



Northwest Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

February 21, 2025, 10:00am-12:00pm

753 West Blvd., Chipley, FL 32428

MEETING MINUTES

Attendees: **Department of Children and Families** – April Busby, Amber Wookey, Asta Trinh, Lucas French, Alexis Thrasher, Roderic Stovall, Brittany Boyett, Mylisa Lee, Vikki Goldstein, Adam Hogberg, Samone Franklin, Tim Potter, Robyn Goins, **Agency on Health Care Administration** – Kirk Hall, **Agency on Persons with Disabilities** – Ali Stanley, **Department of Education** – Andrew Weatherill, Rusty Holmes (SEDNET), **Holmes County District School Board** – Beth Miller, Greg Sallas, **Jackson County School District** – Heather Miller, **Santa Rosa County School District** – Autumn Wright, **Northwest Florida Health Network** - Christina Bertera, Tracie Moorner, Christa Pate, Sharron Washington, Shannon Massingale, **Bridgeway Center** – Larry McFarland, **Apalachee Center** – Brianna Tebben, Jay Reeve, Heather Lincicome (TMH), Sue Conger, **Life Management Center** – Melanie Spoon, **DISC Village** – Jennifer Travieso,), **PanCare of Florida** – Robert Thompson, Drew Hild, **Lakeview Center** – Autumn Mcallister, Patti Hyde, Dustin Perry, Allison Hill, Tia Guidry (Walton), **Judicial Circuit Court Administration** – Jessica Deneen (2nd), Amanda Tarr (14th), **Emerald Coast Behavioral Hospital** – Tiffani Evans, **HCA Florida Capital Hospital** - Kelli Mercer, **Baptist Health Care** – Eric Rutledge, **Simply (Evelavance) Health** – Lori York, **Pensacola Police Department** – Brittany Harris, Eukeisha Lankford, **Jackson County Sheriff’s Office** – Ashley Odom, **Leon County Sheriff’s Office** – Paxton Rogers, **DeFuniak Springs Police Department** – Mindy Shelton, **Washington County Sheriff’s Office** – Duran Harrison, **Escambia County Sheriff’s Office** – Merle Burkart, **Wakulla County Sheriff’s Office** – Ashley Hudson. **EscaRosa Suicide Prevention Coalition** – Rachelle Burns, **NAMI Tallahassee** – Nancy O’Farrell, **South Florida Wellness Network** - Susan Nyamora, **Department of Corrections** – Alex Thompson, Angella New, **Department of Juvenile Justice** – Alison Fulford.

I. CALL TO ORDER

April Busby called to order the Northwest Region Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration meeting at 10:02 am on February 21, 2025.

II. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Asta Trinh - Chief of Regional Operations & Initiatives, **Amber Wookey** - Regional Director, **April Busby** - All attendees introduced themselves and provided name of agency and title, **Kirk Hall** – Agency on Health Care Administration.

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III. **OVERVIEW OF REGIONAL COLLABORATION COORDINATOR POSITION/ROLE/ OBJECTIVES**

April Busby provided an overview of the Commission on Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder, HB7021 Section 394.90826, Objectives and Vision of the Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration, and transparency and awareness moving forward.

IV. **IMPACT OF REGIONAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH INTERAGENCY COLLABORATIVES**

Amber Wookey provided an overview of the collaborative's goals, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that everyone in the region has access to high-quality services.

V. **MANAGING ENTITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Sharron Washington, Regional Administrator of Northwest Florida Health Network, presented an overview of the most recent gap analysis. The last formal needs assessment cycle was in 2022, identifying five key areas of need:

1. **Outpatient services** (including expanding youth services)
2. **Inpatient detox**
3. **Housing**
4. **Psychiatric services** (various levels)
5. **Transportation**

Progress was noted in some areas, such as transportation, where providers now utilize satellite locations, and telehealth has seen an increase. Outpatient detox services have been enhanced through Bridgeway in Circuit 1. To address youth services, the Early Childhood Education program was launched in Bay and Okaloosa counties, alongside the Early CAT team with the Lakeview Center. Other initiatives include the Florida Family and Safety Act in Circuits 2 and 14, which focuses on evidence-based practices.



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VI. REVIEW OF KEY FOCUS AREAS

Amber Wookey provided overview on the 4 key areas.

1. Strengthening Community networks and gross agency collaboration.
2. Enhancing Crisis Care Continuum.
3. Improving Data Collection and Management Processes.
4. Optimizing the financial management of the Behavioral Health system of care.

VII. OPEN DISCUSSION

Dr. Jay Reeve with Apalachee Center and the Chair of the Commission on Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder, was asked to speak on the vision and mission of the Commission.

Key Points:

- The Commission is made up of 17 members appointed by the Governor.
- There are 55 subject matter experts involved.
- Commission meets bi-monthly.
- Commission has 4 subcommittees.
- The recommendation to establish regional collaboratives came from the System of Care Subcommittee.
- Through this initiative, different competing agencies and organizations have come together to work towards a better system of care.

Attendees were asked to participate in an open discussion around the following questions.

1. Tell us about your organization GAP Analysis process and if it is public facing.
2. What other Collaboratives or Workgroups are you attending, and items being addressed.
3. What are opportunities for improvement?

Erik Rutledge (Baptist Health Care): Highlighted gaps in services for youth with autism, who are often sent to residential treatment centers far from home. There is also a lack of substance abuse treatment options for teens in the region.



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Alison Hill (Lakeview Center): Emphasized the ongoing Mental Health Task Force collaboration, which has fostered strong partnerships.

Rachelle Burns (Mental Health Task Force): MHTF created in 2021, strategic plan in 2023. The group's strategic plan focuses on prevention, intervention, crisis care, and recovery. The MHTF holds quarterly "accountability" meetings that showcases all of their work throughout the months leading to the meeting.

Nancy O'Farrell (NAMI Tallahassee): Emphasized the importance of peer support and education, with a proposal for legislative funding to expand its services to all counties in the region. The organization seeks to combat stigma and support families through lived experience, education, family support groups, etc.

Dr. Jay Reeve (Apalachee Center): Shared insights from the Tallahassee MH Council of Big Bend community survey, which identified key gaps in services, including those related to housing and funding. The council has worked with local stakeholders to address these issues.

Tracie Moorer (NWFHN): Advocated for engaging local homeless coalitions and providing education on available resources. Suggested the coalitions present at one of the BHIC meetings. She also highlighted the importance of statewide coordination to address the housing crisis.

Missy Lee (DCF CCDA C14): Discussed communication challenges around Baker Acts and emphasized the need for cross-agency education on responsibilities. Discussed Local Review Team process and educating all agencies on the process and next steps. There are gaps in placement for youth who are Baker Acted and require SIPP services, as well as transportation issues for individuals with mental health and substance use disorders. Thanked PanCare for helping with several transportation issues in the past.

Christina Bertera (NWFLHN): Shared recent work with Sheriff's Offices in circuit 2 that included Baker Act education. Recently started the same work in circuit 14. Recently held a Sheriff's Office round table to discuss baker act and transportation.

Rusty (PAEC): Talked about transportation challenges, especially for rural counties like Washington and Holmes, where access to services is limited. Discussed Medicaid no longer funding transportation. Transportation is unreliable when traveling long distances. Stressed this is a significant barrier.



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Dr. Jay Reeve (Apalachee Center): Emphasized that most rural counties struggle with transportation needs. Shared that Tallahassee has providers that offer an area where an individual can come in for a telehealth visit and use devices provided by the facility.

Kirk Hall (AHCA): Stated the Medicaid is looking into intermediate steps for a SIPP and into a procured payment process.

Larry McFarland (Bridgeway): Discussed the challenges of care coordination, particularly for individuals in crisis. He emphasized the importance of early intervention and the need for better communication between agencies. Post Overdose Support Team (POST) is working well – collaboration with EMS and Bridgeway. Discussed challenges around Marchman Acts, lack of communication between the time a person is baker acted and discharged, and waitlists for beds at state hospitals.

Alison Hill (Lakeview Center): Suggested setting communication goals for the BHIC and a data project would be beneficial.

Mindy Shelton (DeFuniak Springs Police Department): Addressed the challenges of Marchman Acts and transporting individuals in mental health or substance abuse crises, particularly in rural areas. Expressed lack of resources in the northern counties of the region.

Autumn McCallister (Lakeview Walton): Offered to provide resources for MRT, WCHIP, and NWFHN with Mindy Shelton and anyone else in the area that needed them.

Eric Rutledge (Baptist Health Care): Discussed a new "virtual receiving facility" model for emergency room assessments. This model is for all Baptist Health Care affiliated emergency rooms. Beneficial in determining the need for further transport to inpatient care facilities.

Shannon Massingale (NWFHN): Expressed concerns over Medicaid only funding the clinical portion of treatment and not the room and board. Also expressed concerns of psychosexual treatment not being funded. Both of these can roll into being an expense of child welfare due to lack of funding. Is glad to hear that AHCA is looking into a tiered system.

Susan (Floridians in Recovery): Shared insights on peer specialist work and the importance of lived experience in mental health treatment, noting the role of Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs).



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Ashley Hudson (Jackson Co. Sheriff's Office): Mentioned that her office discovered that Florida Statute allows a Marchman Act at the jail.

Dr. Andrew Weatherill (DOE): Will provide a list of all Mental Health Counselors in each school district.

VIII. MEETING FREQUENCY/NEXT STEPS

April Busby provided the next meeting date of May 20, 2025, from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at the PAEC building located at 753 West Blvd., Chipley, FL. 32428.

April Busby requested to be invited to any meetings the attendees were currently holding that may be beneficial to her as the Regional Collaboration Coordinator.

Asta Trinh discussed future quarterly Collaborative Meetings to include Agency specific presentations.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

An opportunity was provided for Public Comment

X. MOTION TO ADJOURN

A Survey link was provided to attendees for feedback. April Busby thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the Northwest Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration kick-off meeting at 11:55 am CST.



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Minutes provided by April Busby