

Summary of 2017-18 Governance Study

Roles, Needs and Responsibilities of Local Governments and Regional Collaborations

September 28, 2017

The SJ 47 study focuses on improving and expanding publicly funded mental health services, with particular emphasis on services delivered by CSBs. In the upcoming phase of the SJ 47 inquiry, the System Structure and Financing Panel will focus on governance of the system at the state and local level.

The Joint Subcommittee's Expert Advisory Panel has found that the current system – with the state operating regional public psychiatric hospitals and contracting with local community services boards to provide community-based mental health services in the local jurisdictions that established them – should be retained, for a number of reasons. Those reasons include the value of the substantial commitment made by many Virginia localities to their CSBs, with many localities establishing CSBs as part of the local government structure (“administrative policy” CSBs) and providing significant financial commitment to the CSBs, and the CSBs in turn, as part of their service delivery, establishing longstanding and significant working relationships with other local agencies, including social services agencies, schools, health departments and public safety departments. However, it is also the case that many CSBs that are established by, and serve, multiple local governments (“operating” CSBs) are not part of any local government's structure, and receive far less financial, administrative and programmatic support from the jurisdictions they serve. The result is a wide variation among the CSBs in the types, timeliness and quality of mental health services that are available to residents of Virginia. The SJ 47 Joint Subcommittee has expressed particular concern with the following problems in the current system:

- Lack of consistent array of services across the Commonwealth;
- Need for uniform measures of performance;
- Lack of accountability based on measures of performance and outcomes.

The next phase of the SJ 47 study will address the local governance issues that may be contributing to these problems, and ways in which those problems may be resolved and services may be improved. Some of the local governance matters that we will be addressing include:

- The nature and variation in local governance and local investment in public mental health and substance abuse treatment services across the state;
- The collaboration of CSBs with other local or regional human service agencies;
- The regional collaboration among CSBs within their Health Planning Regions (HPRs);
- The ways in which additional local funding (above 10% match of state funds required by statute) are used to improve community-based services and outcomes;
- Feasibility of consolidation of some CSBs without disrupting access to services;
- Models within Virginia of regional collaboration and interagency collaboration that might be replicated;
- The experience of other states with a similar structure (e.g., Oregon).

As a first step, we will be reaching out to local governments for their input on establishing the proper research strategy. We plan to have a series of interviews with local government and CSB officials who have been identified as leaders in the field, before undertaking a more structured and comprehensive process for studying and assessing local governance structures during the coming year.