

The Joint Subcommittee to Study Mental Health Services in the Commonwealth in the 21st Century held its final meeting of the 2017 interim on Tuesday, December 19, 2017, at the Pocahontas Building in Richmond. Members present included: Senator Deeds, Senator Barker, Senator Howell, Senator Hanger, Delegate Garrett, Delegate Hope, and Delegate Watts.

Work Group 1 - Service System Structure and Financing - Recommendations

John Oliver presented several recommendations proposed by the Service System Structure and Financing Work Group, including:

- **Study of temporary detention.** The work group recommended establishment of a work group to conduct a collaborative study on measures needed to facilitate effective emergency intervention services and reduce admissions pursuant to temporary detention orders at state hospitals. The work group should include relevant stakeholders and should develop legislative and budget proposals intended to reduce overall admissions and reduce the burden on state hospitals.

The Joint Subcommittee adopted this recommendation; a letter will be drafted setting out the details of the proposed study.

- **Telemental health services.** The work group recommended a budget amendment to provide \$1.1 million per year for three years to Appalachian Telemental Health Network Initiative.

The Joint Subcommittee adopted this recommendation.

- **Alternative transportation.** The work group recommended a budget amendment to provide \$1.7 million per year to support and expand alternative transportation pilot programs in the area served by the Mount Rogers Community Services Board and the area served by the Region 10 Community Services Board.

After some discussion of the benefits of a pilot program or establishment of a statewide program, the Joint Subcommittee adopted a recommendation that a budget amendment be introduced to provide \$10.2 million to fund statewide implementation of the alternative transportation model proposed in RD 337 (2017) - Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services: Alternative Transportation Workgroup Final Report.

Staff then presented additional recommendations adopted by the Service System Structure and Financing Work Group including:

- **STEP-VA.** The work group recommended continued support for ongoing efforts to implement STEP-VA in accordance with the provisions of Chapters 607 and 683 of the Acts of Assembly of 2017. The Governor's proposed budget included \$11.8 million in general funds to expand access to same-day mental health screening and evaluation to every community services board in the Commonwealth and an additional \$6.4 million to complete implementation of same-day access and \$11.2 million in general funds to support outpatient clinics to provide primary health care screenings for individuals receiving services at community services boards.

The Joint Subcommittee adopted this recommendation.

- **Community Integration Plan.** The work group recommended continued support for the efforts of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services to reduce the census at state hospitals by improving community integration of individuals with mental illness. The Governor's proposed budget included \$4.8 million in general funds to support needed community services as a result of the mental health facility census and \$6.9 million in general funds to provide discharge planning assistance (DAP) to assist in discharging approximately 80-90 people on the extraordinary barriers list currently awaiting discharge from state hospitals.

The Joint Subcommittee adopted this recommendation.

- **Plan for fiscal realignment.** The work group recommended continued support for the development of the Secretary of Health and Human Resources' plan for fiscal realignment of the public behavioral health system in accordance with Item 284 of the Appropriation Act of 2017.

The Joint Subcommittee adopted this recommendation.

- **Funding options.** The work group recommended continued exploration of options for funding the public behavioral health system, including options available under the Affordable Care Act.

The Joint Subcommittee adopted this recommendation; the Service System Structure and Financing Work Group will continue to explore options and provide information to the Joint Subcommittee during the 2018 interim.

Work Group 2 - Criminal Justice Diversion - Recommendations

Heather Zelle presented recommendations of the Criminal Justice Diversion Work Group related to expansion of criminal justice diversion, including:

- **CIT programs in rural communities.** The work group recommended a budget amendment to provide the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services with \$657,648 to make grants to support development, implementation, and operation of CIT training programs in up to six rural communities and \$1,925,400 to make grants to support development, implementation, and operation of CIT assessment centers in six rural communities.

The Joint Subcommittee adopted this recommendation.

- **Jail diversion programs.** The work group recommended a budget amendment to provide \$1,417,326 in general funds to support creation of diversion programs at Intercept 2 (initial detention/initial court appearance) in up to six rural communities.

The Joint Subcommittee adopted this recommendation.

- **Forensic discharge planning.** The work group recommended a budget amendment to provide \$4,109,900 in general funds to make forensic discharge planning available at five jails in the Commonwealth for persons with serious mental illness upon their release

from jails to allow for better coordination of care, enhance public safety by linking individuals to needed care, and reduce the risk of future criminal justice involvement.

The Joint Subcommittee adopted this recommendation.

Sim Wimbush presented recommendations of the Criminal Justice Diversion Work Group related to permanent supportive housing, including:

- **Virginia Housing Trust Fund.** The work group recommended a budget amendment to provide \$4.5 million in general funds per year to the Virginia Housing Trust Fund to increase capital investment in order to increase available rental housing and expand access to permanent supportive housing.

The Joint Subcommittee adopted this recommendation.

Public Comment

Following discussion of the recommendations, the Joint Subcommittee received the following public comment:

- Rhonda Thissen, Executive Director of NAMI Virginia, spoke in support of efforts to expand alternative transportation for individuals experiencing mental health crisis and for access to permanent supportive housing. Ms. Thissen also stated NAMI Virginia's support for expanding the Medicaid program.
- Amy Woolard, Policy Coordinator, Legal Aid Justice Center, emphasized the need for alternative transportation for children experiencing mental health crisis.
- Sherri Neil, Manager of Intergovernmental Affairs, City of Portsmouth, expressed support for the mental health jail pilot program and encouraged additional funding for the program.
- John Jones, Executive Director, Virginia Sheriffs' Association, spoke in support of the alternative transportation proposal.