

**CSB Attendees:** Sidney Hankerson, Sarah Church, Roberto Lewis-Fernandez, Thelma Dye, Pankaj Patel, Stephanie LeMelle, Rosa Gil, Jun Matsuyoshi, Diane Arneth, Ahmed Jamil, Cheryle Hinds-Leslie

**Call to Order: 10:03 AM**

**Welcome and Introductions**

- Dr. Michael McRae, Acting Executive Deputy Commissioner (EDC) of the Division of Mental Hygiene (DMH), welcomed CSB members and announced the departure of the former EDC Dr. Chinazo Cunningham to take on the role of Commissioner for the NYS Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS).
- CSB Chair Dr. Sidney Hankerson led the attendees in an icebreaker, “What is the story of your name?”

**Addressing the Long-Term Impact of COVID-19 on Frontline Workers**

- Teena Brooks, Assistant Director of the Office of Consumer Affairs, and Monika Erős-Sarnyai, Best Practices Specialist from the Behavioral Health Office of Emergency Preparedness and Response provided updates on the work of the frontline workers trauma informed care advisory council, an initiative led by the NYS Office of Mental Health.
- Diane Arneth noted that her staff at Community Health Action of Staten Island experience barriers to long-term mental health supports, including the increased cost of insurance and co-pays, particularly for staff members with commercial insurance. Dr. Stephanie LeMelle recommended that the advisory council take a public health approach in the work, and assess need by identifying individuals and groups with disproportionate barriers to accessing mental health care instead of defining what groups should and shouldn’t be included in the term “frontline workers.” Teena and Monika agreed to take this suggestion back to the advisory council.

**Discussion on Anticipated Behavioral Health Needs and Priorities for 2022**

- Dr. Hankerson led the CSB members in a discussion about anticipated mental hygiene-related concerns and challenges in the service system in 2022, including lessons learned from 2021, populations and communities of greatest need, and areas of work or topics that the CSB should focus on in 2022.
- Ahmed Jamil recommended that the agency focus on addressing the increased need for **behavioral health services among youth**, and continue to involve grassroots organizations, community centers, and places of worship in outreach and service provision. Dr. Rosa Gil agreed and shared that her organization saw 27 child psychiatric admissions with numbers continuing to increase. Dr. Thelma Dye also noted that there are youth in their outpatient setting who need a higher level of care, but are unable to receive care due to the lack of children’s psychiatric beds in city hospitals.
- Diane Arneth cited the concerning increase in substance use, problem drinking, and opioid deaths during the pandemic, and recommended that in addition to **promoting access to substance use treatment and services, identifying substance use problems that are specifically a result of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic** would be important as well.
- Dr. Roberto Lewis-Fernandez acknowledged that telehealth is helpful, particularly during the pandemic, but may exacerbate behavioral health conditions for certain populations. Dr. Lewis-Fernandez recommended that methods be developed for **identifying populations who do not benefit from telehealth**. Dr. Gil also shared that while their Latinx youth clients benefit from telehealth, their parents want to feel more included in their treatment planning with providers. Dr. LeMelle agreed and shared that family meetings via telehealth have been effective, but sessions can be made even more meaningful if social workers, peers, and other supports can be involved.
- Dr. LeMelle recognized the ongoing **workforce shortage** in the service system, and recommended finding ways to promote flexibility and availability of behavioral health staff, and accommodate clients who may be unable to access services during regular business hours. Diane shared that the lowest-paid workers often have the least flexibility in their work hours. Dr. Thelma Dye agreed and recommended that mental health professionals be supported in finding jobs and placements that will allow them to support their families and live on the wages they are paid.

**Additional Business and Wrap Up:**

- Dr. Hankerson reiterated the issues raised, and shared that CSB priorities for 2022 will be finalized during the first meeting in 2022. Dr. Hankerson and Dr. McRae expressed gratitude to DOHMH staff and CSB members for their work and closed the meeting.

**Meeting adjourned: 11:35 AM**

The next meeting will be held from 3:30 – 5:00 PM on Tuesday, March 1, 2022