

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

APRIL 1, 2026

Present: Angela Poirier, Jason Minor, Lisa Whittemore, Rob Hirss, Elaine Carpenter, Ken Gagne, Jim McMillian, Dan Thompson, Casey Toof

Excused: Anjanette Watson, Casey Toof

Staff: Todd Bauman, Ryan Davis, Danielle Roberts, Emily Richards, Belinda Bessette, Matt Habedank, Kim McClellan, Stacey Remillard

Public:

Minutes received and meeting called to order by Angela Poirier at 5:30pm.

Motion was made to approve the March minutes as presented by Dan Thompson. Second by Jason Minor. All in Favor

Executive Director Report

- There is not much of an update with Soar, We did look at a few other properties to see if they would be viable options but none of them would work for our needs.
- Bernie Sanders has brought a new grant opportunity to Vermont. We have applied for funds to finish the project we had planned for the 3 Home Health building. We are planning to use this space for aging adults with severe mental illness. With the changes that the state has made to the CRT program we are finding a gap in services for some folks. This project has a three-year time frame currently, but if we were to get these funds it would speed up the plan. The question was asked – where are the folks who would use this solution now? They are in our current residential homes, which are meant to be short-term solutions under the new state regulations.
- The consultant that we have been working with for CCBHC things was onsite today. He is challenging us to think bigger, think what it can be vs. what we do now. It is a fun conversation to have. Rob Hirss and Angela Poirier are going to the State Standing Committee meeting which is set up so they can review us for readiness for CCBHC. It is great to have the support of you all as we move forward.
- Northeast Kingdom has been in the news recently; you may have seen it. There have been some fraud allegations in connection to the enhanced mobile crisis program. We wanted to let you know that we have done a review of our program and our process and we do not have any exposure to those risks.
- We wanted to give an update on the contract we have with United Counseling Services. We have been asked to provide monitoring services for their developmental services. They are coming this week so we can work through the process and plan to move us forward. Samantha and Kim are the leads on this, and it will be a three-year contract. Samantha is excited to work with them, thinking we can all always do better, so it will be fun to see what we can do to improve our services during this process.

Finance Update

- Ryan pulled up the board report to review. We are currently showing a \$2.25 million loss. This is a bit above the planned budget loss, which is \$1.5 million. There are a few factors that lead to this loss. The developmental home providers stipends increased in October, we did not increase them as we did not receive confirmation of anything from the state on these approved budgets, but now we have them. With that we had an increased stipend plus the payback due. We also had an increase in medical premiums due to a high number of medical procedures this month. We do have a large amount of CIS revenue coming into the agency, we were working on getting it set up in the EMR to be able to file the billing and that has been completed, so we will see that revenue come in.
- Our current days in cash is 57 days. Our current days in AR is 38.9. Our current ration is 3.5 so overall we are in a good position as an agency.

Executive Committee Report

- Everything we talked about it in the executive committee meeting has been discussed.

Quality and Risk Management Report

- Kim wanted to review the Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQI). This is something that is required by both DAIL and DMH to lay out what things we as an agency will work on in the next three years. This year, DAIL changed their plans name to Local Community Support Plan and DMH said they will be using for CCBHC and designation requirements. This process has been very siloed, and we decided we want to combine them since we work so closely across the divisions. This is a plan that is created to reflect what we plan to track our progress on across our service divisions, we must report on these things yearly. When we do that Kim will share it with the board. Kim has asked the directors to review their topics.
 - o Community Mental Health Services will be focusing on 988 and Enhanced Mobil Crisis. We are currently meeting our numbers here, but we are still tracking this because it is a very important service. For our children's service the state holds us accountable on how many people we see and how long we see them, so we will be keeping a close eye on that.
 - o Developmental Services has based the items they put into this plan on the sterling committee and what came out of the community needs assessment. We wanted to focus on what we can do to improve the lives of our clients and that is housing. Our goal will be to find at least one more housing opportunity. We opened one (Able House) and are working on new possibilities that we will be piloting with a family. We are also trying to create partnerships with owners of larger apartment complexes to give us first access to a few apartments, the client would pay for the apartment and we provide services, the trouble with this will be the licensing requirements for development services. We also wanted to use the data from the

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client satisfaction survey to help drive this report. So, another thing we added was staff, the quality and retention of them. We will be working on training opportunities for all staff and actually just did one on Documentation that Heather Hubbard gave and everyone really like it.

- Early Child and School Based Services is broken into two sections, school-based services and the parent child center (PCC). We are required to report to the state on a lot of success beyond 6 stuff so that drove a lot of the school-based section of this report. We will be looking at the % of clients that transition to a lower level of care, as well as number of kids served. We will also be looking at the number of contracts we hold with schools, as well as increasing our return rate on the stakeholder survey we are required to give and report back to the state. It will not tell the whole story, but it helps us be able to look at specific programs. For the PCC most things are funded through grants and require their own reporting, but Margeret Walsh said we wanted to look at collecting data on the quality of services. The question was asked – How are you doing the prenatal things? We are embedded so we are able to engage with families early. The question was asked – How are practices standardizing the screening process for these services? They are working together and trying to improve it but it can always be better. Jason Minor recommended talking to UVM, they have people in place now who feel this is a very important need in our community and feel like families are falling through the cracks. We are doing such a good job at it maybe we could work with them to grow the programs.
- The nursing and psych division is working on developing protocol and workflows to implement physical health care screening. We would also like to decrease our medication administration errors and are working with Belinda and Samantha on the residential process around this already.
- The administration divisions will be working on the days in AR when it comes to billing and the medical records team has been working on a creating trainings that can be brought to staff to help them with documentation as well as a few other things.

Developmental Services

- Samantha wanted to share that the gentleman she told us about last meeting is moving into the Able House. We had a resident move on to another option. He came and stayed the night to see how that went, brought some of things to leave there so they were then when he moved in and said to staff “I just can’t wait to live with my friends.”

Community Relations Report

- We had the Franklin Grand Isle Community Partnership meeting today and someone asked how we are sharing our message. For the first time we were at the rotary home show and it is really about being out there, in front of people talking about what we do. It is about the passion of our staff about what we do across the whole agency. We helped pass out

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clip bags which were bags that can be given to youth who smoke or vape with resources to help them stop.

- We will be at the volunteer fair at the complex on April 16th.
- We have the Autism Walk on Sunday May 31st.
- Dan Thompson wanted to recognize what a great job we did with our table at the home show, but we do need to step up our candy game, he even offered to buy it for us! But really he said what a nice job we did.

Human Resources Report

- Stacey wanted to call attention to this month's newsletter and the Stacey's Share section where it talks about how we passed all our audits and tests for this year, and wanted to say thank you to Lynn Jacques, we could not do it without her.
- Our [WE] Committee is helping with the over health of our agency; they just finished a 4-week series with a dietitian as well as providing blood pressure clinics to all staff. We partnered with NMC and The Tech Center at BFA.
- Stacey also wanted to share some data about our force. Our current retention rate is 95.3% and the turnover rate is 4.7%, some of this was controlled by us which is a sign that we are hiring good people. Stacey is going to plan to share this information every quarter.
- We have a new team member in HR; Jen Buckley. It was a need as we move forward with CCBHC as well as building a bench within her team. Lynn has a solid retirement plan, and she is the back up plan for payroll when Jeff is out of town. We are looking forward to having her and growing the team.

Community Mental Health

- Belinda and Meaghan presented to the community partnership meeting and spoke about community response, we talked about how we saw people here and needed to get them to come to us, but now we are talking about how we go to them. It is a great change to see.
- We will be opening up a new program called Daybreak in our Mapleville Depot building. Kim's team has been wonderful with the renovations. This program will be a program where kids can come for stabilization. It will be 1-2 kids who come for the day, go home at night, but it will give them a safe space to be in times of need. We will partner with their school and families to see how we can make their day-to-day lives easier.
- Holly Branon has developed some great structures to help us use the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment which is a requirement of the state. It will help us determine how we can best serve our families. This will be a culture shift for the community, they are used to coming to us and saying these are the services we want, now we will be able to say the data shows this is what you need.
- Celebration of the Arts is May 7th at 1pm at City Hall – Everyone is welcome.
- Belinda also wanted to give Trish Rigotti a shout out, she is doing an amazing job in the emergency services program manager role.

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Early Childhood and School Based Services Update

- Matt wanted to give a few updates about Soar. The showcase is April 17th at 10:45 everyone is welcome. The date for graduation will be coming soon, and we would love to have everyone there. Both of these events are wonderful displays of the great work that is being done there. We did have a troublesome situation there the other day, we had a student run out of the building in the pouring rain, they parked themselves in the middle of the road at the blind spot in the road. Staff were there who called the police for support and then staff had to do a restraint in someone's yard. They came up to this building for a screening. The student and teachers all had a very long day, but they were all back in the building the next day and just kept up the good work. It is hard to see what but great to see that even when kids are struggling, they have a place to go where there is no judgement just support. Matt wanted to share this story to talk about the reality of what some staff have to deal with on a daily basis.
- Elaine Carpenter wanted to mention a few things – We need to find a dad to run the dad group, it would be great if we could do that! Also wanted to recognize the Flynn in Burlington for working with us and thinks that maybe we could consider them for a partnership award at some point.

Motion made to adjourn by Dan Thompson. Seconded by Jim McMillian. All in Favor.

Meeting adjourn at 7:11 pm

Minutes recorded by: Emily Richards