



Avery & Watauga Counties Bridging Local Partnerships Meeting Notes
February 22, 2021
10am via Microsoft Teams

Board Member Attendees: Rick French, Billy Kennedy

DSS Attendees: Chad Slagle, CPS Supervisor Watauga County; Tom Hughes, DSS Director Watauga County; Raquel Jennings, CPS Supervisor Avery County

Daymark Attendees: Billy West, Sarah Dunagan

Youth Villages Attendees: George Edmonds

Vaya Attendees: Brian Shuping, Brian Ingraham, Donald Reuss, Sara Wilson, Jesse Smathers

Scribe: Jesse Smathers

Brian Ingraham shared that Standard Plans are supposed to go live on July 1, 2021, and there may be some bumps in the road because of the large lift.

Vaya submitted 2600 pages in response to the Tailored Plan RFA. Selection by NCDHHS should be complete by June 11, 2020, with target go live date of July 1, 2022. Tailored Plan will serve moderate to severe mental illness and intellectual developmental disabilities.

Goal today is to follow up on the previous Bridging Local Partnerships meetings and determine how Vaya and the Departments of Social Services in our area can partner more effectively.

PowerPoint Presentation shared by Vaya:



DSS
Presentation_Avery_W

Sara Wilson shared information about the five counties where Vaya currently has embedded care management in DSS offices. 5 additional counties have shared an interest in embedding care management and Vaya is working closely with them on logistics. Option of embedding care management with Watauga and Avery is available. Sara Wilson spoke of the value she experienced when she was embedded as a care manager for Smoky Mountain Center in the Jackson County DSS.

Sara Wilson provided an overview complex care management from health risk assessment to interdisciplinary team huddles. She shared detailed information about the multi-source medication list and how it is used, shared case staffing for case specific and system level interventions (tends to result in fewer emergency placement issues), resource guide for DSS, and suggested maintaining regular meetings with leadership of Vaya and

Chad feels that communication between Watauga and Vaya is working well. The biggest issue is appropriate therapeutic placements. More situations where DSS is taking custody. Much of the population is transient so there is more demand on the system due to less kinship options. Chad states

that DSS is making decision on minutes and hours and the MH system seems to be making decisions in days and weeks. Tom Hughes indicates that there is more need for action than planning because they do not often have time for planning. There are approximately 80 kids in foster care in Watauga County. The county has 34 foster homes. About a quarter of the kids in DSS custody need therapeutic care or higher. Challenges are causing, in some cases, more harm than good. The number of emergency placement issues are low but a strain on resources where even a small number of kids in crisis negatively impacts the other kids in care because of the way it pulls staff from other responsibilities.

Sara Wilson shared that Vaya also experiences the strain on resources in these situations and encouraged when possible to partner together, along with our providers to address difficult situations when rumblings are noticed. Chad and Tom made it clear that the greatest challenge tends to be the kids where custody is taken suddenly without any warning.

Raquel Jennings with Avery DSS reiterated the challenges shared by Tom Hughes and Chad Slagle.

Billy West with Daymark can complete telehealth assessments any time. Challenges moving kids out of crisis facilities. Facility-based in Asheville which is often at capacity. Another child facility is coming online in the Sandhills area Behavioral Health Urgent Care in Winston Salem for assessing kids in the urgent situations. The challenges exist in the 30 counties where Daymark works.

Chad Slagle points out that delays in the court system could be impacting capacity.

Donald Reuss reviewed additional challenges created due to pandemic and shared our efforts relieve the pressure created by the pandemic.

Walk-in center, telehealth assessments, and single point assessments at DSS offices. Average referral to assessment is 17 days. 47% are completed within 7 days. The average is high because of no-show or rescheduling. Reviewed community-based continuum of care. Provided treatment services data for Avery and Watauga. Provided information about Equine Assisted Therapy. Provided additional information about available crisis services. Expansion of Eliada Assessment Center. 20 beds through the Nucleus Project. TFC-ASD homes, Treatment Foster Care – Oregon (Oregon has eliminated institutional care for children), Cherokee 1 Home Pilot (wrapped foster care homes), Residential Transitional Programs for youth transitioning to adulthood,

Chad Slagle indicated that he does not believe TFC homes are not getting the necessary training. Requests that we push for more training for people coming to TFC settings. Most TFCs have a standard license but will not accept a TFC kid until all the paperwork is in order. In Cherokee County we have contracted with them to pay a level 1 foster care rate to create additional support for the family

Brain Shuping shared information about accessing grants: Health Transitions, High Fidelity Wrap-Around

Tom Hughes reports that he lacks the resource to expand in anyway. Donald acknowledged challenge and suggested ways the service could reduce stress on the DSS.

Brain Shuping shared information about the System of Care grant.

Sara Wilson – moving forward together

Action Items

Training for TFC- Vaya will support the message and plans for more training for the TFC families.

Private pay licensing rate- Vaya will work with TFC providers to ensure they are open to being paid private licensed rate to allow child to utilize available beds while awaiting the administrative paperwork to be completed, allowing DSS to be reimbursed once authorization is complete.

Check-in meetings (thoughts about structured time on a recurring basis)

Tom Hughes suggested a quarterly meeting for Watauga. Quarterly leadership meeting. Accountability meeting.

Raquel Jennings agreed and was open to staffing meetings monthly. Sara will have Zack Shepherd reach out to Raquel Jennings to coordinate staffings.

Jesse Smathers will create recurring quarterly meeting, coordinating with DSS and Vaya to ensure the right attendees.

Provider representatives expressed gratitude for being included in the meeting.

Brian Ingraham closed the meeting with gratitude for everyone's interest in moving forward.