

**VERMONT MENTAL HEALTH BLOCK GRANT
PLANNING COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes**

June 18, 2021

1:00 PM – 2:30 PM

Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Members in Attendance: Alice Maynard, Annie Ramniceanu (DOC), Marla Simpson, Dan Towle (NAMI, PVT), Stephanie Beck (ADAP), Victoria Hudson (DCF), Cinn Smith, Danielle Bragg (DVHA), Caroline Rubin (CVOEO), Michael Hartman (LCMHS), Ann Rich (DMH), Laurie Mulhern

DMH Staff and Guests in Attendance: Christina Thompson (DMH), Cheryle Wilcox (DMH), Nicole DiStasio (DMH), Julie Tessler (VCP), Trish Singer (DMH)

Convene Meeting, Introductions, Vote on Public Comment:

- Meeting convened at 1:04 PM
- Reviewed agenda, made introductions
- Dan moved to allow limited public comment throughout the meeting today since it is a shorter meeting; Cinn seconded. All in favor and the motion passed.

Review May 2021 Meeting Minutes:

- Marla clarified that her acronym suggestion for VTSAFE should say Vital Time: Suicide Awareness for Everyone.
- Marla noted that two of the priorities suggested at the last meeting were listed in a different order than she had written down. She noted *Housing* should be listed as #9, not #8, and *Peer Services* should be listed as #12, not #11.
- Dan suggested some grammatical changes.
- Alice noted her name was listed twice and one should be removed.
- Stephanie moved to approve the May meeting minutes with the discussed edits; Michael H. seconded. All in favor and the motion passed.

MHBG Planning and Decision Making

- With an influx of new federal funding to DMH, Cheryle reviewed how funding decisions are made at DMH right now and shared some system of care priorities. (See attached visual)
- DMH seeks input from community partners and mental and health care providers, while integrating the governor's priorities and seeking alignment with Vision 2030. Feedback on priorities is then sought from the MHBG Planning Council, and then brought to the commissioner for the final decision.
- Julie noted that new data on open positions in the workforce will be collected on July 1, 2021; VCP expects over 800 workforce vacancies.
- Michael H. shared that not only are Designated Agencies (DAs) experiencing vacancies, but also police and hospitals which is resulting in higher referral rates to DAs.
- Dan noted that he appreciates Vision 2030 and the feedback process and hopes to see this continued and integrated with the new commissioner.

MHBG Overview and Funding Guidance

- Nicole created a training/review guide of the MHBG statute and SAMHSA program guidance. (See attached slides)

- Nicole noted that she intentionally left out an overview of the Planning Council (PC), as PC members are the experts on their responsibilities, and she would like to have their input on creating that portion of the training.
- Alice noted there is a PC Operating Guidelines that may be helpful to include some statute language in.
 - Dan said he would like any changes to the Operating Guidelines to be shared with the council to review and approve.
- Nicole provided an overview of the history, purpose, and rules of the Mental Health Block Grant.
- Dan suggested providing the dates of the federal fiscal year in the presentation, 10/1/2020-9/30/2021, and either explaining or omitting the note in the footer saying “the grant comes from SAMHSA’s Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), Division of State and Community Systems Development.”
- Nicole asked if the PC has access to the federal portal (WebBGas) to view the MHBG Plan. Members responded that they do not. Nicole will reach out to SAMHSA to get Planning Council members access to the portal to review the plan.
- Dan asked to distinguish between statute and program requirements.
 - Nicole shared that the statute is language passed by Congress, whereas program requirements are programmatic updates that SAMHSA has made.
- Dan asked to define ESMI (Early Serious Mental Illness)
 - Trish explained ESMI as referring to a recent onset of serious mental health condition symptoms, such as psychosis, hearing voices, social functioning issues.
- Dan noted he shared an article stating SAMHSA would be doubling the 10% ESMI and 5% Crisis required set-asides and asked if DMH knew more about this.
 - Christina shared that the regular FFY21 Block allocation (\$1,213,910) requires a 10% set-aside for ESMI, and a new 5% set-aside for Crisis Services. SAMHSA also awarded COVID Supplemental funds (\$1,415,844) which requires a 10% set-aside for ESMI, and 5% set-aside for Crisis Services; as well as the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds (\$2,445,549) which requires a 10% set-aside for ESMI, and encourages but doesn’t require a 5% set-aside for Crisis Services.
- Julie requested that the MHBG Guidance PowerPoint be shared over email.
 - Nicole will send Julie a copy of the presentation. MHBGPC have already received a copy of the presentation.
- Dan said it should be noted that the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is not only for suicidal callers but anyone experiencing a mental health crisis, and the name should reflect this to make it clear to the public.
- Marla noted that the Pathways Support Line is for suicidal and mental health crisis calls as well, in addition to be a warmline.
- Laurie M. asked if SAMHSA has any plans to change SED (Serious Emotional Disturbance) acronym to more respectful language. Multiple members and DMH staff agreed, but do not know if the language will be changed.
 - Alice suggested making a request to SAMHSA in the Planning Council application letter noting “SED” is a detrimental and stigmatizing acronym and term.

Vote on meeting Chair

- Christina informed the Planning Council that Marla’s term as chair will be up in July, and we will be holding an election. If you would like to be considered for Planning Council Chair, please email Christina and Nicole by 6/25/21. We will send out a poll on 6/28/21 to vote. The poll will close 7/2/21, and results will be shared at the July meeting.

- Marla suggested voting for a Chair and Vice Chair, or co-Chairs.
- Dan suggested reviewing the Planning Council Operating Guidelines about Planning Council Chair terms and making it an option to vote if the PC would like to have a Chair, or a Chair and Vice Chair, or Co-Chairs.

Adjournment:

Alice moved to adjourn the meeting; Laurie M. seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of adjourning. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 2:31 PM.

Action Items:

- ✓ Nicole will reach out to SAMHSA to get Planning Council members access to the WebBGas portal to review the state's plan.
- ✓ Nicole will send Julie a copy of the MHBG Overview presentation.

Next Meeting: July 16, 2021

Location: Microsoft Teams meeting

Call-in Number: +1 802-828-7667

Conference ID: 506 092 440#

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Optional in person location: WSOC Conference Room Cherry A