

**CSB Attendees:** Ahmed Jamil, Louise Cohen, Sidney Hankerson, Stephanie LeMelle, Thelma Dye

**Action items:**

- NYC DOHMH to provide an overview of existing peer and community health worker programs at the next CSB meeting in June 2023.
- DOHMH to consider hosting feedback sessions with social workers to assess their experiences in the behavioral health workforce.
- DOHMH CSB Coordinator to follow up with members via email regarding next steps with the 2023 goals.

**Call to Order: 1:33 PM**

**Welcome Remarks**

- Dr. Sidney Hankerson, the CSB Chairperson, welcomed NYC Community Services Board (CSB) members and attendees to first meeting of the new year. Dr. Hankerson acknowledged the contributions of the former Acting Executive Deputy Commissioner (EDC) of the Division of Mental Hygiene at the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC DOHMH), Dr. Michael McRae, and emphasized that the CSB continues to be an integral component of the DOHMH's work. Dr. Hankerson also introduced Christina Chang, the current Acting EDC, who will lead the Division until the incoming EDC, Deepa Avula, begins her leadership on March 27, 2023.

**DOHMH Updates**

- Christina Chang invited Marnie Davidoff, the Assistant Commissioner for the Bureau of Children, Youth, and Families (CYF), Dr. Jonathan Giftos, the Assistant Commissioner for the Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Use Prevention, Care and Treatment (BADUPCT), and Jamie Neckles, the Assistant Commissioner for the Bureau of Mental Health (BMH) to present on the [Care, Community Action: A Mental Health Plan for NYC](#), the City's new, comprehensive plan for improving the mental health of NYC residents. The plan focuses on three groups of New Yorkers, for which the City sees the greatest need: 1) Children, youth, and families, 2) People with serious mental illness (SMI), and 3) People at risk of drug overdose.
- Marnie Davidoff provided an overview of the City's goals and strategies for children, youth, and family mental health, Jamie Neckles presented on the City's public health approach to supporting people with SMI, and Dr. Jonathan Giftos discussed the City's overdose response and plans to improve the lives of people who use drugs and people with substance use disorders.
  - In response to a question by CSB member, Dr. Stephanie LeMelle, regarding coordinating with the state to centralize access to services that are available within NYC, Jamie Neckles shared that the City is considering expanding on the Single Point of Access (SPOA) referral system that already exists for some mental health services.
  - CSB member, Dr. Thelma Dye, shared that she was impressed by this comprehensive plan. Similarly, CSB member, Louise Cohen, praised the plan's thoughtfulness about the current needs of the community.
  - Louise Cohen also asked a question regarding the relationship of this work to the New York 1115 Medicaid Waiver, and Marnie Davidoff responded that the City hopes that the 1115 Waiver opportunity will allow the City to address social determinants of health and meet New Yorkers' needs more holistically. Christina Chang added that the NYC DOHMH aims to apply to be a Health Equity Regional Organization (HERO) for NYC, and by doing so, the City hopes to further support social needs and promote preventive care of New Yorkers who are covered by Medicaid across the different populations of focus.

**Discussion of Next Steps regarding 2023 Priorities**

- Dr. Sidney Hankerson urged the importance of leveraging the expertise of the CSB members to achieve the Mental Health Plan and the CSB goals. Dr. Hankerson then provided an update on his preliminary meeting with the Director of the NYC Field Office at the NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH) regarding the CSB members' recommendations regarding workforce data. Dr. Hankerson described how the State's Consolidated Fiscal Report (CFR) may provide

insight on workforce attrition in OMH-licensed mental health clinics, and that the data team at the OMH Central Office is currently working on a workforce survey to further assess the state of the behavioral health workforce in New York.

- Dr. Stephanie LeMelle expressed interest in reaching out directly to the OMH data team regarding the workforce survey, and hopes that the survey can shed light on why behavioral health workers are leaving the industry and where they are going instead.
- CSB Coordinator, Kirklyn Escondo, reiterated the five goals developed from the CSB members priorities around Youth Behavioral Health and Workforce, and requested the CSB members' input on ways the NYC DOHMH can support the CSB members on their activities around meeting these goals.
- Dr. Stephanie LeMelle shared that initiatives such as OnTrackNY and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) have developed innovative ways to engage families, and recommended that their best practices and successes be assessed to avoid reinventing the wheel. Dr. LeMelle also observed that one of the biggest challenges for families is the lack of services after hours, especially for families who work during regular business hours.
- Dr. Thelma Dye emphasized that behavioral health staff also want to improve work-life balance, and recommended that the NYC DOHMH speak directly with social workers, who are often at the frontlines of mental health and particularly experiencing burn out. Dr. Dye shared that social workers are leaving the workforce, and even telehealth has not helped retain staff; Dr. Dye emphasized that hearing from the social workers directly would give them an opportunity to feel like they are speaking truth to power.
- Dr. LeMelle shared that organizations need to take time to understand the levels of expertise available among their staff, so that staff are utilized appropriately. Dr. LeMelle stated that the demand for services have grown exponentially but staffing hasn't grown to meet the demand. Dr. LeMelle agreed with direct outreach to frontline staff, including managers.
- Louise Cohen suggested that the behavioral health service system should utilize peers and community health workers as much as possible, and that the NYC DOHMH should consider partnering with CUNY/SUNY to develop apprenticeship programs to create employment pathways for peers. Louise also advocated for building a pipeline for high school students to develop an interest in the behavioral health field.

#### **CSB Input on the 2024-2028 Local Services Plan**

- Kirklyn Escondo provided a brief overview of the Local Services Plan (LSP), and requested CSB member input on high unmet need in the categories prescribed by the State to be considered for the upcoming 2024-2028 LSP.
- Dr. Stephanie LeMelle shared that among the state-prescribed categories, the needs of refugees and immigrants seems like a particularly acute problem. The NYC crisis system is being inundated due to the influx of refugees, who are in critical need of not only mental health services but housing, nutrition, and medical care.
- Dr. Thelma Dye suggested that Workforce continue to remain a priority, and that the behavioral health system will be unable to recover without the workforce. Dr. Sidney Hankerson agreed that the behavioral health workforce is being stretched and continues to be a critical issue.
- In response to a question by Dr. LeMelle, Marnie Davidoff and Jamie Neckles described additional opportunities and initiatives that aim to develop the peer workforce, including training programs and placement support.
- Regarding Youth Behavioral Health, CSB member, Ahmed Jamil, elevated the importance of developing relationships between City agencies, youth centers, and education institutions to ensure that the youth are supported through the many challenges they experience.

#### **Additional Comments & Wrap Up**

- Dr. Hankerson provided a recap on the discussion, invited the NYC DOHMH to provide an overview of existing peer and community health worker programs at the next CSB meeting in June 2023, and adjourned the meeting.

**Meeting adjourned: 3:02 PM**