Health and Human Services Oversight Committee
Regular Meeting--Minutes
Friday, January 26, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.
Legislative Office Building Room 203

Present: Sen. Rosenwald, Reps. Pearson, Merchant and Weber

Ch. Pearson opened the meeting by noting that weather conditions had made travel particularly difficult.

A quorum not being present, the minutes were not acted upon. (Note that the minutes were revisited at the end of the meeting once a quorum was achieved.)

DHHS Commissioner Update: Commissioner Lori Weaver introduced Justin M. Looser, new Chief Executive Officer, Hampstead Hospital & Residential Treatment Facility, who started in the job last Tuesday. He came to the position from Hospital Corporation of America, where his focus was on behavioral health services, especially for children. He has been liaising with the community mental health centers. His goal is ensuring the hospital is a safe place for kids and moving towards being a center of excellence. He praised the motivation of the staff to do this work. Finally, he expressed the goal of reducing emergency room wait times for children.

Ch. Pearson asked about his relationship with the contracted staff. Mr. Looser said his role was to oversee the contract and establish the vision, including day to day oversight and creating team unity. The current contract is up for renewal July 1. At least three organizations have expressed an interest, so a team will review the proposals.

The number of incidents of exclusion or restraint have been steadily declining, with the 4th quarter having the least number of incidents and emergency calls. More training in de-escalation is being rolled out for all staff.

Sen. Rosenwald asked about a request for proposal that was called back. At the time, the expectation was that the current provider would remain. On further review, some of the models were not working, so they pulled back to review what the exact needs would be.

Sen. Rosenwald said there are 11 children waiting as of today. When are the hospital's 19 renovation beds going to be ready, and will there be enough staff available for them? The dropped ceilings are being removed and the work is being done as soon as possible. Currently the hospital has 51 patients, 93% pof capacity and the highest number in two years. The costs have been reasonable so far, under $67,000 for considerable work. They are working nights and weekends. Certain leadership positions still need to be filled. They will go to the Fiscal committee if necessary to finish the work.

Rep. Merchant asked about reporting going forward. Reporting can be as often as the committee required. They are putting metrics in place, with management structure and monthly unit reports on use of seclusion and restraints. They also want to measure employee engagement and patient satisfaction, both of which are currently high. The number of patients in ER waiting rooms had

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gone from 36 to an average of 14, but was in single digits last week. Rep. Merchant said a list of metrics with a baseline would be helpful going forward, and asked to have these for the committee.

Sen Rosenwald asked about the percentage of Medicaid patients. 75-80% of the patients are on Medicaid.

Maternal Mortality Report - Carolyn Nyamasege, MPH, PhD, Maternal and Child Health Section Epidemiologist; and Carol Whitman, RN, MS, BA, Maternal and Child Health Section Nurse, Perinatal Coordinator/Maternal Mortality Review Committee Coordinator/Co-Abstractor, New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services.

Rep. MacDonald arrived at the start of this report, having been delayed by vehicle accident tie-ups on the interstate.

The annual report waws presented and reviewed. They look at reasons for perinatal death and make informed determinations of preventability. Dr. Nyamasege has been looking at NH death certificates and the causes. The most common cause was substance use overdose. Second was cardiovascular issues. The expanded Medicaid postpartum coverage will help as most deaths are 3 months to a year postpartum. They are working to improve the vital records to identify data needed to understand pregnancy status.

Work continues on addressing substance use disorder. Hospitals do screenings before and after birth. They are looking for additional grant funding for safety bundles at all birthing locations. "Safety bundles" are actionable steps that can be adapted to the facility and resources. There is a substance use disorder bundle, and a perinatal bundle has been rolled out.

Sen. Rosenwald asked about the correlation between the substance use disorder and mental health issues, which are shown in Table 7 as being as prevalent. There seems to be no corresponding attention to mental health conditions. Answer: The overdoses correlate with mental health conditions. In Oct of 2023, a safety bundle on mental health screening, treatment and intervention. was rolled out.

HB 2 Chapter 79:412 Laws of 2023, Medicaid Enhancement for Children and Pregnant Women Quarterly Report – Henry D. Lipman, FACHE, Medicaid Director, Division of Medicaid Services, New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services.

The expansion of postpartum coverage is being rolled out; the plan was submitted August 14th, and the plan was approved retroactive to October 1. There are still not statistics generated on the implementation. It will take some time to see if maternal morbidity and mortality changes.

With respect to the 2021 legislation on maternal home visiting program, there will be utilization statistics available next quarter.

With respect to The Unwind of Medicaid authorized during COVID, the packet handed out compares pre- and post-pandemic numbers. As of Monday, there were 182,000 enrolled. The

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numbers were increased some by the enactment of the enhanced postpartum benefit and the extension of benefits to legally resident mothers and children, SB 2 system of care enhancements also contribute to the increase. Mr. Lipman walked the committee through the slides in the report.

There are fewer children enrolled in 2022 than 2018. NH has the 5th highest eligibility for enrollment. Overall, 47% of cases closed due to income ineligibility. 28% closed due to lack of complete paperwork. Notable that ACA coverage has increased by 19%, as income levels increase. There was a campaign to make it clear to the public that children may be eligible for coverage even when the parents are not.

In response to a question by Rep. Merchant, on page 15 the income levels are not different for parents and children, it is the qualification levels that are different. In response to a question for Rep. Pearson, Mr. Lipman agreed that both the extension of postpartum benefits and the adult dental benefit have had an effect both compassionately and fiscally.

Rep. MacDonald asked if some of the inquiry can be done ex parte when we have enough information already to make the determination to eliminate the need for additional paperwork. The risk of people slipping by is pretty minimal.

Sen. Rosenwald asked why the number of children with disabilities is down 18% when the number of children is down only 4%. The answer was that most of the decrease was people aging out. This may also be an effect of the improving economy.

The slides on dental benefit utilization were reviewed. There was a high of 3000 appointments in November. The decline in December seems to be due to the availability of fewer appointments around the holidays. There are now 158 unique providers. The state is still using multiple mobile clinics. We are well above the national average on applying sealants for children.

Rep. Pearson asked about incentives for new providers. There is a loan repayment plan for both dentists and hygienists. Delta has a $1000 signing bonus which may have expired. They have also enhanced fees for certain undervalued procedures.

Rep. Merchant inquired about the lack of mobile clinics in Sullivan County. It may be because of a lack of sites that can accommodate the relatively large vehicle plus the necessary connections.

HB 2 Chapter 79:532 Laws of 2023, Public Awareness Campaign on Brain Health, Alzheimer's Disease, and Related Dementias Quarterly Report – Wendi Aultman, Bureau Chief, Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services, New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services; and Jessica Eskeland, Senior Public Policy Manager, Alzheimer's Association, MA/NH Chapter.

We are in Phase 2 of the development of the campaign. An RFP has been developed and is in the procurement process. The proposals will be reviewed in February.

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The Alzheimer's subcommittee has met twice and will meet again on January 31st. There will be a presentation on outreach from the Alzheimer's Association, with a snapshot of the state and trends. In February there will be a presentation of the geriatrician's perspective. They will update the state plan on Alzheimer's and other dementias. Rep. Pearson requested that the other dementias not be neglected.

A quorum having been achieved, the December minutes were moved, seconded and accepted by a vote of 4 yes and 1 abstention.

Respectfully submitted,

Rep. Lucy Weber.

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