



# Tompkins County COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BOARD

Tompkins County Whole Health  
201 East Green Street  
Ithaca, New York 14850-5635

Ellice Switzer, Chair

Jan Lynch, Vice Chair

Frank Kruppa; Commissioner

Harmony Ayers-Friedlander,  
Deputy Commissioner/Director of Community Services

Larry Roberts, Chair,  
Mental Health Subcommittee

James Beaumont, and Jeff Boles, Co-Chairs,  
Developmental Disabilities Subcommittee

Stu Bergman, Chair,  
Substance Use Subcommittee

Tompkins County Community Mental Health Services Board  
201 East Green Street, Ithaca NY 14850  
Monday, April 3, 2023, 5:30 p.m. Meeting Minutes

Approved  
7/10/2023

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkpJNVbpLLbEbhoDbTIEgSQ>

**Present:** Ellice Switzer; Jan Lynch; Dr. Auguste Duplan; Jessica Conner, Psyd; Sally McConnell-Ginet; Stu Bergman; Travis Winter; and Larry Roberts (Zoom)

**Excused** Mary Hutchens; and Sheila McEnery

**Unexcused:** Sullymar Pena Vazquez, Dorothy Lovelace

**Legislature:** Randy Brown

**Guests:** Allen Connely, and Ashley Burke

**Staff:** Frank Kruppa, Commissioner; Harmony Ayers-Friedlander, DCS; and Karan Palazzo, LGU Administrative Assistant

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The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm by Ms. Switzer. Introductions were made. Ms. Lynch motioned to approve the March 2023 minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dr. Duplan; all were in favor.

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**Privilege of the Floor & Announcements:** Mr. Roberts asked for discussions about the ACT/Mid-Lake Team coverage in Tompkins County and asked for an update on CARS and Cayuga Health Systems' new relationship. Mr. Kruppa will provide an update on the CARS and Cayuga Health Systems alliance.

**Chair's Report:** Ms. Switzer asked that the subcommittee chairs be prepared to provide brief updates at the next CSB meeting. Reports from the subcommittees will be a regular agenda item moving forward.

**Challenge/Mosaic Cannabis Dispensary:** Allen Connely, CEO of Challenge, and Ashley Burke, Vice President of Clinical and Business Operations at Mosaic gave a presentation on their new initiative. They created an LLC dba "Aspire" and received a conditional license in November 2022. They recently identified a location in West End but were unable to give all the details at this time. In February 2023 they received approval from the Office of Cannabis Management and location approval from the City of Ithaca in March. An opening date has not been secured but the website is [www.Aspirecannabis.org](http://www.Aspirecannabis.org) where individuals can sign up for a mailing list for updates, job postings, mission statements, and history.

### Vision

Offer competitively paid jobs with medical/dental benefits and paid time off

Employ 15 to 20 positions, from customer service to management positions

Employ staff with employment barriers and support them in success

Profits will go back to support Challenge in various initiatives

A palette-based work program is in the works where individuals can obtain experience on a college campus. They also look to expand services to add more staff and teach employment skills.

Aspire will offer a boutique-style shopping experience, along with the option to order online for in-store pick-up, supported by staff that will be well-trained and knowledgeable. With customer education being a primary focus, they will use their relationships with their suppliers to participate in events and build upon the education of the different types of strains to get the desired effect. There will be various strains of cannabis, an assortment of edibles, pre-rolls, oils, smoking accessories, merchandise, and more for purchase. Ms. Burke was excited that the Challenge/Mosaic profits will stay local and support a nonprofit. They look forward to a summer opening.

Ms. Switzer asked if the LLC protects Challenge from potential negative revenue losses that the business may experience. Ms. Burke is confident that the business will have a positive revenue reflective of her past experiences working with Mosaic for the last several years.

Mr. Roberts asked if a representative could attend the monthly Substance Use Subcommittee meeting; what businesses have you turned around; why sell cannabis; how will they employ people with disabilities and substance use issues and other employment barriers; and who are the people excited about the opening.

Ms. Burke responded that a deep dive was taken financially that resulted in strong contract negotiations and price increases for many customers. Mosaic was able to turn around Challenge by providing IT and HR technical support as many small non-profits tend to struggle to cover those costs. Mr. Connely added that Challenge has a positive revenue due to the organization's management with Mosaic. Mosaic took off much of the administrative overhead; methodically thought out positions in managing their current businesses; increased opportunities; pay increases; new IT equipment; and new vehicles creating positive impacts at Challenge.

Ms. Burke responded that they are always looking at new business ideas to generate revenue and support the agency. They recently purchased "ShelterBox" in Ithaca and offer custodial and lawn maintenance employment. They look at outside resources and opportunities to bring additional revenue to support their mission and to be able to offer competitive wages and unique programs.

Ms. Burke responded to a question about their initial investment. She said that the initial investment was an interfering loan from Challenge, and they are currently working out the details and will be able to solidify the budget shortly. Aspire is self-funded and non-profits are not able to access resources from the NYS Dabney Fund which is focused on the War on Drugs. Mr. Connely said that it is important to have a community-based partnership in Ithaca and invest in the community which other dispensaries do not. The LLC has every intent to repay Challenge.

Ms. Lynch asked if the school transition services previously offered by Challenge will return with the expected positive revenue. Mr. Connely responded that Challenge was in a severe deficit at that time and the books had to be examined. The intent is to have these businesses profitable enough to fund back or create new initiatives or modify existing programs to support them. The purpose is to be a community partner/community resource to support the mission of the organization. He said that they are a business with a social mission model and look for diverse revenue streams to support the mission long term. There must be a balance between financial and mission aspects.

Ms. Switzer asked if their initiative is a college experience for students with intellectual disabilities or a matriculating credit-bearing supported education program. Mr. Connely stated that the initiative will be a combination but also working with local school districts to allow that because there's that gap between 18 and 21-year-olds. They have had a successful partnership working with Keuka College for the last ten years.

Ms. Switzer stated that post-secondary transition employment is challenging in Tompkins County and does not have a vendor to provide a total package of pre-employment transitional services. She understands that it is financially challenging but hopes that they will find a way to use some of the profits to support the post-secondary transition of students with disabilities to either educate in terms of matriculating and/or competitive integrated employment. Ms. Burke agreed that this might be a great solution to this community's gap in service.

Ms. Burke responded to the question of who the people are excited about working with Challenge. She said that the primarily cannabis-based people that they are working with are the ones that are excited about the opportunity to work together as a partner to supply them but also those who are going to present and be available at the store to educate the customers.

Employing those with various disabilities is a constant with Mozaic and this business will be no different. Mr. Connely added they are just one of six non-profit dispensaries in the State and that the profits from the dispensaries will go back to the mission of the organization and the dollars will stay local.

Ms. Lynch asked where the profits will go. Mr. Connely responded that acknowledging the management services agreement between Challenge and Mozaic, funding that come in will help offset. He noted that Challenge and Aspire will have associated expenses including back-office support, payroll, wages, HR, and IT.

Mr. Bergman asked how payments were. Burke said that most payments besides a credit card are accepted.

Ms. Lynch asked how they verified the age of purchases. Ms. Burke said that the products are reserved only and age verification is done when the product is picked up from the store.

**Commissioner's Report:** Mr. Kruppa explained that the new relationship between CARS and Cayuga Health (CH) is an alliance where CH will support CARS by assisting in the improvement of back-office efficiencies, and medical staff recruitment. CARS will continue to dba CARS. He believes each will retain its independent Boards and Presidents. He would be happy to invite Jessica Janssen, CEO at CARS, and Dr. Martin Stallone, CEO of Cayuga Health for more details.

Opioid Settlement Funds: Mr. Kruppa reported that the Opioid Taskforce meets tomorrow to finalize the survey going out to the public. The survey is intended to gather information and ideas about opioid settlement funds and provide feedback. The RFP is almost complete.

Areas for the framework:

Prevention work - strengthening the network related to overdose prevention

Expanding harm reduction strategies

Workforce investment and collaboration

Tentative Process for the \$700,000

Offering up to four, three-year, \$ 55,000-a-year grants

Offering four (4) \$10,000 one-time grants

More information will be available after the survey goes out.

Ms. Switzer is not optimistic that school districts will respond to the RFP. She shared that Oneida County Schools is a potential model for Tompkins County. She encourages getting naloxone into school buildings and doing one pill can kill education in Tompkins County. Ms. Ayers-Friedlander believes ADC would be helpful.

Mr. Brown shared that the task force interviewed several agencies and created categories to reach a wider group; education for casual users and how people were dealing with that but unsure of how to handle schools. He believes education in schools is a concern. Ms. Switzer added that there was a massive spike in adolescent overdoses last week. Mr. Bergman agrees with communicating with the school systems is important and beneficial. Ms. Lynch added that SU agencies should be encouraged to reach out to the schools. Ms. Ayers-Friedlander said that the prevention providers have expanded services and some of the services might be able to be done through OASAS funding.

Mr. Kruppa reported that an offer has been made for the Housing Coordinator position. Mr. Roberts suggested communicating with the coordinator about their concerns. Ms. Switzer asked members to email her their questions and concerns. Mr. Brown encouraged members to advocate to the legislature.

**2022 Annual Agency Contract Review:** Ms. Ayers-Friedlander said that May is Mental Health Awareness Month and shared information on events in the community.

"Better Together for Mental Health" May 13<sup>th</sup> in Stewart Park from 10 am to 3 pm

"Cornell Campus Walk" April 30, 2023 – Cornell University Ag-Quad Registration 11 am, and the Walk starts at 12 pm

(The walk is designed to engage youth and young adults in the fight to prevent suicide.)

**Lethal Means** – Reduce access to lethal means of suicide in the community within high-risk populations. Working to get gun locks out to businesses

**Youth Work** – divided into two groups (college population and younger population) works to reduce suicide attempts with activities around training and support

**Zero Suicide** – implementation of the Zero Suicide model in behavioral health and physical health settings

**Data collection** - regularly collect timely, high quality, and interpretable data and identify trends to inform Coalition goal setting and to support the creation of a dashboard that integrates data from multiple sources for the purposes of surveillance and informing the Coalition's planning and activities.

**Health Care** – promotes people’s awareness around all the work that the Coalition is doing

**Work Advocacy** – creating greater awareness and researching funding to help prevent suicide

Ms. Ayers-Friedlander said that The Suicide Prevention Coalition has workgroups available to join for those that are interested and encouraged those interested in joining to reach out to her by email.

LGU Opioid Settlement Funds – Ms. Ayers-Friedlander said that the first round of monies would be devoted to developing one program and sustaining it for a few years and the next amount of funding would be creating an over plan.

Funding ideas to the legislature:

1. Creating a rapid response team for people who have the most complex and serious needs in our community. For those that use the emergency room a lot and are involved in the criminal justice system that is related to their substance use and mental health. Next year’s funding should be a consistent amount for the next sixteen years and will be able to create a better, more informed process for the CSB.
2. Responses to those who have had NARCAN from emergency responders

Ms. Ayers-Friedlander said they are looking to hire two clinical staff for the co-response team who will ride with the sheriff. This position is posted for a licensed clinical therapist on the County website.

Ms. Ayers-Friedlander said that The City of Ithaca is at a different stage of the proposal of Opioid Settlement funding. The County hopes to cover the entire county requiring six teams 24/7 and currently has two teams covering the high-use hours of Monday – Friday, 10 am to 6 pm based on the data from the Mobile Crisis Team (MCT).

The meeting adjourned @ 7:00 pm

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**The Next Community Mental Health Services Board Meeting is  
Monday, May 1, 2023, at 5:30 pm.**