

## ***MINUTES***

### **New Hampshire State Commission on Aging Monday, January 13, 2020 10:00 a.m.-noon 205 Legislative Office Building, Concord**

**Present:** Rep. Polly Campion, Chair; Ken Berlin, Vice Chair; Roberta Berner, Clerk; Rep. James MacKay; Wendi Aultman, DHHS; Patrick Herlihy, DOT; Susan Buxton, Long-Term Care Ombudsman; Sunny Mulligan Shea, DOJ; Lynn Lippitt, NH Housing Finance Authority; Janet Weeks, DOL; Perry Plummer, DOS; Appointed by the Governor: Rep. Harry Viens, Daniel Marcek, Carol Stamatakis, Susan Abrami, Kristi St. Laurent, Marianne Jackson for Susan Ruka, Mark Frank, Rev. Susan Nolan, Suzanne Demers and Kathy Baldrige.

**Absent:** Sen. Ruth Ward; Richard Lavers, DES; John Kennedy, Pamela Jolivette, Susan Emerson.

**Guests:** 16 members of the public.

#### **I. Welcome and Introductions**

Chair Polly Campion welcomed the Commission and guests and asked that Commission members introduce themselves and provide brief updates.

- Rep. MacKay mentioned an upcoming briefing about the 10-year Mental Health Plan.
- Wendi Aultman announced that Lori Shibinette has been nominated as the next Commissioner of the NH Department of Health and Human Services (NH-DHHS), contingent upon Governor and Executive Council approval at an upcoming G & C meeting. Ms. Shibinette is currently serving as the Chief Executive Officer of New Hampshire Hospital. She previously served as a Deputy Commissioner at the NH-DHHS. Prior to State service, she served as the CEO of the Merrimack County Nursing Home and as the Nursing Home's Director of Clinical Services.
- Lynn Lippitt discussed proposed prescription drug legislation.
- Ken Berlin circulated information about NH Works' Mature Worker Program.

#### **II. Approve Minutes of December 16, 2019**

Rep. MacKay made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Susan Abrami seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chair Campion reminded Commission members that the statutory language establishing the Commission states that if a member misses three meetings in a year, the Commission may vote to replace that member. Ken Berlin added that this would be three unexcused absences.

#### **III. Provide Update Regarding Executive Director**

Chair Campion announced that Rebecca Sky has been offered and has accepted the position of Executive Director of the State Commission on Aging. Ms. Sky, who was in attendance, was introduced. She will begin the new position on January 31, 2020 and will have an office in the Doloff Building in the State Office

Park in Concord. Chair Campion said that Commission members were impressed with her energy, depth of skill and experience, including experience with organizational start-ups. She will be coming to the Commission after 14 years with the Foundation for Healthy Communities working on a wide variety of projects.

Wendi Aultman asked if the Commission would issue a formal announcement about the appointment, and Chair Campion said that there would be such an announcement. Rev. Susan Nolan asked for more information about the new Executive Director for those who had been unable to attend the December meeting at which the Commission met candidates and received their resumes.

#### **IV. Ten-Year Mental Health Plan**

Julianne Carbin, Director of the NH-DHHS Bureau of Mental Health, provided an overview of the Ten-Year Mental Health Plan, including elements that relate to older adults.

The plan came out of legislation passed in 2017 authorizing its development. After a year of work, including assistance from consultants from Antioch University, holding stakeholder meetings, creating work groups and developing drafts for review, the plan was published in January 2019. Ms. Carbin explained that the values and principles driving the work included attention to issues of access and equity and a focus on solutions regarding improvements to New Hampshire's mental health system. Fourteen recommendations are set forth in the plan, and several were funded through last year's state budget process.

Rep. MacKay suggested that Commission members at least read the first eight pages of the 50-page plan. He noted that it is intended to be a living document. He was chair of the last 10-year plan (2008) and that this is the fourth 10-year plan that he has seen—and “by far, the best.” Chair Campion said that she had understood that the prior 10-year plan was excellent, but that its recommendations were not funded adequately. Rep. MacKay agreed, adding that it was adopted during the height of the recession. He said over the past decades, we have seen New Hampshire's mental health system go from being one of the best in the country to one of the worst.

Ms. Carbin addressed the Plan's recommendations and progress to date as well as their relationship to older adults:

- The Medicaid reimbursement rate was identified as quite low (a 3.1% annual increase was approved in SFY19).
- The plan addressed emergency department wait-times as a significant concern.
- Development of appropriate space for children in need of mental health care was an identified need.
- Expansion of mobile crisis teams was also identified as a need.

- Suicide rates were identified as a concern. A group of special concern is individuals over age 65, particularly men who tend to use firearms in committing suicide. The plan discussed the need for prevention strategies, including hotline support.
- Education about mental health issues needs to be enhanced and expanded. Isolation and loneliness are real concerns for individuals with mental health issues (and these are concerns across the age spectrum).
- While there are 10 regions within New Hampshire's mental health delivery network, the plan indicates that regional delivery needs to be enhanced with some additional centralization (a portal/hub), possibly with a one-call approach.
- Community support needs to be expanded, particularly step-up and step-down housing options.
- Peer and natural supports should be better integrated within the existing system.
- The plan recommended the establishment of a commission to address criminal justice and mental health.
- Prevention and early intervention need more attention.
- Workforce coordination is a priority, with mental health training available across the workforce spectrum.
- The Plan also prioritizes quality improvement and monitoring of services.

Commission members brought up the following points and questions:

- Mark Frank noted the role of faith-based organizations and other community services and suggested that mental health education efforts be extended to them. He also said that he thought veterans and their families should have had more attention in the plan.
- Carol Stamatakis asked if there was already an adequate geri-psych infrastructure in place in the state with the problem being inadequate workforce to staff the existing structure. Wendi Aultman responded that there are gaps within the system as well as workforce issues, with few long-term care facilities having the capacity to handle the need. Chair Campion asked Wendi Aultman to report back about the gaps in workforce and infrastructure.
- Marianne Jackson asked about the potential for tele-medicine to fill some of the gaps. Ms. Carbin noted that the Department has an RFI out right now regarding options for crisis intervention (including mobile teams). Rep. MacKay said that in the process of implementing the plan, major problems are emerging including huge discrepancies between resources available in urban and rural areas. He added that right now there are 200 vacancies for licensed professional therapists and that low salaries have been an impediment to recruitment.
- Chair Campion noted that legislation was passed last year requiring continuing education in dementia for direct care staff in residential facilities and community-based settings. She added that more legislation

had been passed in 2019 to expand access to tele-health for individuals within their own homes.

- Lynn Lippitt mentioned that the DHHS Referral, Education, Assistance and Prevention Program (REAP) has counselors available for older adults to provide up to five sessions within the home. However, REAP counseling is not intended to deal with crisis intervention.
- Suzanne Demers added that she has seen that older adults in mental health crisis can be very difficult to place, but noted that Cottage Hospital in Haverhill has opened a geri-psych unit, Ray of Hope, that offers an option.
- Roberta Berner asked for more data regarding suicide rates of older adults. Ms. Carbin said that she would send the information for distribution to Commission members. Rep. MacKay said that two populations of specific concern are older adult men and individuals in late adolescence through early adulthood.

## **V. Public Comment**

Roger Vachon, retired from the Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services and active within EngAGING NH, spoke about the history and intent of the Joseph D. Vaughan Awards, presented by the former State Committee on Aging to a volunteer or volunteer couple from each county for meritorious achievement on behalf of older adults. The Vaughan Award has been presented annually since 1962. Mr. Vachon has taken on major responsibility for the award process for the past 10 years, since EngAGING NH became co-sponsor of the awards. He distributed information about the award and necessary process if the Commission on Aging wishes to continue a similar program. He offered to help out with the process this year, if the Commission were to continue an award program.

Carol Stamatakis made a motion that the Commission take on the responsibility of recognizing older adult volunteers in coordination with EngAGING NH this year. Rev. Nolan seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Vachon noted that his costs to coordinate the program have been approximately \$250 per year. Wendi Aultman said that BEAS could cover the cost this year. Ken Berlin made a motion to accept this offer; Patrick Herlihy seconded the motion; the motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Vachon will check on the availability of the Executive Council Chamber for a May presentation, in alignment with Older Americans Month, and will get back in touch with the Commission regarding potential dates (including the date of the Commission's May meeting).

Chair Campion asked for volunteers to form a committee to work on the program. Ken Berlin, Sunny Mulligan Shea, and Dan Marcek volunteered.

**VI. Other**

Chair Campion suggested that the February meeting of the Commission include a legislative update. She asked the Alliance for Healthy Aging's advocacy committee to share a report regarding state legislation affecting older adults. Carol Stamatakis suggested that the Commission create a legislative committee.

**VII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m. upon motion by Ken Berlin, seconded by Patrick Herlihy, and approved unanimously by Commission members.

Next meeting: Monday, February 10, 2020, 10:00 a.m.-noon, LOB 205