

NORTHWESTERN COUNSELING & SUPPORT SERVICES  
107 FISHER POND ROAD  
ST. ALBANS VT 05478

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 2, 2020

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**Present:** Elaine Carpenter, Sara Kittell, Meg Marshall, Jim McMillan, Tony Treanor, Jason Minor, Carl Rosenquist, Anjanette Watson, David MacCallum, Rob Hirss, Meg Marshall

**Excused:** Jeff Moreau, Dan Thompson, David Hutchinson, Betty Charron

**Staff:** Emily Richards, Todd Bauman, Kim McClellan, Steve Broer, Stacey Remillard, Joe Halko, Sam Thomas, Jessica Irish

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**Minutes received and meeting called to order by Jim McMillan at 5:32pm.**

**Motion was made to approve August minutes as presented by Carl Rosenquist. Second by Rob Hirss. Abstention Elaine Carpenter. All in favor.**

### **Executive Director Report**

We are not going to have a presentation like we normally do at a long board meeting. Instead, Todd is going to do a quick over view and then the directors will report more in-depth. The first thing to touch base about is the inquiry from Rob about a recent breach at another agency, about his personal information. Rob received a letter from another local agency. This breach did not impact our agency. We checked and confirmed that our security measures are strong and we are not susceptible to a breach from this software platform. Todd updated the board on the NMC CEO hiring process. He is on the panel that interviewed the final candidates. Todd could not disclose the names of the applicants, but expressed confidence that all applicants are strong candidates. The process is collaborative and a sign of strong partnership between NCSS and NMC. As we spoke about last meeting Doctor Mooney has resigned and is moving on. We have been looking very closely at his case load so we can find the best way to continue to care for our clients. We have a plan in place that will ensure that all patients receive the care that they need. We have also hired Dr. Strokoff to join our psychiatric team. He has a very strong skill set and will be great for our clients and agency. We have also have additional external referral sources if needed. Dr. Mooney is the medical director so we are looking to hire for that position. This job is posted and we do have an internal candidate. We are working on that interview process and will update the Board next month. We are also working on filling the CFO position. We have about twenty applications right now. Stacey and Todd went through them and paired it down to ten. We have asked Greg Sargent to help narrow it down to about 5 applicants. Greg does our audits and knows the DA system very well, his feedback is very valuable. We hope to start scheduling interviews in a few weeks.

### **Financial Report**

We still do not have our FY21 budget from the state. Awhile back we were told that we could expect a 15 – 20 % budget cut for FY21. We did later get communication that it would not be as

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bad as they had thought. Todd wanted to thank Carl for his and the committees work on this. We only have financials through May; we are hoping to close June within the next few weeks. The state has changed the way we can access revenue. This has helped us to draw down needed funds, but has also caused a delay in our ability to close our monthly financials. We are watching our financials closely. We are not out of the woods yet, and we need to be prepared for what the next months could bring as well as the next few years. We did a really good job of cutting expenses and making sure we stayed in the best place possible while our revenue was down. Once we have final numbers, we will update the board.

### **Behavioral Health**

As you all know our crisis team answers the national suicide lifeline for the state. We are expanding our hours, and anticipate they will expand again in the spring. We have been invited to talk to them in September; they are impressed with our service. We have taken part in two different suicide prevention symposiums. The integrated health team is doing the access TV show with Joe around their efforts in addressing suicide prevention in the primary and specialty care settings. We have a cross division collaboration presentation that we all have come together to update and modify to be about a 45 minute presentation. If it a presentation about who we are and what we do. We are giving this presentation to NMC next week. Todd was thinking that it would be the board presentation at the January meeting. We have a lot of trainings on the books; we will be conducting a MHFA in October with the border patrol. We have a few U Matter trainings coming up. We have been working closely with the emergency shelters, and have just provided a MHFA training for all their staff as well as the staff of Laurie's House, which is the region's domestic violence services. Franklin County Sheriff's Department has reached out wanting some training, we are working with them to see how we can make that happen.

The Question was asked – Woodside is planning on closing as of October 1<sup>st</sup> and are planning on paying a contractor to provide services when needed, what is our thought around this? We had a program that was called High Fidelity Wrap; this program served 2 children were from our catchment area that were placed at Woodside. The state cut this program which resulted in a more kids requiring a Woodside placement. We really feel like the care for most of these kids should be in their own community. We have a meeting with DCF next week to talk about handle the crisis support because they are so over whelmed. If they are going to close they should reallocate those funds back into the DA's so we can provide the services these kids need. There are gaps in the residential supports for all the divisions. Comment from the board – Thank you for being so involved the training schedule is impressive.

### **Developmental Services**

It has been a month since Sam has been in the positions and she wanted to thank Kathy who has been a tremendous help during this transition. They staff have been a wonderful help as well. We have a lot of clients returning to service which is wonderful, in the board report Sam said we had 118 individuals we are now at about 130 individuals who are receiving services. We are

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slowly recalling staff in the most effective way we can. Heather Hubbard has been key in this process. We have clients who are retuning back to work. These clients' employers held their jobs for them, this just goes to show the value these individuals are providing our community and the great work our employment team does. We have starting working on the home inspections again, we have 110 contracted homes and it is part of our job to make sure that are clients are safe. All our AOL programing was suspended due to COVID. Our staff are trying to work on ways to get some of that programing back up and running in a safe way. One of the problems around this is the space we would need to be able to do it safely. Claire Thompson is working with our community to see if we can fine space to run a few different programs. The week of September 13<sup>th</sup> is direct service staff week. Sam has been told that we normally go all out for this, food and celebrations all week. We however cannot do that now, so the leadership is working on how we can celebrate our direct staff this year. If you happen to see them around that week, please say thank you! The difficulty of care payments have been the most challenging thing this past month. The state has said that since folks cannot be out in the community it provides a difficulty of care for unpaid family members and shared living providers. The state was coming up with a plan to have a stipend given to those who can show a difficulty of care. They first plan was the stipend to come from unused agency managed funds. The DS directors across the state came together and said they will not work, so DAIL came back and are working on a way to give those stipends without the agencies having to use agency managed funds. We have our DS quality care review coming up this month. Heather Hubbard has been amazing in the prep for this, as well as Kim and her team. They will review about 38 client records and then interview a few clients if it can happen in a safe way. On October 16<sup>th</sup> we will have a debriefing to get the results of the review.

### **Children Youth and Family**

Our Children's Division has been working closely with our school partners to get ready for the new year. Danielle wanted to first and for most say how proud she is of her staff. With the regulations put forth from the state and AOE we have had to get very creative on how we would hold summer programs. We had four different programs that were very successful. Parents were commenting that these were the best summer programs that their kids have taken part in. We worked very hard to follow guidelines and reducing exposure and the spread. We have been working with AOE, the state and school districts since school was let out in March. It has been a good process and our staff have been wonderful advocates for our clients and their families. We are currently working on meetings with AOE to work out the details of the schools contractual structure. Soar is currently serving 72 kids, five days a week. Our CAT and Autism program enrollment is up slightly and the School Based Services are about the same. Soar has been open for two weeks now and things are going really well. Today we started the Chittenden county EI programing. This will be about 280 clients from the Chittenden county area. Amy Johnson and her team have done a fantastic job getting this up and running. We have a very strong and successfully EI program, so we are mirror our process and procedures for the Chittenden county program. We had a major win for our families that we serve as well as our staff, the ban of a four hour max of daycare a day for kids who are doing the hybrid learning model was lifted.

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This means if a kiddo is only physically in school Thursday and Friday they can go to daycare fulltime on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

The question was asked – What is the long term plan of the oversite and management of the new EI program? We will have two team leaders and a service coordinator who will help manage the team. And as we said our current EI program has been very successful and we will run this one the same way. The question was asked – What is the plan with Walter? He is currently in training and has more to do before he is certified for anything. Matt Hogan has been working on plans for him and doing a great job; he is hoping that he can be used in schools, individual settings, trauma situations and so much more. The question was asked – Does the contract for the Chittenden County EI program have a time line? And if we are hiring people what will it look like for those folks if the program goes away? We have a really good relationship with the Howard Center and we feel very confident that we are going to continue to hold this contract. We have great results with the way we run our current program and we hope to expand this success into the Chittenden County Program. The question was asked – Are all students on site at once at Soar? We do have a few students that are fully remote but for the most part yes they are all on site. We do have the elementary students starting and ending a bit earlier than the high school students to help with transportation.

### **Community Relations**

As most of you know we had to cancel the community partner classic but we have been lucky enough to have some of our sponsors who still want to support our work. There has been a lot of talk around the state about embedded staff into law enforcement. Our programs have been in the spot light and how well they are doing. We share our store and Cooper with WCAX. We were also quoted in an article that was in 7days, there is thought across the state around modeling our plan with Cooper and the state police. We are working really hard on Stigma in these uncertain times. We know our services are going to be needed so much more as we come out of this pandemic. In August we re-ran the vaping episode of our TV show. We did this because it is being proven that people that vape are more likely to get COVID. September's episode will be focused on suicide prevention awareness and what our integrated health team is doing among the offices they are working in. We are launching a state wide plan that will included news and print with VCP. We will talk about how the services we offer can be accessed anywhere in the state. NCSS's segment will talk about how suicide does not discriminate. John Holzsheiter and Lance Metayer will be part of our segment. The Afterglow event has been canceled, but the family has decided to open up the store and all profit from this will come to NCSS. There is a new anti-racism task force as part of VCP. We are trying to promote that no matter where people come from or who they are they have access to services. The first piece of this will be a viewing of the documentary 13.

### **Human Resources**

We are steadily calling people back to work which is great! We do still have a handful of folks who are out. We are being super diligent and making sure we are making strong decisions with

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our recalls. We have starting recruiting to fill some needed open positions. These are mostly BI and residential staff. We have had some staff transfer to a different position in order to come back from lay off status, but we have also had some turnover. The accommodation request for those returning to work have been coming but we are all being creative and supportive and it seems to be going really well. There has been a decrease in our unemployment since June, but we still have not gotten any word on the 50% kick back, we were told we would get.

**Operations**

In our effort to keep expenses down we let go of 4 leases. All buildings are open to staff. Each building has a cleaning plan, health officers to do the health screens, we are following the guidance from the state. With some of our clients needed the face to face contact instead of the zoom options, we have had some child's outpatient staff seeing clients in our 107 location. This seems to be going well, the child's and adult team worked really closely together to make sure the scheduled they had worked, to follow guidance form the state. The new EMR system went live yesterday!! We have a command center at 107, normally we would do everything in person, but due to current circumstances we had to make some adjustments. Our plan is to have at least one our help desk staff, a few config team members and Trisha on site every day this week. Other help desk staff, config team members and Netsmart will be remote. We have check-ins three times a day, open zooms for staff to jump in if they are having issues. Netsmart has a set up in Kanas to be support for us during this week, but so far we have not needed to use them once, we have been able to address all issues in house, which is awesome! We got all 550 staff trained between August 3<sup>rd</sup> and August 31<sup>st</sup>, so we were ready. The trainers are also available to help staff live time if they need it. This has been years in the making but all hard work of the team has pulled it off. It is going to be great for the agency, staff and clients.

**Motion to adjourn was made by Carl Rosenquest . Second by Rob Hirss. All in favor.**

**Meeting adjourn at 7:25pm**

Minutes recorded by:

Emily Richards

Executive Coordinator