

NORTHEAST DELTA HUMAN SERVICES AUTHORITY (NEDHSA)

Board Meeting MINUTES

June 8, 2021

Remote meeting held via ZOOM format

5:30PM

Call to Order Meeting called to order by Mike Shipp and prayer was led by Rev. Shawn Hornsby and a quorum was met.

Adopt Agenda: A Motion was made by Thelma Merrells and seconded by LaTanya Whiteside to approve /accept the Agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

Adopt Minutes of May 11: A Motion was made by Latanya Whiteside and seconded by Rev. Shawn Hornsby to approve / accept the Minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

Board Members Present:

Dr. E. H. Baker, Thelma Merrells, Rev. Shawn Hornsby, LaTanya Whiteside, Robert Flowers and Mike Shipp

Board Absent: Yvonne Lewis

Northeast Delta HSA staff present: Dr. Monteic Sizer and Delores Harris

Ownership Linkage-Recognition of Guests: None

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – No requests for comment.

GOVERNANCE PROCESS/EXECUTIVE LIMITATIONS for DECISIONS

Upcoming Events/Community Action

Northeast Delta will be hosting its inaugural Stop the Violence Bike Ride to highlight and address increasing teen violence and death in our region. The event will also allow Northeast Delta to discuss its prevention and wellness initiatives. We will be connecting the region to much-needed mental health and addiction services too. The Bike Ride will be Saturday, June 26, 2021, from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM at the Hub Music Hall, 201 Washington St., Monroe, LA.

Northeast Delta participated in the 3rd Annual Community Health and Wellness Expo held at the Monroe Civic Center on June 5, 2021. This event allowed the agency to continue to promote its integrated service delivery model. Northeast Delta was a Platinum Sponsor of the event.

Northeast Delta's Prevention and Wellness Department will be hosting a yoga and meditation workshop on June 12, 2021, as part of our WellAHEAD initiative. We were recognized and certified by the state of Louisiana as an organization for our internal and external commitment to staff and overall population health wellness.

After more than six months of financial auditing, the Louisiana Legislative Auditor's Office reported only two findings. We disagreed with one of the findings. The other finding we accepted due to the clinical staff's inconsistent obtaining of prior authorizations. To be noted, measures have been put into place to avoid future services without getting prior authorizations. No other audit issues were identified.

Regarding the audit issue we disagreed with and contested, we complied with all debt recovery guidelines. Like other state and federal agencies, Northeast Delta deferred/temporarily suspended sending vulnerable communities to collections due to their inability to pay for clinical services. As of May 2021, we resumed sending billing statements to patients as we stated we would. In April 2021, we let our patients know what to expect in May 2021. Additionally, patients who owe outstanding fees for services will be required to pay the full amount owed for the time payments were suspended. Those who do not or cannot will be placed on a payment plan and handled according to our contract with the Office of Debt Recovery.

Again, to have asked vulnerable, marginalized communities to pay fees when they likely didn't have the financial ability to do so, would have created further stress and forced many to abandon life-saving clinical services they relied upon. As a state safety-net behavioral health provider of services to vulnerable communities, we have a clinical, state, and moral obligation to do no harm the patients we are committed to serving.

In August 2020, NEDHSA's Central Billing Office (CBO) began requiring all clinics to track and submit prior authorizations via an MS Excel spreadsheet monthly. Implementation of this new process decreased the number of claim denials associated with "No Prior Authorization." However, this process only tracked and monitored prior authorizations and did not initiate them.

In the future, and before services requiring prior authorizations are provided, clinical staff will obtain the necessary approvals needed to bill for eligible services. Additionally, to improve continuity between clinical staff responsible for obtaining prior authorizations, tracking authorized services/visits, and getting the dates needed for re-authorizations, the Director of Clinical Services is currently automating these processes within our electronic health record (EHR). By automating these processes, clinical staff will easily track and monitor authorizations within the client's electronic health record. When clinical staff obtains the required authorizations, the number of authorized visits will be entered into the EHR by the designated clinical staff. The system will then track the number of remaining visits and notify clinical providers when the recertification should occur.

Another added compliance process will require providers to obtain required authorizations before scheduling appointments. This process will be monitored weekly by administrative staff at each clinic location. Planned scheduled appointments without prior authorizations will be rescheduled until the approval has been obtained and verified. Administrative staff will also be responsible for keeping providers informed of the number of remaining visits to avoid future problems.

Our Prevention and Wellness hosted two annual Take Back Box days. Events happened in Monroe, Morehouse, and Madison Parishes. Ms. Lewis assisted and partnered with us in Madison Parish. We also conducted a Take Back Box Day on June 1, 2021, in St. Joseph, Tensas Parish.

Dr. Monteic A. Sizer continues to be asked to join statewide panels as a subject matter expert relative to the state's Covid-19 response. The most recent LDH Office of Community Partnerships and Health Equity panel focused on the disproportionate deaths in the African American community. Mistrust was discussed as well within this population relative to Covid-19 vaccination. Dr. Sizer was asked by the Urban League of Louisiana to discuss trauma and related mental illnesses at its Empowerment and Policy Conference. Upcoming panels Dr. Sizer will participate in include a faith-based response and examining how negative social determinants of health contribute to health care inequities and untimely death outcomes. Dr. Sizer recently completed an interview for the

Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness Conquer Covid19 statewide media campaign.

Northeast Delta departments continue to develop plans for a phased, full reopening model where clients are seen face-to-face. All plans include universal precaution measures, technology, PPE gear, etc. We have already secured many of the items needed to ensure the safety of staff and clients. All staff are working from their Northeast Delta assigned workstations. The only exception is a few DD staff. They are working a flex schedule to avoid all staff being at their cubicles at once. We continue to require face coverings in all agency common areas. We also continue to practice social distancing and office screenings before individuals enter our buildings to avoid the community spread of COVID-19.

We continue to participate in many social media campaigns, including suicide prevention and various addiction ones. We have also started a massive digital public awareness campaign about our programs and various services. This digital campaign includes Google, website, news banners, Various social media outlets, etc. One commercial features our agency, and the other discusses opioids and what we are doing about it.

Our virtual Lunch and Learn held on May 12, 2021, from 12:00 PM – 12:30 PM was a success. Our special guest was a representative from MADD, Mothers against Drunk Driving.

Our contract to outsource our pharmacy services as a cost saver with GEONOA Pharmacy has been fully executed. Again, we are maintaining our current infrastructure. GEONOA will give us maximum flexibility and improve our overall services to regional clients.

We are still planning to have GEONOA Pharmacy offer the Covid-19 vaccine to Northeast Delta staff who prefer the Moderna vaccine. We will be offering the vaccine to our outpatient and inpatient clients. We will do the same for contractors as well.

I am happy to report that all Northeast Delta HSA staff in good standing will still receive merit pay increases in July 2021. This recognition is welcomed due to their hard work and dedication to our overall agency's vision, mission, and tenets.

Executive Director – Monthly Activity and Fiscal Reports

After the ED's report was presented, along with monthly Fiscal report a Motion made by Dr. E. H. Baker and LaTanya Whiteside to approve / accept as submitted. Motion passed unanimously.

Financial Planning & Budgeting/Financial Condition and Activities – *With respect to the actual, ongoing financial condition and activities, the ED shall not cause or allow the development of fiscal jeopardy or a material deviation of actual expenditures from board priorities established in Ends policies.*

NEDHSA's FY20-21 appropriated budget is \$15, 169,624. Our SGF = \$7,730,554. Our IAT = \$6,665,226. Self-generated = \$773,844.

BOARD –

- Agenda Planning (Policy Manual Page 9)
Mr. Shipp asked board about any changes that may be needed. None was suggested.
- Cost of Governance (Policy Manual page 8)
- Budget is set to use for continuing educational training or webinar courses to help board members retain more knowledge concerning procedures, etc. Also money is available for travel to Seminars as needed. He told members that if they came across a training that would benefit them please let him know so that they can be enrolled in the training and it will be paid for with monies set aside in the Northeast Delta Human Services Authority budget.
- Discussion of meeting format -
The Agenda format we currently use was approved to continue to be used. The board also agreed to start in July having in person board meetings again and we will still practice social distancing and the wearing of masks.

BOARD MANAGEMENT – *Ongoing*

- Board member recruitment

EXECUTIVE SESSION

ADJOURN

A Motion was made by Latanya Whiteside and seconded by Thelma Merrells to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting – July 13, 2021 - 5:30 pm
Ouachita Parish Health Unit – Community Room
1650 Desiard Street, Monroe, LA 71202