

**ALCOHOL, DRUG ADDICTION & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BOARD OF CUYAHOGA COUNTY**

**COMMUNITY RELATIONS & ADVOCACY (CR&A) COMMITTEE  
SEPTEMBER 6, 2023**

**Committee Members Present:** Patricia James-Stewart, M.Ed., LSW, Committee Chair, Erskine Cade, MBA, James T. Dixon, Sadigoh C. Galloway, MSW, LSW, LICDC-CS, Katie Kern-Pilch, MA, ATR-BC, LPC-S / Other Board Directors: J. Robert Fowler, Ph.D.

**Absent:** Ashwani Bhardwaj, Reginald C. Blue, Ph.D., Gregory X. Boehm, M.D., Sharon Rosenbaum, MBA, Harvey A. Snider, Esq.

**Board Staff Present:** Scott Osiecki, Chief Executive Officer, Carole Ballard, Felicia Harrison, Woo Jun, Linda Lamp, Tiffany Ponds-Kimbro, Jessica Saker, Starlette Sizemore

**1. Call to Order**

Ms. Patricia James-Stewart, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m. Mr. James Dixon read into the record the Committee Mission Statement: *"To establish mental health and addiction as a permanent civic priority, enhance the public's perception of people with mental illness and addiction, increase community support and future funding opportunities, and broaden communication, cooperation and partnerships with people living with mental illness and addiction, family members, organizations, other governments and the public."*

**2. Audience Input on Agenda Items**

No audience input regarding agenda items was received.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the May 3, 2023 Community Relations & Advocacy Committee were approved as submitted.

**4. Introduction of Tiffany Ponds-Kimbro, Director of External Affairs**

Mr. Scott Osiecki, Chief Executive Officer, introduced Ms. Tiffany Ponds-Kimbro, Director of External Affairs, to the Board Directors. He stated that Ms. Ponds-Kimbro is an alumna of Cleveland State University and has returned to her hometown of Cleveland after serving in various marketing and communications leadership roles in Las Vegas, most recently with the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) William S. Boyd School of Law. Ms. Ponds-Kimbro started at the Board on Monday, August 14, 2023.

**5. Legislative Update**

Mr. Osiecki reported that he is no longer the chair of the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities (OACBHA) Governance Committee, but will remain an active member. As the past chair, he had the opportunity to meet with the new chair of the committee and OACBHA staff. Discussion within the committee is transpiring regarding developing guidelines of when the association should take a position on legislation and when to encourage Boards to act. This would include legislation that has a direct impact on the operations of the Board. When this legislation is occurring, OACBHA would be taking a position on and encourage Boards to also act on.

Mr. Osiecki provided an update regarding the following legislation:

**House Bill (HB) 8**

HB 8 is the parental notification requirements on school curriculum. Individuals believe that the Boards should take a position on this matter, however, this is really not the Board's domain. The Board will follow this bill to see if action needs to transpire regarding mental health and/or addiction needs within the schools.

**HB 68**

HB 68 is to enact sections of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) to enact the Saving Ohio Adolescents from Experimentation (SAFE) Act regarding gender transition services for minors, and to enact the Save Women's Sports Act to require schools, state institutions of higher education, and private colleges to designate separate single-sex teams and sports for each sex.

**Issue 2**

Ohio Issue 2 would “commercialize, regulate, legalize, and tax the adult use of cannabis.” This issue will be on the Tuesday, November 7, 2023, ballot. Mr. Osiecki reported that OACBHA probably will not take a stance on this issue, however the Boards share information regarding cannabis use, particularly the Surgeon General’s remarks regarding the dangers of cannabis use. Mr. Osiecki shared that when medical marijuana was on the ballot, the Board provided information in the same manner.

**HB 249**

HB 249 is to amend sections of the ORC to make changes to the law regarding involuntary treatment for persons with a mental illness subject to court order. This bill was introduced on Tuesday, August 1, 2023, and has not been assigned to a committee at the present. Further discussion will be forthcoming with OACBHA regarding this bill.

**HB 257**

HB 257 is to amend sections of the ORC to authorize certain public bodies to meet virtually, and to declare an emergency. Mr. Osiecki reported that certain public bodies include school boards, county commissioners, and Bureau of Workers’ Compensation. As a result, OACBHA will be looking to add ADAMHS Boards to this list.

**Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA)**

Mr. Osiecki reported that amendments to regulations implementing the MHPAEA are presently in the public comment period until Monday, October 2, 2023; and that Ms. Ponds-Kimbrow will be forwarding an Advocacy Alert to inform individuals about this act. He stated that The Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici MHPAEA of 2008 is a federal law that generally prevents group health plans and health insurance issuers that provide mental health and substance use disorder (MH/SUD) benefits from imposing less favorable benefit limitations on those benefits than on medical/surgical coverage.

**6. State Opioid and Stimulant Response (SOS) 3.0 “Overdose Awareness Day” Grant from the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS)**

Ms. Ponds-Kimbrow reported that the Board applied for the OhioMHAS SOS 3.0 Grant and was approved for the full amount of \$20,000 for advertising and informational materials for an Overdose Awareness Day event called “Waves of Awareness.” Stella Maris, Inc., is serving as the local coordinator for the Overdose Awareness Day event and is contracting with a variety of vendors for promotional materials for the event. The Board will enter into an agreement with Stella Maris, Inc., to utilize the grant funds for approved purposes.

“Waves of Awareness” is a day-long event scheduled for Thursday, August 31, 2023, in Cleveland’s Public Square. The event will begin at 11:30 a.m. with a video slideshow from the main stage accompanied by the ringing of the bells of the Old Stone Church. A short program will follow featuring public officials and community speakers. Five thousand purple flags will be installed in the lawn by members of the Ohio National Guard, symbolizing the almost 5,000 Ohioans lost to accidental overdose last year. Up to 60 community providers and the MetroHealth Mobile RV for health screenings will be on site to provide resources and information. Food trucks, music, “Yoga in the Park” and messages of hope and testimonies from the stage will be held throughout the day. The event concludes at dusk with a candlelit Walk of Remembrance and a “Light Up Cleveland” event illuminating Public Square, Terminal Tower and Progressive Field in purple lights. The event’s Steering Committee includes the ADAMHS Board, Cleveland Public Square, Downtown Cleveland Alliance, Families Impacted by Opioids, Melinda and Mathew Gamez, Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, LIUNA, MetroHealth, Ohio National Guard Counterdrug Program, Project Noelle, Project White Butterfly, Evelyn Rueda, Stella Maris, Inc., The Centers for Health Affairs, Unicorn and Polka Dots, The Soar Initiative, and THRIVE4Change. Board staff is recommending the Board Directors accept SOS 3.0 grant funding in the amount of \$20,000 from OhioMHAS for advertising and informational materials for a “Waves of Awareness” event in recognition of International Overdose Awareness Day; to be held on Thursday, August 31, 2023, and contract with Stella Maria, Inc., in the amount of \$20,000 for the term of August 10, 2023 through September 15, 2023.

**Motion to accept SOS 3.0 grant funding in the amount of \$20,000 from OhioMHAS for advertising and informational materials for a “Waves of Awareness” event in recognition of International Overdose Awareness**

**Day to be held on Thursday, August 31, 2023, and contract with Stella Maria, Inc., in the amount of \$20,000 for the term of August 10, 2023 through September 15, 2023 to the Finance & Operations Committee.** MOTION: E. Cade / SECOND: J. Dixon / AYES: E. Cade, J. Dixon, S. Galloway., K. Kern-Pilch / NAYS: None / ABSTAIN: None / **Motion passed.**

**7. Week of Appreciation Mini-grant Funding from OACBHA**

Ms. Ponds-Kimbrow reported that OACBHA will provide the Board with \$1,500 in mini-grant funding from OhioMHAS to support and recognize local first responders and those who work directly with individuals struggling to overcome substance use disorders. Week of Appreciation will take place Sunday, September 17, 2023, through Saturday, September 23, 2023. This mini-grant funding will be used to purchase candles from Happy Thoughts Candle Co. and each candle will have a label with words of encouragement and appreciation. A small card will be included with each candle. Provider agencies will be asked to nominate two staff members to be recognized for their work directly with individuals with substance use disorders. Nominated staff members will receive a Week of Appreciation Candle in recognition of their hard work and dedication. Board staff is recommending that the Board Directors accept Week of Appreciation funding in the amount of \$1,500 from OACBHA and contract with Happy Thoughts Candle Co. for \$1,500 for the term of September 1, 2023 through September 29, 2023.

**Motion to accept Week of Appreciation funding in the amount of \$1,500 from OACBHA and contract with Happy Thoughts Candle Co. for \$1,500 for the term of September 1, 2023 through September 29, 2023 to the Finance & Operations Committee.** MOTION: K. Kern-Pilch / SECOND: S. Galloway / AYES: E. Cade, J. Dixon, S. Galloway., K. Kern-Pilch / NAYS: None / ABSTAIN: None / **Motion passed.**

**8. Suicide Prevention Month**

Ms. Carole Ballard, Director of Education and Training, provided an update regarding September is Suicide Prevention Month. She reported that September was first declared as National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month in 2008. Since then, September has been a time to acknowledge those affected by suicide, raise awareness, and connect individuals with suicidal ideation to treatment services. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), each year more than 41,000 individuals die by suicide, leaving behind friends and family members to navigate the tragedy of their loss. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death among adults in the U.S. and the 2nd leading cause of death among people aged 10-24; and these rates are increasing. Ms. Ballard also provided current statistics and shared events and trainings pertaining to suicide prevention. (The PowerPoint presentation is attached to the original minutes stored in the Executive Unit.)

**9. Media Tracking Report**

Ms. Ponds-Kimbrow reported that the ADAMHS Board had a total of 44 media mentions since Friday, May 5, 2023. 38 of these mentions were positive and six were neutral. This brings the year's total to 115 media mentions, 109 of which are positive and seven of which are neutral. There were no negative media mentions.

Ms. Ponds Kimbro reported that there was also widespread media coverage, specifically, for the upcoming Behavioral Health Crisis Center and the Fend Off Fentanyl Act. Both were mentioned by various print, web, and television outlets. Mr. Osiecki and Dr. Mark Hurst's OpEd on Care Response was published in the Plain Dealer and Cleveland.com.

**10. Social Media and Website Tracking Reports**

**Monday, July 24, 2023 through Friday, September 1, 2023, Social Media Report**

- Ms. Ponds-Kimbrow provided committee members with an overview of the social media statistics. She reported that for the timeframe Monday, July 24, 2023, through Friday, September 1, 2023, the Board had 1,976,591 impressions on social media, 3,999 engagements (likes, comments, retweets, mentions, etc.), gained 336 new followers and 1,560 post link clicks.

**Thursday, May 4, 2023, through Tuesday, September 5, 2023, Website Report**

- Ms. Ponds-Kimbrow provided an overview of the website tracking reports, which showed gains in engagement (up 30%) on X, née Twitter; and audience growth was up 42% across all social platforms. Website traffic was down over the Summer but should rebound as more campaigns will direct users to the Board's website.

**11. New Business**

No new business was received.

**12. Follow-up**

No follow-up was received.

**13. Public Comment Period**

Two representatives from First Alliance Healthcare, Ms. Joenisha Sanders, Director of Operations, and Ms. Denise Sadler BA, MSW, LISW-S, Clinical Supervisor, introduced themselves to the Board Directors. With their headquarters located in Cleveland, Ohio, Ms. Sanders reported that First Alliance Healthcare was established in June 2016 to develop and operate a network of behavioral health facilities across Ohio. First Alliance Healthcare provides therapeutic services to its clients in a variety of settings, including in-home/community-based programs and outpatient clinics. Their mission is to create a world-class organization that sets the standard of excellence in the treatment of specialty behavioral health and addiction disorders and where people receive care that enables them to regain hope in a supportive, caring environment.

**14. Upcoming September and October Board Meetings:**

- Planning & Oversight Committee Meeting: September 13, 2023
- Finance & Operations Committee Meeting: September 20, 2023
- General Meeting: September 27, 2023
- Faith-based Outreach Committee Meeting: October 4, 2023
- Committee of the Whole Meeting: October 18, 2023
- General Meeting: October 25, 2023

***There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:48 p.m.***

***Submitted by: Linda Lamp, Executive Assistant***

***Approved by: Patricia James-Stewart, M.Ed., LSW, Community Relations & Advocacy Committee Chair***