

ST. CLAIR COUNTY COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH  
3111 Electric Avenue  
Port Huron, Michigan 48060

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GROUP MEETING: Advisory Council  
PLACE: St. Clair County CMH – Summit  
DATE: December 11, 2024  
TIME: 12:00 p.m.  
PRESIDING: Martha Partipilo, Advisory Council Member

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PRESENT: D. Johnson, K. Gallagher, H. Fogarty, K. Thompson, R. Mirabelli, M. Partipilo, C. Raymo, N. Condland, T. Hudson  
ABSENT: N. Thomson, S. Herrle, J. Marocco  
GUEST: S. Chase, M. Wesch

I. Call to Order/Agenda Changes

The meeting began at 12:05 PM, with Kathleen Gallagher calling it to order. She warmly welcomed our guest, Shane Chase, who is considering joining the Advisory Council, along with Mike Wesch, CMH Staff.

II. Review/Accept Minutes

The meeting minutes, unavailable during the meeting, were subsequently distributed via email for review.

III. Executive Director Update

1. The Power of Words

At St. Clair County Community Mental Health, we recognize the power of words to shape perceptions, influence relationships, and impact self-understanding. In our work, we witness how language can inspire hope or cause harm for those with mental health conditions, disabilities, or substance use disorders.

Language reflects our values and attitudes, and derogatory terms like "retarded" perpetuate stigma, disrespect, and exclusion for individuals with disabilities. Such words, even when used unintentionally, can cause emotional harm and normalize a lack of respect. As Debra Johnson emphasizes, "Every word we choose carries weight," and using stigmatizing language contributes to marginalizing vulnerable populations. It's a shared responsibility to foster a more inclusive and respectful culture.

Debra Johnson proposed organizing a contest, similar to our poster or writing competitions, to encourage the use of positive language in schools. It was also recommended reaching out to media/video production teachers for ideas and support in promoting the initiative.

St. Clair County Community Mental Health offers support and presentations on the importance of inclusive language and mental well-being for schools, teams, workplaces, and community groups. Contact SCCCMH to learn more and collaborate on making a positive impact.

2. 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

St. Clair County Community Mental Health will celebrate its 60th Anniversary on the evening of May 21, 2025. Stay tuned for more details in the coming months!

IV. CMH Updates

1. Engagement and Advisory Council Membership

Kathleen Gallagher emphasized the need for increased engagement and additional Advisory Council members. If you know someone who could make a meaningful contribution, please encourage them to apply. Our clerical support team has distributed an application for the council's review. The application is also on our website.

V. Division Director(s) Update

1. Parenting through Change

The group offers free parenting support, empowering parents to become their child's best teacher. Participants will receive guidance from group leaders and peer support to achieve family goals, address challenging behaviors, and develop effective discipline techniques. Sessions run every Wednesday from January 15 to March 19, 2025, at The Harrison Center, from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM. Space is limited, and registration is required. Interested individuals can sign up through their caseholder. Parents must have children enrolled in CMH Services.

2. Children's Crisis Residential

An RFI was issued for the children's crisis residential group home which will provide an alternative to inpatient psychiatric services or shorten the length of in-patient stays for children, ages seven to seventeen, who need behavioral stabilization due to a severe emotional disturbance or a severe emotional disturbance with a co-occurring intellectual or developmental disability. We have yet to receive any proposals.

3. Out of County Individuals residing in Group Homes Returning

Over the past two years, 12 individuals have returned to group homes in our county. This is a positive development, as it allows them to reconnect with their home community and family.

VI. Community Relations Update

The Community Relations team has been hard at work preparing for our CMH Staff and Family Santa Visit, as well as the All-Staff Inservice. They have also launched the "I Am a Friend" bookmark contest for elementary schools, the "Building Brighter Tomorrows" poetry contest for middle schools, and the "Building Brighter Tomorrows" art contest for high schools.

VII. Policy Review

02-001-0040, Grievance Process – There are no substantive changes.

02-001-0045, Appeal Process and Second Opinion – The title was changed to remove the & to use the word and, no other substantive changes.

05-001-0045, Reporting Suspected Abuse or Neglect – There are no substantive changes.

Any comments on the Policy changes should be emailed to Tonia by 12-30-2024 at thudson@scccmh.org.

VIII. Council Roundtable

Debra Johnson inquired whether the Council would be open to changing the meeting day, as CMH now offers Qi Gong on Wednesdays at 12 PM. Kathleen Gallagher recommended scheduling meetings during either the first or last week of the month to accommodate CMH staff. The frequency of meetings—monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly—was also discussed. Clerical support will distribute a survey, and the topic will be revisited at the next meeting to determine the best approach moving forward.

Rosella Mirabelli voiced her frustration with the lengthy wait time for a dietitian. Also discussed were HCBS regulations concerning food and the impact certain medications can have on weight.

Martha Partipilo is actively collaborating with Innovative to secure an electronic payment option for room and board, as well as an app that provides parents and guardians with updates and status information from the group homes.

Nora Condlan expressed her gratitude to Shane and Mike for their ongoing communication and support for her grandson. She also advocated for the inclusion of group home representation on the Advisory Council.

IX. Next Meeting

Wednesday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025

X. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Tonia Hudson  
Recording Secretary

Reviewed and Approved,  
Kathleen Gallagher  
Chief Clinical Officer