

MINUTES

Monday, February 14, 2022 1:00 P.M.

Law Enforcement Planning Council Palm Beach County School & Community Safety Initiative Behavioral Health Track

Online via Zoom



Members Present:

Captain Randy Foley, Chair, Behavioral Services Division, Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office

Lisa Williams-Taylor, Ph.D., Vice Chair, CEO, Children's Services Council of PBC

Mary Blakeney, Director, PBC Emergency Management, Public Safety Department

Darcy J. Davis, Chief Executive Officer, Health Care District of Palm Beach County

William Delaney, Vice President of Government Relations, Beacon Health Options

Elisa Cramer, Community Development Administrator, FL Dept. of Children and Families

Tammy Fields, Director, PBC Youth Services Department

Dr. Barbara Cox Gerlock, LLC, Consultant

Sharon L'Herrou, President/Chief Executive Officer, 211 Palm Beach/Treasure Coast

Alexa Lee, M.S., Director of Programs, Palm Beach County Substance Abuse Coalition

Kevin McCormick, Director, Exceptional Student Education, PBC School District

Sergeant Jeanette Rivers, PBC Sheriff's Office

Dr. Gena Rowlands, Senior Planner, PBC Sheriff's Office

Robin Russo, Director of Student Well Being, Palm Beach State College

Chief Javaro Sims, Delray Beach Police Department

Jill Sorensen, Director of Children's System of Care, SE FL Behavioral Health Network

Greg Starling, Chief Probation Officer, Department of Juvenile Justice

Sharon Tarlow, Education Coordinator, Behavioral Health Services, JFK Medical Center North Campus

Heather Thomas, Case Manager, PBC Sheriff's Office

Ortances Thomas-Hawkins, Director of the Mobile Response Team, South County Mental Health Center

Major Michael Waites, PBC School District Police Department

Norma Wagner, FL Dept. of Children and Families

Craig Williams, Chief Assistant State Attorney, State Attorney's Office, 15th Judicial Circuit

Lauren Zuchman, LCSW, Executive Director, BeWellPBC

Grant Evaluation Partners:

Cassandra Atkin-Plunk, Ph.D., Associate Director and Associate Professor, FAU

Vaughn Crichlow, Ph.D., Associate Dean and Associate Professor, FAU

CJC Staff Present:

Regenia Herring, Executive Director

Katherine Shover, Senior Criminal Justice Analyst

- I. Welcome and Opening Comments by Captain Randy Foley, Chair. He read the recommendations from the prevention and intervention groups, and was really impressed by the amount of work that went into these efforts. He has been doing a lot of research and has attended several conferences on this topic. Including the FBI national conference which was focused on threat management and mitigation prior to an incident. He also met with Fire Rescue last week about their Mental Health Initiative. He thinks that these efforts along with what the FBI is currently doing will really tie into the reaction working group. In April, he will be getting trained by the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice about changing the perspective of law enforcement and mental health providers working effectively together as a team.
- II. Introductions: Ortances Thomas-Hawkins introduced herself. She was formerly the Supervisor of Mobile Response for the North area, but is now the new Director of the Mobile Response Team for South County Mental Health Center.
- III. Agenda/minutes were approved by consent. Motion was made by Dr. Barbara Cox Gerlock and seconded by Tammy Fields.
- IV. **Prevention Recommendations:** Dr. Barbara Cox Gerlock recognized everyone that worked on the project including Kevin McCormick, Tammy Fields, Keith Oswald, Megan Eaton, Sharon L'Herrou, Dianne Wyatt, Alexa Lee, Dr. Cassandra Atkin-Plunk, and Dr. Vaughn Crichlow. She also recognized Katherine Shover for her support. She provided an overview of the recommendations. Just as the main committee has been looking at the need for awareness with the Aware and Care site, there is also a need for the community to know about other resources that are available. PBC is

rich in resources to raise awareness about mental health issues and educate people to reduce the stigma associated with these issues. Some of these resources include 211, Caring First, Birth to 22, and the Mobile Response Team (MRT). Caring First is a new comprehensive behavioral and mental health platform on the PBC School District's website. It lists all of the resources available in every school on 14 different levels such as behavioral health, mental health, bullying, Safe Schools, and Exceptional Student Education. Even though all of these resources are available there is a need for the community to become aware of them. For instance, the community may not know that MRT isn't there just for a crisis, but also to de-escalate a situation and get them into services. Other gaps include the need for a click button for community based tips on the website, all materials translated into other languages, and the 211 Teen Guide needs to be distributed back into the schools.

Dr. Gerlock also noted that there has been a wealth of professional development around the issues concerning behavioral health, prevention, and mental illness. (See the list of the agencies on the recommendations attachment). Some of the gaps are particularly evident with COVID such as staff leaving for agencies that offer tele med services. There is a need for a comprehensive professional development plan for all providers in PBC. They also need to examine the effectiveness of evidence based programs to determine if they are meeting the needs of the clients. There are already initiatives concerning ACEs, but there is still a need to train all stakeholders on ACEs and Trauma Informed Care. She noted the great collaboration and commitment among stakeholders to work on the services for youth and families, however a comprehensive countywide approach is still necessary to reduce silos. Another concern is that parents are unaware or unwilling to accept services. It is also difficult to access which services have been provided to children, so there is a need for a comprehensive integrated data system that includes all system stakeholders. Additional needs include developing a cultural and linguistic diverse staff, parent awareness, and gun safety training. Also youth involvement is really important as a resource for developing programs.

Chair Foley commended the group for their tremendous work on this project. He thought that the recommendations were very impressive. A couple areas that need further discussion are the tipline, deconfliction, and parents accepting services. He advised that law enforcement is building their own data deconfliction platform, but it would be interesting to discuss on the behavioral health and community services side. He advised that there may be some challenges concerning the release of this information. He also mentioned the need to get more buy-in from families. Regarding the tipline recommendation, Dr. Cassandra Atkin-Plunk explained the need to delineate between school based and community based tips as someone may be deterred from reporting a tip if it doesn't involve a school. Chair Foley agreed and said that PBSO has a See Something, Say Something link that can be used for reporting community based tips. Those tips go to every state, local and

federal intel agent in Palm Beach County. Lauren Zuchman appreciated all of the work that went into this effort. She encouraged joining forces with some of the existing groups as there is work going on in some of the spaces that Dr. Gerlock shared. That way we can find points of agreement and build off the work that is happening to prevent silos. Chair Foley agreed with this suggestion.

Intervention Recommendations: Members include Dr. Barbara Cox Gerlock, Megan Eaton, Nicholas Fricke, Deputy Chief Robin Griffin-Kitzerow, Ortances Thomas-Hawkins, Kevin McCormick, Renelda Mack, Dr. Mary Claire Mucenic, Sergeant Jeanette Rivers, Sharon Tarlow, Major Michael Waites, Craig Williams, Jill Sorensen, Keith Oswald, Dr. Cassandra Atkin-Plunk and Dr. Vaughn Crichlow. Sergeant Jeanette Rivers advised that the group met to identify the gaps in the community and mitigate these threats. The Mobile Response Team (MRT) participated in the committee and provided information about a lot of resources that many members didn't know were available. MRT is a free 24/7 resource that can respond to any situation where a person is suffering a mental crisis before a violent act occurs. They cover all of PBC and have virtual options. There is also the Crisis Assessment Prevention Education (CAPE) support teams that works with the PBC School District. The gaps include lack of facilities and beds to assist those in crisis. The group looked at the differences between crisis resource services for Charter Schools vs. public schools. More awareness may be needed about the services that are available to Charter Schools. In addition, the community may not be aware that MRT can provide assistance before law enforcement needs to get involved.

Recommendations include a system of care approach to ensure equity in the process. Cross county comparison to see if there are any gaps. A tandem response model with a social worker and law enforcement officer. Law enforcement agencies could utilize MRTs if they don't have a social worker on staff. Also collaboration among providers, wraparound services, increased funding and community awareness about services such as MRTs. Also the need to leverage virtual options for assessment and treatment, as well as work with the private sector to increase awareness. Other recommendations include encouraging municipalities to work with hospitals and nursing supervisors. The need to utilize the faith community to destigmatize mental health as community members don't always use available resources. Also trauma informed care training to assist law enforcement in dealing with the community and to identify needs within their organization.

Sergeant Rivers reported about other resources that are available such as the deconfliction software for law enforcement that was developed with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). Another resource is the ability to submit tips through apps such as FortifyFL. Gaps include the need for community awareness about the apps to ensure threats aren't missed. Expanding their language lines and outreach to communities that may not be aware of these services. Also letting the community know that anonymous reporting is always an option. A call for help isn't

a report to immigration services. Better communication is needed to ensure that the right resources are provided to individuals. Training is needed for the deconfliction software once it comes online. Baker Acts is another area that can be addressed. A continuum of services to see the gaps when services are needed. Also to determine the impact of Baker Act legislation. A legislative change is needed to allow parents to voluntarily place their child in the hospital for an evaluation. In addition, the group recommended finalizing the brochure to assist parents when they need help with the Baker Act process.

Chair Foley liked the idea of the brochure to help parents understand the Baker Act process. He noted that both groups emphasized the need for collaboration with behavioral health providers. In addition, he offered the services of the Sheriff's Office to get information out to the Charter Schools and faith based organizations. Their Intel Section has a Community Outreach Department that made contact with each of the Charter Schools and faith based organizations to let them know about the services that they have such as See Something, Say Something. Information could be emailed out to these organizations. Sharon L'Herrou loved the idea of starting with outreach contacts that are already in place. Vice Chair Lisa Williams-Taylor suggested tackling one or two items over the next year as many are long standing issues. Director Herring thought that was a great idea. She noted that we still have the reaction team to assemble. The final report with recommendations will then be provided to the LEPC and the CJC. Sharon L'Herrou mentioned the database has been challenging because of the privacy and data integration issues. She proposed that more awareness of the resources is needed and suggested a flyer that promoted 211 and Aware and Care that can be sent out electronically to the aforementioned distribution list. Dr. Gerlock suggest adding Caring First so they know what is available by school.

Kevin McCormick mentioned another area that could be addressed is the Baker Act guide. Sharon Tarlow got back together with the small team that was initially working on this project. She mentioned they are waiting on approval of the final draft from the School District and the Hospital. It can be distributed once it is approved. This is a caregiver's guide for navigating a hospitalization under the Florida Mental Health Act/The Baker Act. Tammy Fields asked if the legislation concerning Baker Acts would be incorporated in the recommendations. Sharon Tarlow noted that it is a brief overview that helps caregivers to understand what happens at the receiving facility, educational setting, home and community. It also provides next steps about what to do when released. Jill Sorensen mentioned that she would like to make sure that it is the most up-to-date version.

Dr. Gerlock commented about the need for more community awareness about MRT. Ortances Thomas-Hawkins asked if information about MRT could be added to the brochure. Sharon L'Herrou noted that the steps need to be clear with just a couple action items. She advised that 211 can link to MRT. Robin Russo agreed that

it would be helpful to have more information about MRT as they refer to them quite frequently. Chair Foley agreed that the information would be helpful as many people may not be aware of their services. Dr. Atkin-Plunk commented that they may want to have different flyers or brochures depending on the audience. Sharon L'Herrou agreed that research suggests that if you want people to take an action that you need to make it clear and easy. Chair Foley recognized Dr. Atkin-Plunk and Dr. Crichlow for their input and recommended that they be on all of the committees. Director Herring agreed that this is a good project for the committee to work on as a small win while the recommendations are being finalized. Volunteers to work on this project include Sharon L'Herrou, Dr. Atkin-Plunk, Dr. Gerlock, Kevin McCormick, Dr. Crichlow, and Sharon Tarlow.

V. Business

Reaction Working Group: Chair Foley advised that the third group comes into play when intervention fails. He suggested Fire Rescue, FBI, Emergency Management, community mental health providers, School Board Police, FAU, MRT, and a law enforcement representative for this group. Tammy Fields asked if this overlaps with the plan that PBC already has in place as a tremendous amount of work has already been done in this area. Mary Blakeney noted that they already have a robust plan, but would be interested to see if any of the members for some reason may have been overlooked. They may be able to build upon what they already have rather than duplicate the process. She noted that this could be a quick turnaround with a couple meetings. They are in the middle of a big revision of a lot of their domestic security products. Their whole focus is on a countywide incident so it would encompass all of the colleges, as well as public, private, and charter schools. She noted that law enforcement, Fire Rescue, and community partners that do a lot of mental health counseling have been very involved in their planning. Chair Foley asked if Mary Blakeney would spearhead this effort. She agreed and mentioned that she has a new staff member that is coming on board on Tuesday. Director Herring mentioned this is perfect for the group to address in coordinating all the systems. Katherine Shover noted that they may want to look at how this ties into ASHER. Kevin McCormick advised that the School District looks at the immediate response after a crisis to ensure students receive coordinated care. Chair Foley noted that they are also looking at this from a regional approach from RDSTF. He was wondering if there was a database with contact information for licensed clinical therapists if there was a tragedy. Kevin McCormick mentioned that they partnered with MSD after Parkland to make sure that they followed the same protocol.

- VI. There was a brief discussion regarding the Sun Sentinel Article about a recent threat case. Director Herring mentioned that kids are impulsive and they should have an opportunity to be redeemed through civil citation as they don't realize the implications of their actions. Chair Foley mentioned that the whole situation could have been prevented if parents worked with law enforcement. Sharon L'Herrou

noted that a lot of actions are being driven by fear and fear of liability. They try to do everything to prevent these incidents, but it has led to no risk and zero tolerance. In a lot of cases that leads towards a tendency to arrest. They need to figure out how to address these situations sooner. Major Waites mentioned that they are working with Safe Schools and the State Attorney's Office to get the message out. They try to identify the source of the threat. He advised that they have about a 95% diversion rate for written threat cases. Wraparound services and continual education are provided so that they learn the lesson without a felony conviction and the stigma attached to them. Dr. Gerlock noted that the data shows that we have given kids second chances in PBC. She remarked that the JFO program with local law enforcement is really reducing the number of kids that are entering the system for non-serious, low-level misdemeanor offenses. Chair Foley thought that this was a great discussion. He asked for members to please share any articles with Katherine Shover that they would like to discuss at future meetings.

Director Herring advised that Dr. Gerlock will be presenting before the Criminal Justice Commission to inform them about the perceptions vs. realities concerning juvenile justice and school data trends in PBC. She also mentioned that the CJC is working on trauma informed care training. They have a great collaboration between PBC Sheriff's Office, Palm Beach State College, and Youth Services to ensure that we are a trauma informed county.

- VII. Next meeting will be held on February 14, 2022 at 1 PM.
- VIII. Adjournment