

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

MARCH 1, 2023

Present: Jim McMillan, David MacCallum, Angela Poirier, Tony Treanor, Rob Hirss, Ken Gange, Anjanette Watson, Andrea, Casey Toof, Meg Marshall

Excused: David Hutchinson, Dan Thompson,

Staff: Emily Richards, Todd Bauman, Kim McClellan, Belinda Bessette, Stacey Remillard, Joe Halko, Derek Hoy, Danielle Lindley, Sam Thomas

Presenters: Brady Therrien and Megan Reynolds

Minutes received and meeting called to order by Jim McMillian at 5:35pm.

Motion was made to approve February minutes as presented by Tony Treanor. Second by Ken Gange. All in favor.

Presentation:

Employment Services – Presented by Brady Therrien and Megan Reynolds

Executive Director Report

Todd wanted to give an update on our designation review process. The state comes in every four years and reviews all three divisions. The Developmental Services review has been completed. Samantha Thomas and her team presented at the state standing committee and the only thing that was presented to them as an area of improvement was that we could grow our peer services. Behavioral Health is next to meet with the state standing committee and board member Rob Hirss will be joining as an agency standing committee member. Danielle is waiting for the invitation to meet with the state standing committee. Once these are complete the state will give us a final report. Everything is looking good for us. We did just hear that one of our sister agencies, one of the small SSA's in the state has been designated. This is just proof that these reviews from the state are real, and we need to make sure our staff and the process we have in place are in line with the guidance they give us

There is a new law in the state that schools that fall under certain guidelines be tested for PCB contaminations. Burlington High School has been the school most in the spotlight for this. The state has decided that they would like these issues resolved. Soar was on the list to be tested. PCB is an air born toxin that was added to construction materials in the late 70's early 80's. We are one of the first school to be selected for testing since the state decided to move forward with this process and we are the first independent school to go through the process in the nation. PCB's were found in a few of the classrooms. There are two options for remediation, and we created a plan the aligned with the safest option and the state has approved this plan. We have informed all staff and families of the results and shares many resources with them. We will be holding a town hall for the community and staff where the panel will be made up of the folks

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

from the state that oversee this process. Part of our plan is to move some classrooms around and we will do this to keep things as undisturbed at the school as possible. The library and art rooms are affected by this so it has been decided that there will be a library and art cart that will go to the classroom during those time instead of the students coming to the library or art room. We are hoping to be back to normal by the fall but are unsure of the timeline. We will need to be create with summer camps as work is being done on the build during the summer.

The board would like to be included in the communications on the progress as this moves forward.

We were selected as one of the Best Places to Work Vermont. We brought this up about 18 months ago, it steamed from our staff satisfaction survey results and the fact they have been falling a bit. We thought this would be helpful for us to see what we could be doing better. This is done by an outside source so we thought that could be a good insight. We needed a 40% survey return rate to be considers, we ended with a 57% return rate. The results are based on 805 of staff feedback. We have decided to bring about 25 staff to the awards ceremony and would like to invite the board as well. The event is 3/29/2023. The question was asked – Who else received the award? There are 3 categories, small, medium, and large companies. We were in the large category; it is based on staff size. Some other winners were King Arthur Flour, Comcast, HCRS, NBT Bank, Vermont Mutual Insurance group, the Richards group, Vermont Information Processing, Inc. There are 57 winner's total.

Financial Report

The finance team closed the month of October today. By doing this it keeps on the schedule that Derek shared in his board report. All our numbers are looking good, the loss we have is less than the projected loss. We are on target for the year, our numbers tend to increase in the spring. The amount we have in our bank account is decreasing which is due to the strategic investments we have been making. A few months ago, the board voted to approve the purchase of our Fletcher house, that was delayed a bit but we finally closed on the property. We have rented this property for a long time and with the board voting to approve the purchase we were able to continue to offer the client that lives there safe and consistent care.

Behavioral Health

During our leadership team meetings, we have been having really great dialogue around the relations with community partners. During the pandemic many people turned insular, so we have been trying to rebuild our connections, this team is has been great and it is fun to see them jump right in. We are also expanding our relationships with local education centers. We had six youth come and spend time with our Emergency Services team. The students were very engaged and asked a lot of questions. DAIL auditors' juts popped into our 22 Upper Weldon location and where there for about seven hours. The auditors did a great job asking a lot of questions about what and how we do things. Realeen Bedard did a great job during the audit. We will have their report soon. Another thing we are doing is a lot of collaborative thinking with the other services

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

divisions. We are working on transitional youth, intake structures and residential programming to name a few.

Child Youth and Family

Matt Habedank, Lance Metayer, Amy Johnson all testified to the legislators recently. We also have about five staff who are testifying at the budget hearings that are coming up. We had five staff met with Senator Leahy staff. We have had a really hard situation going on that truly shows how amazing our staff and how much they care about the clients they serve. One of our clients mom has said “she can’t do this anymore.” DCF is down so many staff now that they said there is nothing they can do. We have had staff step up in so many ways, and from all our programs, we are supporting this kiddo from before school to bedtime. This is what needed to happen to keep this kiddo in his community and we also know there is nowhere for them to go if they can’t be here. Danielle just wanted to talk about this to share how this level of acuity has been popping up more and more.

Developmental Services

Really proud of our staff in DS and the hard work they did and do every day to make it possible to get redesignated. The Voices and Choices conference is coming up and is in person the first time since COVID. We are going to use one-time funds that we have to pay for the folks who want to go. We will have some staff going as well. Ken will be there and will report out to the board after the conference. We are going to work on some transportation for that as well. Pad Smith is retiring, and Troy Millette is stepping in and we are bringing PAEA services back. This is very exciting our clients really like this program. Something we are working on is finding out what kind of trainings are staff would like, we know they are looking for some professional growth, so we want to make this happen. Randy is our peer support specialist; it has traditionally just been on Friday’s, but they are opening up more time and will start having some options on Wednesday’s. We are really looking forward to the renovations to start at 7north, once these are done we will be able to get a second client in there.

Community Relations

Our legislative committee has been doing really great work and stepping up and expanding what they do. What Joe is excited most about is that the committee has taken the list of legislators and is communicating with them on a regular basis. The current TV episode is about employment services and Brady Therrien who just did the presentation here was one of the guests of the show. Michelle Harms and Randy Lizotte will be on the March episode. There was a suggestion that the Voices and Choices Conference could be a good topic for the TV show.

Human Resources

We often say that we are better than a peers, and we have gotten the data from the state and we are still doing better than some of our peers. When it comes to our turnover rate we sit at about

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

28.5% and the state is at about a 34%. Our vacancy rate is getting better 16.4% currently we have 513 staff right now. We are moving in the right direction. Our retention number is important to Stacey because she wants to know who is staying. 82.9% are still with us since last year. As we work the day to day it is hard to see that we are on the upward trend for staffing. We have seen a 98.2 % rate of retention for those who are taking advantage of the loan forgiveness program.

Operations

Every year Todd and Jim sign the provider agreement with AHS. AHS brings a committee together to negotiate the contract, and this year there are 3 NCSS staff who are included in the process.

Nursing and Psychiatry

We are really focusing on the CMS programming. It is very successful, and April and Derek are working to develop the contract to keep it here in the agency.

New Business

Ken would like to add the annual dinner on the agenda so we can figure out what we are going.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Tony Treaner. Second by Rob Hirss. All in Favor.

Meeting adjourned at 7:33pm

Minutes recorded by:

Emily Richards

Executive Coordinator