

Action Items for DOHMH:

- CSB members to receive 1) press release and full report of DOHMH data on the impact of COVID on the mental health of New Yorkers and 2) NYC RPC telehealth recommendations to the State (attached).
- CSB members who have questions about telehealth related updates to email CSBNYC@health.nyc.gov.

Call to Order: 12:06 PM

Welcome and Introductions:

- Dr. Hillary Kunins and Co-chair Gail Nayowith welcomed the Community Service Board members.

Update on the DOHMH Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic:

- Dr. Kunins provided brief updates on DOHMH leadership changes, including the appointment of Dr. Dave Chokshi as Commissioner of Health, and pandemic-related DOHMH activities including the following:
 - Launched the COVID19 Community Conversations (3C), where participants learn about COVID-19's impact on mental health, health disparities in communities of color, the effects of trauma, grief, and anxiety, and coping skills and mental health resources available in NYC.
 - Beginning the second phase of the FEMA Project Hope grant to provide crisis counseling to New Yorkers affected by COVID-19.
 - Launched a suicide prevention campaign in September 2020 for suicide awareness month.
 - Launched series of financial sustainability webinars with the Consulting group CCSI, for DOHMH contracted and other NYC behavioral health providers.
 - Offering technical assistance on financial sustainability to a few DOHMH contracted providers.
 - Offering behavioral health parity training for providers and consumers, which includes an overview of behavioral parity laws, identifying parity red flags, processes for appeals, and parity resources.
 - Offering webinars on the importance of flu vaccination and a webinar from the Small Business Services Workforce that connects providers to staffing resources.

CSB Subcommittee Updates:

- **Dr. Myla Harrison, representing the Mental Health subcommittee:** the most recent subcommittee meeting took place on September 15, 2020 and the group discussed how the MH system has difficulty retaining staff that are trained to do high-quality work in the public sector. For example, many clinicians earn their clinical hours toward their LCSW and then leave their clinics for higher salaries and better benefits in private practice or hospital settings; Opportunity may lie in using a pro bono legal-type model that includes provision of free or low cost services as part of licensure/continuing education requirements.
 - Thelma Dye commented that in her experience, social workers who accept lower wages are often of color and are often the first in their families to obtain a graduate degree; they are willing to accept lower wages because they consider health insurance more important than competitive wages.
 - Dr. Harrison also shared details of the New York Racial Equity & Mental Health Conference Series, a webinar developed by the NYS Office of Mental Health & the NYC DOHMH that discusses the urgent need for racial equity and antiracist work in the field of mental health.
- **Gail Goldstein, representing the Substance Misuse subcommittee:** the next subcommittee meeting will take place the following day, on September 23, 2020.
- **Dr. Janice Chisholm, representing the Developmental Disabilities and LGBTQ subcommittees:** the next DD subcommittee meeting will take place on September 28, 2020. The last LGBTQ subcommittee meeting took place on June 29, 2020, and subcommittee members discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic specifically on the LGBTQ community.

- **Dr. Michael McRae, representing the Criminal Justice subcommittee:** while the Criminal Justice subcommittee has not yet met this quarter, efforts are ongoing in DOHMH to promote mental health services for justice-impacted populations.

Update on Local Services Plan and Action Items from the CSB Member Recommendations:

- Kirklyn Escondo reviewed the CSB member recommendations incorporated into the Local Services Plan, including the emphasis on Racial Equity, and shared that the members' recommendation directly led to the formation of a Racial Equity Subcommittee in the State Mental Health Planning Committee, and discussion is ongoing regarding the inclusion of Racial Equity as a permanent Issue Area in future LSP guidance.

Telehealth Expansion During the Pandemic:

- Gail Nayowith and Dr. Kunins asked CSB members to share experiences with innovative strategies for providing care during the pandemic, including best practices and challenges related to telehealth:
 - Cheryelle Cruishank shared that while in-person contact is the gold standard for providing treatment, particularly for clients with disabilities, telehealth has been instrumental in resuming service delivery. Due to needs regarding access to technology, Ms. Cruikshank's organization has provided tablets and offered technical support for clients to ensure contact. Finally, she acknowledged that telehealth has allowed service providers to experience the nuances of family dynamics that were not made clear before.
 - Thelma Dye shared that telehealth has allowed for service delivery without the need for travel, and has made clients feel safer. As a result, the client no-show rate has dropped. Moreover, the new modality of treatment has been generally popular with families but activities like play therapy has been difficult to adapt virtually. Northside is assessing the effectiveness of permanently using telehealth as an option for service provision.
 - Several other CSB members also shared a number of challenges for the implementation of telehealth: Families often don't have access to appropriate devices for receiving virtual services, and many older adults don't have the technological literacy to fully experience what telehealth can offer. For families with several children, there may not be enough devices to meet the needs of each child. Some clients also do not have access to Wi-Fi. Despite the gamut of obstacles, several members agreed that overall, both providers and clients have shared positive feedback after telehealth services, and have expressed interest in continuing utilization of telehealth in the future.
- Yoshi Pinnaduwa shared a number of updates on telehealth, including recommendations to the State from DOHMH and the NYC Regional Planning Consortium on retaining telehealth flexibilities, an update on the new NYS telehealth bill that added telephonic only care to the NYS definition of telehealth, and OMH and OASAS guidance to providers on permanently adding telehealth services as an option for service provision.

Presentation on the FEMA Crisis Counseling Program:

- Susan Elgendy provided a high-level overview of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP), which, once awarded, will fund mental health assistance and training during major disasters such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additional Comments and Wrap Up:

- Gail Nayowith closed the meeting by sharing news of the DOHMH press release on newly published data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of New Yorkers. Dr. Myla Harrison shared some highlights from the research, including high rates of depression and anxiety among adults in New York City, as well as evidence for the negative impact of the pandemic on the mental health of children.

Meeting adjourned: 1:26 PM

The next meeting will be held from 1:00pm – 2:30pm on Thursday, December 10, 2020.