective Treatment (RESET) program and their Survivors of the Opioid/COVID epidemics Utilization of Resources and Community Engagement (SOURCE) program.

Discussion and Wrap Up

Talley Wells told the committee that its task is to consider what NCCDD should invest in; in the context of these presentations, the Council might want to keep all of it or one small piece of it moving in the right direction. Charlrean Mapson said training law

enforcement officers and first responders is a very important place to start because awareness comes with the training. Representative Terry Brown pointed out that the self-advocacy component of this work could help many people with I/DD. Talley also pointed out that NCCDD has the ability to do things such as host a statewide webinar on one of these topics to create more awareness.

Philip Woodward reminded the members to RSVP for the hybrid August Council meeting on August 10th-11th in Cary. Charlean made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Jonathan D'Angelo seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:16 p.m.