



COUNTY OF HUNTERDON NEW JERSEY

HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ALCOHOLISM & DRUG ABUSE YOUTH SERVICES COMMISSION MENTAL HEALTH BOARD



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REFERENCE:

- Council
- Mental Health
- Youth
- Disability Services
- Substance Use Disorder
- Transportation

To be approved September 7, 2023.

MENTAL HEALTH BOARD

Regular Meeting

Thursday, June 1, 2023 5:30 p.m.
Via Microsoft Teams

MEMBERS

R. Walker
M. Deo
W. Dudzinski

EX-OFFICIO

A. Wairimu

STAFF

S. Becker
M. O'Reilly
S. Nekola

GUESTS

T. Barlow
T. Bost
K. Merson
A. Villano

I. CONVENE: OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT:

“This meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 – 10:4-21. Notice of this meeting has been provided in the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Courier News. A public notice announcing this meeting has also been placed in the lobbies of the Hunterdon County Department of Human Services, the first floor of the Main Street County Complex, 71 Main Street Building #1, Flemington, NJ; the first floor of the Route 12 County Complex, Building #3, 314 State Route 12, Flemington, NJ and County Clerk’s Office.”

ROLL CALL:

The regular public meeting was opened at 5:30 p.m. Introductions were made.

S. Becker stated she is the Assistant Mental Health Administrator and Drug and Alcohol Director for Hunterdon County.

M. O’Reilly stated she is the Administrator for Hunterdon County Department of Human Services.

Chief T. Barlow introduced himself as Chief of Police in Tewksbury Township, past president of Hunterdon County Chief’s Association and a Hunterdon County CIT instructor.

A. Villano stated she is the Senior Director of Recovery Services for Acenda Integrated Health.

A. Wairimu stated she is the Program Analyst for Hunterdon County with the Division of Mental Health & Addiction Services.

K. Merson stated she is the Clinician Supervisor for the Rutgers EISS in Hunterdon County.

M. Deo stated she with Mobile Response's Tri-County Services.

S. Nekola stated she is the Division Head of Social Work Services and Seniors, Disabilities and Veteran Services for Hunterdon County.

T. Bost stated she is a Hunterdon County Resident.

R. Walker stated she is with Summit Oaks Hospital.

W. Dudzinski stated he is the chairman for the Mental Health Board and the CFO of NewBridge Services.

- II.**
- A. *MINUTES:** R. Walker made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of May 4, 2023. M. Deo seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion passed.
- B. CORRESPONDENCE:** S. Becker asked the group if they would be in favor of writing a letter of support to the Attorney General and Senators who are supporting Bill No. A-4979 and Bill No. S-3533. She asked for the opinions of the Mental Health Board Members. All members were in favor. S. Becker advised Chief Barlow the Mental Health Board will write a letter of support.

III. REPORTS:

- A. County Update:** M. O'Reilly thanked Chief Barlow for attending the meeting and presenting the Blue Envelope Program.

She advised the County received information about the myriad of Mental Health and Substance Use Programs Hunterdon Behavioral Health offers at the Prosecutor's Working Group meeting.

M. O'Reilly announced L. Nauman the Division Head of Seniors, Disabilities and Veteran Services has left her position with the County. S. Nekola is now the Division Head of Seniors, Disabilities and Veteran Services as well as remaining the Division Head of Social Work Services.

M. O'Reilly stated the Housing Choice Voucher waiting list opened today, June 1, 2023. The application can be found by following this link: <https://www.pha-web.com/portals/onlineApplication/1600>. She conveyed approximately fifteen (15) individuals came to the Department of Human Services to receive assistance completing their application, and approximately five hundred (500) applications were received online.

- B. State Update:** A. Wairimu reported DCF Commissioner, Christine Beyer, and Commissioner Sarah Adelman will be holding a virtual meeting on June 7, 2023, from 2:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. to discuss labor shortages impacting social and behavioral health services within children and adult services in New Jersey. They will address the next steps to engage

with providers to create solutions.

A. Wairimu announced Opioid Listening Sessions will be held on Monday, June 12, 2023, in Camden, another will be held on Thursday, June 22, 2023 at Sussex County Community College. And a virtual Listening Session will be held Thursday, July 20, 2023. Individuals can register at www.nj.gov/opioidfunds.

A. Wairimu stated the next quarterly provider meeting will be held on June 8, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. Interested individuals can register using the following link: https://dhs-nj.gov.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_u6ucelrnQdWzR2HcbCe1qA.

A. Wairimu announced she will be transitioning out of her position of Program Analyst for Hunterdon County. Starting June 19, 2023, she will be an ICMS State Coordinator. She advised J. Verney, and T. Wilson will cover the duties of Program Analyst for Hunterdon until the position is filled.

S. Becker congratulated A. Wairimu on her new position.

C. **NAMI Hunterdon Update:** W. Dudzinski stated NAMI Hunterdon has prepared a Tardive Dyskinesia awareness video. He conveyed the video is posted on their YouTube channel.

IV. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None at this time.

V. **NEW BUSINESS:**

A. **Blue Envelope Program:** Chief T. Barlow reported Tewksbury township adopted the Blue Envelope Program in October 2022. He conveyed it is modeled on a program first developed and distributed in the State of Connecticut. A resident of High Bridge approached Chief Bartman, of High Bridge Police, asking if New Jersey had a program similar to this. Chief Bartman assigned one of his officers, Brian Shipps, to look into the Blue Envelope Program. Officer Shipps began to assemble the program. Chief Bartman asked Chief T. Barlow, knowing he has a 21-year-old son who is on the spectrum, to review the program with Officer Shipps. The Blue Envelope Program was then rolled out.

Chief T. Barlow reported the purpose the Blue Envelope is to improve the interaction between a driver with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and a Police Officer on a traffic stop. The blue envelope provides written information and guidance on enhancing effective communication between police officers and individuals with ASD.

Chief T. Barlow reported for New Jersey, the Autism rate is one (1) in thirty-four (34). Nationally, the Autism rate is one (1) in thirty-six (36) children. There are an estimated 5.4 million American adults who are Autistic. With such a high prevalence, it is not a matter of if an officer will interact with an individual with Autism, but when.

In situations such as a traffic stop, any of us would feel stress, anxiety, or fear. But a person with Autism may experience more intense anxiety and fear. Chief T. Barlow shared a story about his son being stopped by a police officer on his drive home one night after work. Chief

T. Barlow explained Chief Bartman presented him with the idea of the Blue Envelope Program shortly after his son's traffic stop. Chief T. Barlow was onboard and hoped the program would be rolled out statewide.

Chief T. Barlow stated when Tewksbury Township rolled out this program in October 2022, it was also presented to assemblyman John DiMaio. Assemblyman John DiMaio now sponsors Bill No. A4979 on the assembly side. Senator Douglas Steinhardt then sponsored Bill No. S-3533, similar to Bill No. A4979.

Chief T. Barlow explained the front of the envelope has information for the driver. The envelope explains the officer may shine a flashlight in their car, may have a radio, and may have flashing lights on their car. The envelope also informs the driver to keep their hands on the steering wheel until otherwise directed, even if the officer is not at their car. Chief T. Barlow explained the back side of the envelope is for the officer. It states the driver may exhibit signs of anxiety, and repetitive movements. The envelope asks the officer to speak clearly and use the most simplistic explanations possible. It also explains to allow the driver extra time to respond, and clearly tell the driver when the stop is over and that they can leave.

Chief T. Barlow stated the driver is asked to include a copy of their driver's license, vehicle registration, and current copy of insurance card in the envelope. The drivers with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), are asked to keep the envelope with its contents in the visor or glove box of their car for easy access. The blue envelope was created to stand out and is the color associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Chief T. Barlow explained during his son's traffic stop, his speech and tone were robotic, and he was slow in his responses. The officer noted his son's eyes were dilated and he was slow in his movements. Typically, these are all signs that an individual is under the influence. If the officer who conducted the traffic stop did not pick up on the fact that Chief T. Barlow's son was on the spectrum, the officer would have had him out of the vehicle completing a field sobriety test. Chief T. Barlow explained his son's balance is not good and he would have failed the sobriety test and been brought down to the police station. Chief T. Barlow advised the Blue Envelope Program will relieve the stress for both the driver and officer.

The inside of the envelope includes a short message to the caregiver and driver. There is a space to include emergency contact information of another person who can verify the driver is on the spectrum.

Chief T. Barlow stated Bill No. S-761 was signed on May 15, 2023, to allow New Jersey residents to request an official indication of an Autism Spectrum Disorder or communication disorder diagnosis on their state driver's license. Chief T. Barlow explains as a parent, he is reluctant to see that occur. He stated the concept is a great idea, but he does not like the idea of it being included on the license. Chief T. Barlow added the fact that driver licenses are used for much more than just motor vehicle stops. His concern is the negative ramifications. Individuals are required to present their driver licenses for several reasons such as housing, loan applications, and at restaurants and bars. With this indication on driver licenses, there is a potential for individuals to be treated differently or discriminated against.

Chief T. Barlow stated it is his hope that in addition to this law, they will also pass the two bills he spoke about, and the Blue Envelope will be a statewide program. Chief T. Barlow reported the Blue Envelope Program was started in September 2022 and was rolled out in October. By November 2022, it was endorsed by the State Chiefs Association. Since then, Warren, Morris, Monmouth, Atlantic and Gloucester Counties have adopted this program. Individual departments including Roshelle Park, Dumont, Oakland, Upper Saddle River, Bernards Township, Glen Ridge, Bernardsville, Bloomingdale, and Monroe Township have also adopted the Blue Envelope Program.

Chief T. Barlow stated the Hunterdon County Chiefs Association has distributed envelopes to all police stations in Hunterdon County and every State Police barracks that service Hunterdon County, Hunterdon County Prosecutors Office and the Sheriff's Department also have the Blue Envelopes available. Envelopes have also been distributed at the high schools and several large driving schools have requested the Blue Envelopes. He added K. Blanda from the hospital reached out to Chief T. Barlow asking for envelopes to distribute.

Chief T. Barlow was asked how the situation is handled when the individual is under the influence. Chief T. Barlow responded individuals on the spectrum do commit crimes and do the wrong things. He added the officers are informed to not change their tactics; they will still be looking for signs of intoxication and evidence of criminal act, but the officer will have a better understanding knowing what may be going on.

Chief T. Barlow conveyed they are spreading the word about the Blue Envelope Program. He will share the information for Bill No. S-3533 and Bill No. S-761, to encourage the group to spread the word and reach out to their local senators and assemblymen.

Chief T. Barlow was asked if there are any other initiatives for other Mental Health conditions. Chief T. Barlow explained their Blue Envelope was modeled off Connecticut's envelope. He explained at the top of the envelope there are two check boxes, one marked *verbal* and the other marked *non-verbal*. Chief T. Barlow stated the idea of a generic envelope has been mentioned. This will allow the individual to note what the individual's disability is.

VI. NEWS / UPDATES:

Chief T. Barlow conveyed he is a CIT instructor for Hunterdon County and shared there will be a CIT class held in October 2023. The class is open to Mental Health practitioners as well as law enforcement. It is a 40 hour, Monday through Friday training held at the Route 12 complex. Interested individuals can contact Chief T. Barlow.

S. Becker announced the Stigma Free Task Force is holding a Stigma Free Walk with the local Rotary Clubs. The walk will be taking place at Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC) on Saturday, June 3, 2023, from 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. She added the event is shaping up to be a great event, and there a lot of agencies signed up to attend.

S. Becker shared there is a group in Hunterdon called Hunterdon Hope Seekers. She stated the group was created by the family of an individual who lost their life due to overdose. They are holding an event at the Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC) on August 26, 2023. Free

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Narcan will be given out at the event and the movie *Fentanyl Factor* will be shown. She will share additional information when she receives it.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting of June 1, 2023. All were in favor. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m. The next meeting will be held on September 7, 2023, at 5:30 p.m.