

VERMONT MENTAL HEALTH BLOCK GRANT  
PLANNING COUNCIL  
Meeting Minutes

August 20, 2021

1:00 PM – 2:45 PM

Location: WSOC, Cherry A  
and Microsoft Teams

**Members in Attendance:** Marla Simpson, Dan Towle (NAMI VT, PVT), Stephanie Beck (ADAP), Victoria Hudson (DCF), Cinn Smith, Ann Rich (DMH), Laurie Emerson (NAMI VT)

**DMH Staff and Guests in Attendance:** Christina Thompson (DMH), Cheryle Wilcox (DMH), Nicole DiStasio (DMH), Dr. Paul Grant (Beck Institute)

**Convene Meeting, Introductions, Vote on Public Comment:**

- Meeting convened at 1:05 PM
- Reviewed agenda, made introductions
- Dan moved to allow public comment throughout the meeting today; Laurie seconded. All in favor and the motion passed.
- Dan requested to add three items to the agenda today
  - Update on RFP for MHBG Project Coordinator
    - DMH response: The state cannot discuss the RFP specifics at this time and legally must wait until after the contract is signed.
    - Dan: How is the position being funded?
    - DMH: MHBG allows for up to 5% of the annual allocation to be spent on administrative costs. The increase in funds (COVID supplemental, ARPA, Testing & Mitigation grants) has provided enough through aggregating the administrative set aside on each.
    - Dan: Request that this information is brought to the attention of MHBG Planning Council before the state makes a decision.
    - DMH: The RFP was shared with the MHBG Planning Council over email before being posted.
  - Information about the compensation for committee members.
    - Currently only funded for time in meetings.
    - Significant amount of time is dedicated to work in between meetings.
    - Increasing compensation could help with recruiting and retention.
    - Request for this to be revisited at a later meeting.
  - Emailing
    - Dan: This can wait until DMH conducts process improvement discussions in the fall.

**Review June 2021 Meeting Minutes:**

- Dan moved to approve the June meeting minutes; Stephanie seconded. All in favor and the motion passed.

**Budget Update & Planning for Current Block Grant**

- Presentation by Dr. Paul Grant of the Beck Institute on Cognitive Recovery Oriented Therapy (CT-R)
  - More of an approach than a therapy
  - Helps people find their best selves
  - Focus on purpose, connection, empowerment, and hope

- Residential as transitional. Should be a collaboration not a support.
- Aspiration-focused
- Question: Can NAMI/peer specialists attend the training?
- Answer: Yes.
- MHBG has ~\$60,000 of unspent funds from the FFY20 allocation. These funds must be spent by 9/30/21. This means the funds must be allocated and the activity must occur before 9/30/2021.
- Why there are unspent funds:
  - Team Two training -- grant was delayed due to COVID. It was also a grant that was held by former Deputy Commissioner Mourning Fox. At this time, activity will not be able to take place and the funding must be reallocated.
  - Vermont Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health (VFFCMH) Local Program Standing Committee grant – grantee has had staffing shortages that has prevented them from being able to draw down the full grant allocation. Grantee has requested that grant be cancelled. VFFCMH have spent \$15k of the \$60k allocation already. \$45k must be reallocated.
- Proposals for use of ~\$60K
  - CT-R training (see presentation above)
  - Brochures for families with children in the Emergency Department, to help navigated the mental health system of care.
    - ADAP: Have these brochures been translated into multiple languages?
    - DMH: No, but that would be a good use and we will look into that.
  - MS: Suggest using these funds towards food insecurity to pay for food for individuals in need.
  - DMH: Unfortunately, that is not an allowable expenditure under the MHBG statute.
- Christina reviewed the budgets and goals for FFY20, FFY21, COVID Supplemental Funds, and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.
  - COVID Supplemental and ARPA funding goals are tentative, and no proposals have been approved by DMH yet.
  - Proposals will be reviewed and prioritized by Planning Council members at the October MHBGPC meeting.

### **MHBG Application Status & Updates**

- DMH provided a progress update on the FFY22 MHBG application due September 1, 2021.
- DMH received new Notice of Award (NOA) from SAMHSA for \$125,000 for COVID Mitigation. These funds are meant for COVID tests, PPE, COVID vaccines, etc. for individuals with **SMI and SED mental health needs at community mental health providers.**
- Vermont's ARPA proposal was approved by SAMHSA.

### **MHBG Demographics, Applications & Council Letter**

- Demographics
  - Nicole reviewed the MHBGPC member composition
  - Two members have resigned from the council since last year and we are recruiting. The council needs more family members, people with lived experience, advocates, and providers.
- Member List
  - Nicole reviewed the current membership list
- Letter to SAMHSA for FFY22 application
  - Dan suggested to spell out acronyms and replace 'substance abuse' with 'co-occurring,' and offered some grammatical edits.
  - Marla will make the suggested edits and add a paragraph discussing the terms SED and SMI.

- Laurie moved to accept letter with suggested edits; Dan seconded. All in favor and the motion passed.

**Adjournment:**

The meeting adjourned at 2:45pm.

**Action Items:**

- ✓ Christina will send the Planning Council the FFY20 budget with unspent funds and ARPA proposed budget.
- ✓ Marla will update the Planning Council letter to SAMHSA and send it to DMH by early next week.

**Next Meeting: October 15, 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**