

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
September 20, 2022

Present: Lisa Virkler, Chair; Andrea Moroughan, Vice-Chair; Richard Chartrand; Jeffrey Nellenback; and Jessica Moser.

Others: Legislators Larry Dolhof, Tom Osborne, Josh Leviker, Phil Hathway, and Ian Gilbert; County Manager Ryan Piche; County Attorney Joan McNichol; and Human Resource Director Caitlyn Smith.

Committee Chair Legislator Virkler called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m.

Legislator Virkler moved to accept the minutes from August 16, 2022 as recorded, seconded by Legislator Chartrand and carried.

Suicide Awareness Month – Patricia Fralick, Community Services Director; and Anna Platz, Public Health Deputy Director

Anna Platz began by stating that September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. The brief overview will give some data, state priorities of the NYS Office of Mental Health, Coalition history, coalition structure, current initiatives, and 2023 and beyond. The data from the last Community Health Assessment had Lewis County at 22.0 as the suicide mortality, age adjusted rate per 100,000 population which is the highest in all of New York State. The data from the Lewis County Coroner's office shows that in 2022 to date there have been 3 deaths, which does not include any overdose deaths.

Pat Fralick stated that the mission of the NYS Office of Mental Health's Suicide Prevention office is to promote, coordinate, and strategically advance suicide prevention with the aim of reducing suicide attempts and deaths among New Yorkers. Lewis County Community Services has been working with them since 2012 and these efforts include rolling out the 988 number, reduction of the stigma attached to mental health issues, Zero Suicide initiative, crisis services, needs of specialty groups, education and training opportunities, and postvention services.

Anna Platz gave a brief history of the coalition which was formed in 2013 due to the number of youth suicides that happened in a short time span. Some of their past activities have been several trainings; Cup of Joe, a campaign for survey responses; guest speakers; launch of the Traumatic Loss Team; NYS Infrastructure grant (regional grant with Jefferson County and St. Lawrence county); Gun lock distribution with local sportsmen's club; website creation; covid-19 workbooks; Lewis County mental health resource magnets; movie theater & billboard campaigns; establishing relationships with local AFSP chapter; and awareness days & events. The past funding sources for these activities have been through donations, FDRHPO rural health funds, Community Services allocations, Lewis County Youth Bureau, and NYS grants like the SPCNY Infrastructure grant.

The Coalition is structured with a steering committee of six (6) voting members which include a chairperson, who is a Lewis County Public Health Employee, Co-Chair, Director of Community Services, Lewis County Legislator Lisa Virkler, Secretary, Treasurer, and then several non-voting members who participate when time allows. All the funding is handled through NRCIL who acts as a fiduciary under the current MOU. The donations and grant funds are used to support grant deliverables and other ineligible expenses. In 2023 Lewis County Government has included \$12,000 in the budget to help support initiatives.

The current initiatives are evidence-based trainings like QPR, SafeTALK, Adult Mental Health First Aid, Youth Mental Health First Aid, ASIST (next training is scheduled for October 12 & 13, 2022), Gizmo's Pawesome Guide for Mental Health, and a presentation called "It's Real:Teens and Mental Health". Gizmo's Pawesome Guide to Mental Health was purchased through Lewis County Youth Bureau funding to take an upstream approach to support the mental health and wellness of youth through Gizmo's friendly messaging by introducing the concept of mental health; sharing how one may care for their own mental health daily; identifying when one's mental health needs attention and how to use healthy coping strategies; defining trusted adults and how to connect with them; and making a personalized mental health plan that can be used daily. Legislator Virkler stated that her children went to the library for this presentation and got something out of it, at ages 2 and 4.

Other initiatives going on this month is the Gun Safe Raffle, which has multiple ways to enter, liking the Facebook page, liking one of the informational videos shared on the page during the month of September, sharing one of the informational videos posted on the page during the month of September, donating to the Coalition, and completing a firearm safety course between 1/1/2022 and 9/31/2022 (proof of course must be submitted). The other are Mental Health PSA's where six (6) community members were interviewed, and their stories professionally produced into 1-3-minute videos. During September, there is a 2nd round of suicide specific videos shared. Anna shared a video from Linette Bush, suicide loss survivor.

The Coalition has received recognition through several avenues, and it has been both helpful and humbling. The 2023 objectives for the Suicide Prevention Coalition are to complete a strategic planning session, bring "Lock & Talk Virginia" to Lewis County, continue safe storage conversation in Lewis County, support and promote 988, and efficiently use County funds. The Traumatic Loss Team is focusing on increasing community awareness, looking into their processes and see if they can implement a more "automatic" response, and efficiently use county funds.

Legislator Dolhof questioned why 911 wasn't linked to the 988 number, Pat responded that it is but the opposite way, if you call 988 they can put you through to 911. There was further discussion on using 988 to call for mental health

assistance. Legislator Nellenback asked how many overdose deaths there were in the first and second quarters of 2022, Pat responded that there were zero for the first quarter and she didn't have any data for the second quarter yet.

Veteran Services Options for 2023 – Ryan Piche, County Manager

Ryan presented a few options for the Veteran Services Agency. The Board could choose to maintain the relationship with Jefferson County and have one of their staff members come in two days per week for in-person coverage with full-week phone/email coverage, which allows for the other staff at Jefferson County to process paperwork at an estimated cost of \$20,000 (the NYS revenue received). The next option would be to hire someone full-time at roughly \$62,742.00 and place them under the direction of Office For the Aging for better oversight. There was discussion of whether there would be enough work for a full-time person and trying to find someone who can do quite a bit of outreach and maybe bring in more veterans. Legislator Osborne voiced his opinion that our current Veteran Service Agency person through Jefferson County is very knowledgeable. Legislator Virkler questioned if Jefferson County could offer this person 5 days a week, Ryan stated that he will research this more.

The following dockets were reviewed:

1. Appointing Wyatt Wagner of Lowville, to the Community Services Board and the Developmental Disability Subcommittee for the term of October 5, 2022 through December 31, 2025.
AYE 5 NAY 0
2. Authorizing agreement between Lewis County Office For the Aging and Caregivers Home Health Care to provide personal care aides/homemaker services for OFA clients for the term of January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023 at a cost of \$40/hr., with a minimum of 30 hours/week/aide to a maximum of 40 hours/week/aide.
AYE 5 NAY 0
3. Authorizing agreements between Lewis County Office For the Aging and various providers for program services.
AYE 5 NAY 0
4. Authorizing agreements between Lewis County Department of Social Services and NRCIL, Bethel Church and Catholic Charities for warming center services for the 2022/2023 "Code Blue" season at a cost of \$10,000.00 for Bethel Church to provide the building; \$112,102.00 to NRCIL to provide staffing; and \$12,000.00 to Catholic Charities to provide supplies and furnishings.
AYE 5 NAY 0
5. Authorizing an extension agreement between the County of Lewis and ICU Security & Private Investigations for armed security guard services at the

Department of Social Services building for the term of November 1, 2022 through October 31, 2023 at a cost not to exceed \$82,836.75.

AYE 5 NAY 0

There being no other business to come before the committee, Legislator Virkler moved to adjourn at 3:14 p.m., seconded by Legislator Chartrand and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Cassandra Moser, Clerk of the Board