

**Joint Subcommittee to Study Mental Health Services
in the Commonwealth in the 21st Century
Eastern State Hospital, Williamsburg, Virginia
May 7, 2018
Meeting Summary**

The Joint Subcommittee to Study Mental Health Services in the Commonwealth in the 21st Century (Joint Subcommittee) held its first meeting of the 2018 interim on Monday, May 7, 2018, at Eastern State Hospital in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Opening Remarks

The meeting began with a tour of Eastern State Hospital's facilities, followed by introductions and opening remarks. Senator Creigh Deeds, chairman of the Joint Subcommittee, announced that Delegates Nick Rush and Todd Pillion had been appointed to the Joint Subcommittee.

Remarks of Secretary Daniel Carey, M.D. & Commissioner Hughes Melton, M.D.

Following introductions and opening remarks, the Honorable Daniel Carey, M.D., Secretary of Health and Human Resources, provided information about the future direction of behavioral health services in the Commonwealth. He noted the Joint Subcommittee's successful efforts around implementation of STEP-VA and expansion of access to permanent supportive housing for individuals with serious mental illness and voiced continued support for these efforts. Other priorities include Medicaid expansion; efforts to ensure that every person in the Commonwealth with a substance use disorder will have access to timely, evidence-based treatment and recovery services; and efforts to build a behavioral and developmental health system that provides a comprehensive, evidence-based, and cost-effective continuum of care that creates positive outcomes for individuals, families, and stakeholders. Secretary Carey also identified several areas for further work, including:

- Increasing alignment between behavioral health programs and providers to promote integration of behavioral health screenings and treatment into a range of settings to ensure the needs of individuals with mental illness and substance use disorder are met where they present;
- Identifying individual and population-level metrics that can be implemented to evaluate the quality and outcomes of the behavioral health system;
- Promoting standards and accountability for public and private service providers to ensure adequate monitoring and oversight across behavioral health services to improve program integrity and ensure delivery of high-quality, evidence-based services; and
- Aligning payment systems to incentivize evidence-based services and best practices, link payment to performance, and transition to a value-based payment model.

Following his remarks, Secretary Carey introduced Hughes Melton, M.D., Commissioner of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. Commissioner Melton stated that his goal is to improve the performance of the Commonwealth's behavioral health system, bringing the Commonwealth from 40th in the nation to the top 10 best-performing behavioral health systems in the nation. He reiterated the administration's commitment to building on current initiatives, focusing on teamwork and cooperation to build on past successes. Specific issues to be addressed include challenges around local contributions to the public mental health services system, fully funding implementation of STEP-VA, and addressing the crisis of high censuses in state hospitals resulting from increased temporary detention order admissions.

Organization of the Joint Subcommittee and Work Groups and Discussion of Work Plans

Senator Deeds stated that Delegates Pillion and Rush will be assigned to Work Group #1, System Structure and Finance. The System Structure and Finance Work Group will be led by Senator Hanger and will focus on creating a system of care that works for all Virginians. Senator Deeds stated that implementation of STEP-VA and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services' financial realignment strategy are steps in the right direction but that additional work is needed to achieve the work group's goals. Work Group #2, Criminal Justice Diversion, will be led by Delegate Bell and will continue to focus on issues related to diversion, services for individuals with mental illness in jails, discharge planning, housing, and other related issues.

Members of the Joint Subcommittee then discussed several items for further consideration during the interim, including:

- What is necessary to ensure that STEP-VA is fully implemented in the future?
- What is necessary to ensure the financial realignment strategy is successfully implemented in a manner that relieves pressure on state hospitals?
- What are the right number and location of state hospitals, to ensure needs are met in the most effective and efficient manner?
- How can the Commonwealth transition from a facility-based approach to mental health services to a community services-based approach?
- What changes are necessary to build accountability into performance contracts between the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and the community services boards?
- What is the appropriate relationship between the state and localities in the context of the public mental health services system?
- What role should community services boards play in the public mental health service system?
- How should mental health services be delivered in the Commonwealth's jails?

Senator Howell noted the need to incorporate substance abuse services into the service system. Senator Barker expressed a need to focus on the types of data and information collected and how data and information is used to improve the public mental health service system. He also noted the need to work together with other entities focused on efforts to improve the public mental health service system to share information and facilitate good decision making. Delegate Garrett expressed a need for data on services provided by community services boards and implementation of same-day access to services and a need to focus on increasing accountability in the existing system and the delivery of mental health services in jails. Senator Hanger reiterated the need to focus on mental health services in jails and stated that the Joint Subcommittee should also begin to develop plans for funds that would become available to the Commonwealth if the Commonwealth chose to expand Medicaid. Senator Cosgrove also asked that the Joint Subcommittee consider options for continuing its work after 2019.

At the end of the meeting, the Joint Subcommittee adopted a work plan for 2018 that included tours of various state hospitals and a plan for receiving information and reports from the work groups, to facilitate development of recommendations.