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**Executive Director’s Report to the Board, June 2, 2021**

**Contract Management**

* Our contract with NYSDOH for the Rural Health Network Development Program (RHNDP) was successfully amended to reflect an overall reduction in the award amount from $190,000 per year to $141,001/year. I will remind the Board that ten (10) years ago, this contract was for $240,000/year, suggesting that there is a declining commitment from the Legislature to support the RHNDP.
* We continue to wait for our *current* year budget and work plan (that is, the one beginning on July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021) for the Tobacco Control contract to be approved. Because there was significant uncertainty with regard to this contract for an extended period of time, we allowed positions to remain vacant and reduced other-than-personnel expenses. Given that the budget is not approved, even at this late date, this year’s budget amount will be significantly underspent. Meanwhile, we anticipate that we will be asked to develop the budget and work plan for the *next* contract year—that is, the one beginning July 1, 2021 and ending June 30, 2022—any minute.
* NYSOFA has issued the request for applications for NYConnects for the *current* contract year—that is, the one beginning April 1, 2021 and ending March 31, 2022. Happily, there has been no reduction in the overall funding amount. We will be preparing a subcontractor budget for CCOFA to submit shortly.

**Personnel Management**

* Sarah Trafton began her employment with the Healthcare Consortium on May 17th as the Community Engagement Coordinator in the Tobacco-Free Action Program
* Stephen VanDenburgh has been hired to serve as the full-time Information and Assistance Specialist in NYConnects Program. Steve’s first day of work will be Friday, June 4th
* Bryan Zimmerman has been hired to serve as the full-time Youth Engagement Coordinator in the Tobacco-Free Action Program. Bryan’s first day of work will be Monday, June 14th
* Heidi Proper will be completing 3 weeks of an internship requirement associated with the Rural Medicine Summer Experience elective at SUNY Upstate Medical University. Lisa Thomas and I have developed a plan of work for her that starts with “grounding” her in the health status of the community, as gathered from written documents (e.g. community health assessments and health improvement plans), which the goal of exposing the soft, vulnerable underbelly of our rural health (and human) service system. To that secondary research, we want to add primary research—and a human dimension to that narrative--by providing opportunities for her to speak with both service providers and consumers. There will be quite a bit of reading, but also some project planning and implementation, including structured interviews and, ultimately, reporting. The first day of Heidi’s internship will be on Monday, June 7th.
* On May 19th, we had our first in-person staff meeting since March 2020. Several senior staff coordinated to provide a breakfast, and we focused on getting “reacquainted” with a group icebreaker activity (“two truths and a lie”). It was a fun time and a good way to get “soften” the transition back to closer contact.

**COVID Management**

Yet again, we have updated our COVID-19 Workplace Health and Safety Plan—this time, to reflect the most recent CDC and State guidance regarding masking for fully vaccinated individuals. Written guidance was distributed to staff last week, followed, a couple days later, by the updated Plan itself, and everything will be reinforced verbally at our next all-staff meeting. We have taken the approach that all fully vaccinated staff may be unmasked and not socially distanced while in the Consortium’s office suite; masking is still required in all common areas of the building, including stairwells, hallways, restrooms, the kitchen, and conference room. Staff will also be required to mask whenever meeting with non-staff (e.g. clients, vendors and other visitors). Lastly, for the safety of our staff, we will continue to require all visitors to mask. We have both asked all staff to report on their vaccination status and we have also required a copy of the vaccination card from anybody who wants to be unmasked to support that disclosure.

**Board and Community Relations**

**Recent**

* On April 14th, I participated in Congressman Antonio Delgado’s Healthcare Advisory Committee meeting
* On April 21st, I participated in a press conference at the Capitol organized by Assemblymember Didi Barrett to promote legislation that proposes to alter the state constitution to create mental health parity
* On May 20th, I participated in the semiannual meeting of the NYSHealth Foundation’s Community Advisory Committee meeting
* On May 27th, I participated in the third meeting of the Advisory Committee for the Consumer Empowerment Scorecard convened by the NYSHealth Foundation
* On May 28th, I attended a meeting with the Home for the Aged to support the application of Lou Pierro et al. for funding to support the EverHome Columbia Pilot Project, which aims to provide care management and in-home technology supports for vulnerable older adults in Columbia County
* On May 29-30, I attended the Public Health Partnership Conference, which was jointly sponsored by NYSPHA, NYSACHO and NYSARH
* On June 5th, I participated in a radio interview on Robin Hood Radio, as part of a series profiling FCH grantees
* On June 13th, I attended the Greene County Virtual Open House organized by Upper Hudson Planned Parenthood. This was a great example to me of what these kinds of events can look like, and Chelly was good enough to provide an opportunity for an extensive introduction of the Consortium. Thank you, Chelly!
* I have been participating in a small-group, limited-duration effort to develop the Local Services Plan of the Columbia County Community Services Board
* I have been convening and facilitating meetings of the Southern Hub Behavioral Health Workgroup, which meets once monthly

**Upcoming**

* I’ll be participating in a small-group, limited-duration effort over the next few weeks to update the Columbia County Addiction Response Plan
* I’ll be participating in a small-group, limited-duration effort to determine the future of the Columbia-Greene Addiction Coalition
* I’ll be joining a Fatality Review Board that will review deaths related to Behavioral Health (overdoses, other substance use, completed suicides etc.) with the goal of identifying gaps, challenges and barriers within our system
* Later this week and next, I have a couple meetings scheduled with our funder-partner-friends at the Foundation for Community Health to discuss (1) FCH’s new strategic framework and (2) our transportation program
* The fourth and next-to-last meeting of the Advisory Committee for Consumer Empowerment will be next Thursday, June 10th
* I will be on vacation from roughly Tuesday, July 6th through Wednesday, July 14th, visiting family in Kansas and Nebraska

**An appeal to engage with NYSARH**

As the Chair of the Governance Committee of the Board of Directors of the New York State Association for Rural Health (NYSARH), I am currently managing the Association’s annual nomination and election of board members and officers. If you are an individual member of NYSARH, or the designated representative of an organizational member of NYSARH, I encourage you to consider board service (and if you/your organization are not yet a member of NYSARH, I encourage you to become one!).

**Upcoming Board and Committee meeting dates**

* New Board Member Orientation, meeting #1: Thursday, June 3rd, 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
* New Board Member Orientation, meeting #2: Monday, June 7th, 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
* Executive Committee: Wednesday, July 7th at 9:00 a.m.
* Budget and Finance: Tuesday, July 27th, at 3:00 pm
* Governance: Wednesday, July 28th at 1:00 pm
* Board of Directors: Wednesday, August 4th at 2:30 pm with guest speaker Kelly Radzik, from CGCC, on the “Millennial Workforce”