RSA 126-A:13
Health and Human Services Oversight Committee
March 22, 2019
LOB 205

Present: Representatives Weber, Campion, MacKay, McMahon; Senator Rosenwald
Absent: Representative Nordgren; Senators Fuller-Clark and Bradley

The meeting was called to order by Rep. Weber at 10:06 AM.

1. Review of Minutes

The committee reviewed the minutes of the February 22, 2019 minutes. Rep. MacKay moved that the minutes be approved and was seconded by Rep. McMahon. The minutes were approved.

2. Subcommittee Update; Rep. Weber

Rep. Weber informed the committee that Rep. Pearson had withdrawn his request for the creation of a subcommittee on Environmentally-Triggered Chronic Illness, which he proposed at the February meeting. The House passed HB 736, reestablishing the commission to study environmentally-triggered chronic illness, and he will pursue his purpose by requesting that a subcommittee of that study commission be formed.

3. Therapeutic Use of Cannabis Advisory Council; Rep. Jim MacKay and Michael Holt, Division of Public Health Services.

Rep. MacKay explained that the statute governing the therapeutic cannabis program required that the Therapeutic Use of Cannabis Advisory Council issue an opinion on whether the program should continue after its first five years, or not. The advisory council met in December and issued an opinion that the program should continue. The advisory council will next meet at the call of the chair, but meetings are not regularly scheduled.

Mr. Holt shared an annual data report on the program and reviewed it with the committee. A medical advisory board is being organized to make recommendations to the legislature regarding qualifying conditions. While that board begins its work, bills on that topic currently before the legislature have been retained in committee.

Rep. McMahon asked if there was a way to require that recommendations be vetted by the advisory board before coming to the legislature. Mr. Holt explained that there was nothing the Department could do to limit what bills are filed. Rep. Weber suggested that legislators could defer to the recommendations of the advisory board, as they often do with the recommendations of the Newborn Screening Advisory Committee. Rep. McMahon asked if a member of the public who wanted to add a qualifying condition to the program could contact the advisory board. Mr. Holt said they could – there will be a public hearing process.

Rep. Weber asked about progress on opening satellite Alternative Treatment Centers (ATCs) authorized by legislation last year. Mr. Holt explained that the satellite ATC in Conway could be open as soon as May. The one in Keene isn't as far along in the process but could potentially be open as soon as June.

4. Permanent Commission on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury Annual Report; Margaret LaBrecque, Commandant, NH Veterans Home and Colonel Richard Oberman

Commandant LaBrecque presented the commission's annual report. She has taken over as chair of the commission due to Col. Oberman's departure to attend the Naval War College. The commission has completed data collection from its second survey. The lead data analyst resigned prior to a review of the data, but a subcommittee has been assembled to sift the data and prepare a report.

Col. Oberman explained that state funding ran out in 2017 for liasons in the community mental health centers who provided training on military culture, inquiring about patients' veteran status, available veterans benefits and data collection. The commission is looking for data on barriers to care and how to remedy them. Currently a $250,000 grant application though the National Guard is being developed to continue that work. Rep. Campion asked if the commission applied for the funds which ran out in 2017, and Comm. LaBrecque explained that the commission advocated for them. Rep. McMahon asked if the commission needed a line item in the state budget to get a federal match and Col. Oberman explained that the grant was for federal funds which didn't require a state match.

Rep. MacKay asked how the issues examined by the commission fit with DHHS's ten-year mental health plan. Comm. LaBrecque explained that the commission liaises with the Department through Amy Cook at the Bureau of Community Based Military Programs. Rep. Campion asked about funding through the SAMHSA grant, and Comm. LaBrecque said she would have Amy Cook get in contact. Rep. Weber asked that Amy Cook be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

5. Newborn Screening Advisory Committee Annual Report; Tricia Tilley, Deputy Director, Division of Public Health Services

Deputy Director Tilley reviewed the annual report for the committee.

Senator Rosenwald asked why an RFP for a data system to collect surveillance data on Critical Congenital Heart Disorder (CCHD), which was authorized in 2016, will not be issued until this summer. Ms. Tilley replied that while hospitals have been testing for CCHD since it was added to the required panel in 2016, it has taken the Department a great deal of time to work with hospitals to develop a data system that integrates with their existing IT infrastructure. In the meantime the Department has been piloting data collection on CCHD with midwives at birth centers.

Rep. McMahon noted the concerns about water contamination by PFOA raised in connection with the pediatric cancer cluster on the Seacoast and asked if the newborn screening panel would be able to detect a link between environmental toxins and health impacts on children. Ms. Tilley offered the example of the collaboration between the Division of Public Health Services and Dartmouth on a study of how arsenic was metabolized, as a previous partnership on an environmental health issue. She explained it would be difficult to use the screening panel to evaluate correlations around pediatric cancer in part because samples were destroyed after six months to preserve privacy, unless there was parental permission or a

clinical purpose to retain them. As the science on PFOAs develops it is possible that the screening panel could serve as a data resource.

6. DHHS Commissioner's Update and Dashboard Report; Deputy Commissioner Thomas Pristow and Legislative Director John Williams

Deputy Commissioner Pristow reviewed the Commissioner's Update and Dashboard Report with the committee.

Rep. MacKay referenced a statement by the Governor that he was committing to funding 75% of the ten-year mental health plan, and asked for clarification on what that meant. Mr. Pristow replied that the details of implementing the ten-year plan hadn't been fully worked out, but the legislature would be fully briefed when they were.

Senator Rosenwald asked why, in the report summarizing the number of clients served through the SUD referral hubs (Doorways), only six clients had been served by the Doorway at Granite Pathways in Nashua in January. Other Doorways in the state have served double digits, and Manchester served 189. Was something going wrong in Nashua? Mr. Pristow responded that it was too early to tell, as the system is still being stood up. If numbers were still low this summer that would be an indication that there may be a need to further evaluate what is taking place in Nashua.

Rep. Campion asked about callers to 211, and if they were often being bumped to operators out of state who were not familiar with NH programs. She has heard reports of suicidal callers being sent to operators in Texas or Nebraska. Mr. Williams offered that there were high level discussions taking place about an appropriation for resources to remedy that problem. Mr. Pristow explained that in the future overflow calls should go to a second, in-state site.

Rep. Weber observed that information on the Doorways and how to get help through them is not easily available online, and that when she was able to find a website for one it only had a street address and no telephone number listed. Mr. Pristow explained that the program was still being stood up and that there should be some patience until July or August before concluding there is a problem.

Rep. McMahon asked if there were enough spokes connected to each hub to conduct the planned education campaign. Mr. Pristow said there were, and that he would have more information on that at the April meeting.

Rep. MacKay asked if workforce issues were creating problems for the expansion of the SUD treatment. Mr. Pristow responded that the Governor had just issued executive orders to address workforce concerns. The adolescent treatment center at the Sununu Youth Services Center was off to a slow start. Recruitment has not been an issue, rather the continuing high turnover rates at The Division of Children, Youth and Family have slowed things down. Rep. MacKay noted that the Community Mental Health Centers say they have more than 200 positions vacant, and that that should be a high priority for the Department.

Senator Rosenwald asked for information on State Opioid Response grants, Medicaid Managed Care Organization grants, capitation rate comparisons of the current fiscal year and next – the differences in the new contract and the commercial rates for the expansion population. Mr. Williams said the Department would provide that information.

Rep. Campion asked about the LTSS contract for $750,000 with Navigant that went before the Governor and Council last week. Concerns had been raised to her that it was unwise to have a company involved in developing the Managed Care Organization model, prior to HB 1816 (2018) putting a stop to it, now being chosen to implement an alternative approach. Mr. Pristow said he would bring more information about it at the next meeting.

Rep. Campion asked about an increase in the rate of pay for direct service providers in relation to the developmental disability waitlist. Mr. Williams indicated that pay rates were built into the budget process, and Mr. Pristow said he would bring information to the next meeting.

7. Tuition Waiver for Children in State Foster Care or Guardianship; Robert Rodler, Administrator, Division of Children, Youth and Families

Mr. Rodler reviewed the Tuitiion Waiver report with the committee. Rep. Weber asked if there were 20 slots per year for each year of a four year USNH degree program, and Mr. Rodler clarified that there were 20 USNH slots total, and they were distributed to prioritize individuals who were currently in programs.

Mr. Rodler noted the greater instability in waiver recipients attending a CCSNH program, with relatively few reaching graduation. The Department is talking with schools about specifically connecting waiver recipients with on campus services and supports, and pairing current waiver recipients with new waiver recipients for support.

Rep. MacKay asked what areas the waiver recipients were studying, and commented that the State had a social service workforce shortage. Mr. Rodler replied that the Division doesn't try to influence what students study, but that often students gravitate toward social service careers due to their childhood experiences. Rep. MacKay commented that that was very positive.

8. Adjournment

Rep. Weber adjourned the meeting at 12:03 PM. The next meeting will be held on April 19th at 10 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Rep. Polly Campion,
Grafton District 12