

1. UPDATE ON BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES COORDINATING COMMITTEE

- In 2020, HCA and WSAC formed a “Behavioral Health Services Coordinating Committee” [BHSCC] to provide an opportunity for Counties and the State to improve communication and problem solving around behavioral health system issues. Both Jill Johnson and I represent the North Sound region.
- When county representative identified “network adequacy” as one of the top county concerns, a “network adequacy” sub-group was formed to provide input to the state on how to better define, measure and monitor network adequacy.
- Attached is an overview of a technical presentation HCA provided at the 2nd meeting of this sub-group. It outlines how the state has defined network adequacy in the past and challenges and opportunities in improving the measurement and monitoring of network adequacy to include a broader focus on actual “access to care” [attachment 1].
- Slides # 38-40 outline some of the options to consider in addressing availability of services.
- The BHSCC workgroup met a 2nd time on October 6. The MCOs shared a copy of a network survey they conducted for the first quarter of 2022 and plan to conduct every quarter thereafter. [Attachment #2]
- WSAC has voted to include network adequacy as one of its top legislative priorities for the upcoming legislative session.

2. HCA-NSBHASO QUARTERLY CHECK IN MEETING

- The Quarterly “HCA-NSBHASO” check in meeting will be held on October 12. A verbal update will be provided at the October 13 Board of Directors meeting.

3. HB 1688 – BALANCED BILLING ACT

- The recently passed “Balanced billing Act”, HB 1688, includes the requirement for commercial health plans to reimburse providers for “emergency services” including behavioral health crisis services.
- North Sound BH-ASO staff are participating in a state workgroup to recommend what process would be put in place to bill and receive payment from commercial carriers.
- The administrative burden either for providers or the BH-ASOs of collecting individual coverage data and billing commercial carriers would be significant. We are urging the state to adopt a method that minimizes this administrative burden.

4. 2023 MEDICAID RATE DECREASE

- Although the legislature approved a 7% provider rate increase next year, the proposal from the state's actuaries, Milliman, is to reduce the base 2023 Medicaid rates for behavioral health by 7.4% thus cancelling out any net increase for providers.
- Attached is a letter to legislators from the Washington Council for Behavioral Health voice the concern from providers on the impact of this underlying decrease in rates [Attachment #3]

5. CONTINUATION OF COVID FEDERAL BLOCK GRANT FUNDING

- HCA has applied for a no-cost extension of the current COVID relief Federal Block grant enhancement funding through June 2023. These funds were originally authorized to only go through March 2023.
- HCA will be exploring internally about the possibility of allowing the BH-ASOs to shift some of the unspent proviso related COVID block grant funds into other contracts and programs to better utilize the overall COVID block grant funds.
- The North Sound ASO will also be assessing programs that were provided COVID block grant funds that have either not yet started up or are projected to underspend their allocations.

6. UPDATE ON FACILITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- A survey has been distributed to Counties, providers, and the MCOs to gather information on gaps and need for both inpatient and outpatient services.
- To date, over 36 responses have been received.
- We have sent a second request to the MCOs to share whatever information they can since they feel some of our data request included proprietary information.
- Once all the survey and MCO responses are received, the consultant, Percival Health, will combine it with the results of their own demographic research to develop preliminary findings.
- These will be reviewed and discussed with the County Coordinators, Advisory Board, and Board of Directors.

7. CRISIS SERVICES UPDATE

- The Weekly Crisis Capacity Indicator snapshot through October 6 is attached [Attachment 4].
- For the last 4 weeks, both crisis calls and outreach services have been at the average number for the year.
- Although calls are going to the 988 line as well, VOA reports that it has not really reduced the kinds of calls that traditionally go to the regional crisis line.

8. UPDATE ON THE “NORTH SOUND RURAL COMMUNITIES OPIOID RESPONSE PROGRAM” [HRSA GRANT AWARD]

- We’re entering the second year of the 3-year federal grant award from Health and Human Services for the Rural Communities Opioid Response program,
- We used the grant to provide Opioid Use Disorder services in Island and East Skagit County. Specifically, it is funding an IMPACT team, Recovery Specialist, and MAT services in East Skagit County and a Prevention Specialist and MAT services in Island County.
- During the second six months of the grant period [March-August 2022], the unduplicated number of persons contacted by grant funded positions have tripled:
 - Total number of persons contacted: 393
 - Persons referred to supportive services: 150
 - Persons screened for substance use disorder (SUD): 47
 - Persons diagnosed with SUD: 40
- Most of the contacts have taken place in East Skagit County but MAT services have also been provided in Oak Harbor and a Prevention Specialist is being funded within the Coupeville School District.
- On September 28, an open house for the new Mount Baker Presbyterian Church (MBPC) building in Concrete was held. This building is located at 44942 State Route 20 and includes private offices where our coalition partners such as the Lifeline Connections MAT provider, and Community Action outreach teams can provide services and collaborate. The building may also serve as a future support site with access to shower and laundry for those in need. The event was well-attended with coalition partners, as well as County Commissioner Ron Wesen and Skagit County Public Health representatives

9. TEAMONITOR REPORT

- We’ve received the final report and score from HCA for this year’s TeaMonitor review.
- Of the 90 items reviewed, we received a “Not Met” for two of them and “Partially Met” for five.
- However, for the two “Not Met” and several of the “Partially Met” we had actually provided the required information in our submittals, but the reviewers [there were new reviewers this year, and different ones reviewed different sections] claimed they could not find the information in our materials. Even after we pointed out where the required information was, they still refused to change our score.