

1. NORTH SOUND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- In June, 2022, the North Sound BH-ASO Board of Directors approved a contract with the Cumming Management Group [in partnership with Percival Health] to update the original 2017 Behavioral Health Needs Assessment.
- The original needs assessment focused primarily on facility-based services. At the direction of the Board, the BH-ASO updated the scope of work to include outpatient services as well and the Percival Health became the lead for this new project.
- Percival Health collected utilization data, demographic data needs surveys collected from a variety of stakeholders.
- A draft of the Executive Summary is attached. [Attachment 1]
- We will be presenting the final report at the January Advisory Board and Board of Directors meetings.
- I will be proposing that an ad-hoc workgroup of County Coordinators and Advisory Board Members be formed to develop recommendations based on the report.

2. CLOSURE OF PIONEER CENTER NORTH

- Pioneer Human Services has notified us that it will be closing Pioneer Center North effective January 31, 2023. [see letter – Attachment 2]
- They will cease admitting new clients as of December 1, 2022 and will notify current clients as of that date.
- Admitted clients will continue to receive treatment through January 31, and will discharge or transfer admitted clients on that date.
- They will continue to operate their other existing facilities.

3. EXTENSION OF COVID RELIEF FEDERAL BLOCK GRANT FUNDS EXPENDITURE PERIOD

- CMS has agreed to extend the period the state can use the COVID relief Substance Abuse Block Grant funds in addition to Mental Health Block Grant funds through September 2023.
- The state anticipates receiving the next round of Block Grant Relief Funds – American Rescue Act funds – in July. They will allow the state and regions to continue to fund programs funded with the COVID relief funds.
- The North Sound BH-ASO however, will review the level of actual utilization of these funds and will recommend changes to better align with emerging needs and the capacity to sue these funds.

4. CRISIS SERVICES UPDATE

- The Weekly Crisis Capacity Indicator snapshot through November 26 is attached [Attachment 3].
- Also attached is the monthly Dashboard [Attachment 4].

5. UPDATE ON BALANCED BILLING ACT – HB 1688

- The state workgroup developing recommendations for the method by which commercial health carriers will reimburse providers of emergency behavioral health services has submitted its recommended plan that will be transmitted to the legislature.
- Under this proposal, the ASOs would collect the encounter data from providers of mobile crisis outreach services and report it to the commercial carriers. ASOs would continue to reimburse the providers at the normal rate and collect the resulting reimbursements from the commercial carriers.
- The proposed plan recommends that the new process would be implemented by January 2024. In the meantime, however, commercial carriers must accept and process “fee for service” claims as out of network services if providers so choose to bill them.
- Commercial carriers must also reimburse services provided in crisis stabilization facilities, but the plan calls for facilities to bill commercial carriers directly for these services.

6. BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES COORDINATING COUNCIL - DISCUSSION ON NETWORK ADEQUACY

- The Behavioral Health Services Coordinating Council [BHSCC] workgroup on “network adequacy” continues to meet and refine its recommendations regarding strengthening the requirements for MCOs to ensure “network adequacy” and improve access to care.
- The plan is to improved standards, measurements, and accountability to be included in the next round of Integrated Managed Care contracts for January, 2025.
- In support of this effort, HCA staff is working on a grid detailing the various state efforts underway to better measure and monitor access to care, including the work on several legislative provisos such as the “rural behavioral health timely access study”.
- The next meeting of the workgroup is on December 12.

7. UPDATE ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

- We have requested an update summary from HCA on the status of state led workforce development strategies, including the status of efforts authorized by last year’s legislature.
- The funding for additional strategies may be included in the Governor’s 2023 budget request which may be out next week.

8. MOUNT VERNON POLICE CO-RESPONDER PROJECT

- We received a progress report from the Mount Vernon police on the status of the co-responder project that we are funding with a combination of Proviso and Block Grant funds. This project is formally titled as the Mount Vernon “Integrated Outreach Services.”
- Two of the four positions have been hired and on-boarding begun.
- Attached is a report on some of their early accomplishments. [Attachment 5]

9. NEW NORTH SOUND BH-ASO FISCAL APPOINTMENT

- We have filled the newly created positions of Accountant. Kimberly Nakatani will be joining us on December 1. She has extensive experience with fiscal operations.

10. END OF STATE COVID EMERGENCY ORDER

- The Governor’s COVID Emergency Declaration ended October 31. Our Attorney has researched our options for continuing to use a “hybrid” model for Board of Director meetings under the Open Public Meetings Act.
- The OPMA requires that meetings be open to the public and available for public comment. Meetings that include a link for virtual participation can meet this requirement, however, the North Sound BH-ASO LLC’s own by-laws only allow for voting in person.
- The Governance and Operations Committee has recommended that these by-laws be changed to also allow for voting on the virtual platform as well. The North Sound BH-ASO will be drafting the proposed language for the change.