

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

JANUARY 8, 2025

Present: Angela Poirier, Elaine Carpenter, Jason Minor, Dan Thompson, David McCallum, Ken Gagne, Jim McMillian, Casey Toof, Andrea Patrick-Baudet,

Excused: David Hutchinson, Anjanette Watson, Meg Marshall

Staff: Todd Bauman, Derek Hoy, Danielle Roberts, Emily Richards, Belinda Bessette, Matt Habedank, Samantha Thomas, Kim McClellan, Stacey Remillard, April Matheau,

Public: Shireen Hart, Jennifer Stratton, Mike Feulner

Minutes received and meeting called to order by Angela Poirier at 5:40pm.

Motion was made to approve the December minutes as presented by Dan Thompson. Second by Jim McMillian. All in Favor

Annual Board Training

- Training proved by Shireen Hart. Slides from the presentation are included in the annual board manual

Executive Director Report

- We have completed our Community Needs Assessment (CAN). Todd will share it with you all when he sends the weekly wrap on Friday. We are going to lean into this report when thinking about the decisions we make and the services we provide.
- A press release came out Monday to officially announce that we were chosen as a recipient of the CCBHC grant from the state.
- We have our annual Longevity Award Luncheon this coming Friday. This year we have 53 employees who are being recognized. Micheal Bombard from Soar, will be recognized for 35 years with the agency. He will be the staff with the most longevity recognized at the luncheon.
- We wanted to remind everyone that the February meeting will be at Soar. We will have Rob Montgomery of Fuss & O'Neill who is the consultant we have been working with around the Polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB)'s. He was at the executive committee meeting today and we reviewed the report and options for possible next steps. We were going to have him come tonight to the full board but had our training scheduled already. This is why our February meeting will be at Soar, we will review everything with the full board then.
- Emily will be handing out the annual board manuals at the end of the meeting. There are four forms in the front of the binder that need to be filled out. For those of you who are virtual Emily will reach out to figure out how to get you the manual and the forms to fill out.

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Financial Report

- Derek wanted to start by saying that there are a lot of things going on and it is an exciting time to be on the board.
- Derek wanted to highlight the current days cash and the fact that it is consistently around 67-68 days. There are scenarios at the bottom of the balance sheet of how our days cash would be impacted based on different upcoming possible expenditures. As a reference point during COVID we only had 20 days of cash, so we are in much better standing then we were.
- Residential is something that we are looking very closely at. The need within our agency for our clients continues to grow. We have kept you aware of the need for one more 2-3-bedroom house. We still have not found the right property but wanted to let you know we are still looking and will continue to keep you in the loop.
- We are purchasing two more vehicles for Soar. They have two currently that cannot be inspected and are no longer drivable.
- We reviewed the year to date (YTD) profit margin graph and our lines seem to be constant and back on track to years prior to Covid. This is helpful as we are trying to make strategic plans to help serve our clients to the best of our ability.
- The question was asked – With the vehicles that we just purchased, if a grant comes up would you be able to go back and pay for the vehicles we just bought? No, we can't go back and pay for things. The vehicles we have tend to pay for themselves, at the rate we receive.
- The question was asked – There are no external restrictions on our funds, correct? The only restricted funds we have are the board reserves.

Executive Committee Report

- Rob Montgomery came with legal representatives; it was good conversation filled with a lot of information. We will continue that conversation at Soar next month.

Community Mental Health Report

- The CNA which helped informed the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) application is out and we are excited to start using it to help inform our work. A lot of feedback we received was around access. We talked about our access center before we are getting closer to have it up and running. The last week of December we moved folks down to the access center on Houghton St. It will house two rapid access clinicians, our assessment specialists and screening staff. We will have daily appointments available, when we are fully open. Katie Mable has come back to the agency to be the team leader of this program. We are still building it, but we are moving forward. When we are ready, we will blast it to the community and do a grand opening. We will also invite Meaghan Malboeuf here to talk about the program.
- December was full of celebrations, and this just makes for a happy place to be. Our CRT luncheon is very much loved by staff and clients, and we keep expanding it. A few

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comments from clients stood out to Belinda. One was from a client who was given some pink nail polish and a few other pink things, they were so happy that we knew their favorite color was pink and was just very thankful because they don't normally get gifts. The other was a comment about how one of the pumpkin pies there was delicious, if it only had a little bit more nutmeg it would have been just like the ones they made.

Early Education & School Based Services Report

- Our school based Autism program is working toward changing their name to school based adaptive program. This program has always served kids with many different diagnoses other than Autism. We think this name represents what we do better.
- The adaptive team have a community program where the clients go to an offsite location half way through the school day. It was a byproduct of Covid and has now grown into something much bigger. We have had a place in Richford where the program ran, we do not have many clients from this area. We found a location that is closer, this is helpful for staff and is much easier for clients. We will be doing an open house on March 10th. Samantha Thomas shared a story about this program, they have a young man that has a coffee cart the comes around at Family Center, he has made a really good connection with Amy Bronson. He was there today, and Amy was in a meeting, and he was worried he wouldn't get to serve her, it was just great to see the connection and the commitment that came out of this.
- We have hired a new Collaborative Achievement Team (CAT) consultant. Based on moving parts and internal hires we have had this position open since June. The vacancy has hindered our ability to take on clients. So, we are really happy to have the position filled.

Developmental Services Report

- Able House is the hottest topic in DS right now. We will be delivering boxes that were delivered to 130 this week with the things we need to get the program up and running.
- Samantha has shared before that she is working with her team on adding focus on outcomes and value-based payment. She wanted to give a shout out to our admin folks who have been very helpful, including Amanda Morong who has been wonderful.
- February 5th will be an Open House at AOL. Everyone is welcome.
- Samantha has had a lot of fun gathering comments and information about the staff that she has to recognize at the longevity awards. It is so much fun to get information from peoples' peers.
- We had a home provider who had a house fire and a life was lost. Our clients are safe and the staff have been amazing. Samantha wanted to share a quote that she got from one of her team leaders, Casey Carpenter, "Even though these moments are so tragic and so hard they help me remember that we are really good at helping others, stepping up, offering resources and making things happen. We are an amazing, powerful resource to our community and to our clients and to each other. These are the moments that we make the world better."

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- The question was asked – Is the property we are talking about purchasing just a step in the right direction, it doesn't seem to be enough? Yes, it is a step, it will not solve the problem, but it is a stepping stone.

Community Relations Report

- During December Danielle spent time looking at different strategies and how we are using them. For example, looking at Facebook (FB) and how we are reaching our community. Another strategy Danielle would like to start to use is getting away from stock images and using actually NCSS images, trainings, buildings and staff. The FB posts that get the most interactions are the ones that include staff, for example the post about the training that Holly Branon did with the BFA Comet Hockey Team.
- We have video advertising with WCAX, we have new recruiting videos playing and the next one that will be airing is one about afterglow.
- Yesterday Danielle posted about a 97 year old women who donates quilts to us to give to children we serve. She was really wonderful and so much fun to talk to. We asked her what the key to a long life is and she said staying busy and helping people.
- Danielle has been working with the Parent Child Center (PCC) around increasing the involvement for the play groups they offer.
- John O'Neil was on an episode of Were Here For You around season depression and this lead to an interview and article in.

Human Resources Report

- The Longevity Awards luncheon is this coming Friday. You are all welcome just let us know please because we have to give the caterer the final head count.
- We had to build 14 positions for Able House, so we have been focusing our recruiting there. We have hired 2 staff for those roles.
- We have a CRT staff that would like to do a testimonial, he feels we need more men in the field. He does not want to do a video but will do a quote and photo.
- We are participating in the Best Place to Work in Vermont again this year. The survey was sent out and we had a 55% response rate, we had to have a 40% return to even be considered. Hopefully we will have the results in a few weeks.
- Our WE Committee created a wall calendar full of staff photos and agency events. We are having an event to give them to staff and combining it with a donation drive for CVOEO.

Quality and Risk Management Report

- Telehealth for our Electronic Medical Record (EMR) went live this past Monday. This was the quickest project we have done with Netsmart. There were a few issues that needed to be fixed, but our teams came together and had things fixed quickly.
- We have a lot of projects going on, Able House, Houghton St., and 3 Home Health for our small facility and IT teams. Kim pulled them together and did a deep dive on what worked and what didn't to help us move forward and always improve the process. It was a great

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hour and half meeting and staff loved the process and it gave them a lot of things to work with moving forward.

- The question was asked – With the 988 accreditation there are some things needed from the board, but have not heard anything since the first meeting, when will we be needed? Kim is not sure but will get back to Angela.

Other Business

- Please make sure all the forms in the board manuals are filled out and returned to Emily. She will work with those online.

Motion made to adjourn by Dan Thompson. Seconded by Elaine Carpenter. All in Favor.

Meeting adjourn at 7:48 pm

Minutes recorded by: Emily Richards