

**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES COLLABORATIVE COMMISSION**  
**MEETING NOTES – JANUARY 11, 2023**  
**VIRTUAL**

**ATTENDANCE**

Councilwoman Sarah Bagley	Kate Garvey	Amanda Hazelwood	
Catehrine Clinger	Councilwoman Aliya Gaskins	Jenny Rivera	
Jessy Cuddy	Angela Green	Kurt Huffman	Amanda Ruff
Laura Durham	Jacinta Greene	Mike Mackey	Christina Sherlock
Jay Falk	Katie Greenway	Julie Murphy	J-Lynn Vanpelt
Francesca Gallozzi	Kate Harbour (also panelist)	Zahra Rahimi	

**Excused Absent**

Ingrid Bynum  
Rose Dawson  
J. Glenn Hopkins  
Tammie Ignacio

**Staff**

Noraine Buttar  
Shawn Brown

**Panelists:**

Dr. Marcia Jackson  
Dr. Kiriimi Fuller  
Elizabeth Hughes  
Stephanie Marzelli  
Ursula Rocha

**Guest:**

Allen Lomax

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

The Chair invited members of the public to make any comments. None were made.

**WELCOME**

The Children, Youth, and Families Collaborative Commission (CYFCC) Chair, Jessy Cuddy introduced new member, Alex Roberts and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**REVIEW AND APPROVE DECEMBER MEETING MINUTES**

The Meeting Minutes were reviewed and approved with one amendment.

**NEW BUSINESS – MENTAL HEALTH ROUND TABLE – INTRODUCTION BY JESSY CUDDY AND MODERATION BY KATIE GREENWAY**

Jessy Cuddy gave an overview of the why behind the mental health roundtable, reminding members of goal group focuses. Mental health professionals were highlighted and an overview of

ground rules given. If members have questions that they might be interested in getting answered, they are encouraged to drop questions in the chat. During the panel, members were asked to think about immediate “aha’s”, new learnings, and activation opportunities.

### **What is the state of mental health in Alexandria?**

Fuller - Alexandria is on track with the rest of the nation. 28% more intakes since 2021. 2021 was a record year for mental health intakes. The youth's mental health needs are getting more complex. Schools are a key resource for early recognition. Substance use is also a huge issue. Since April 2022 overdoses have risen dramatically.

Rocha - Impact of the pandemic is still reverberating. Replacing conflict resolutions, emotional regulation instruction since the pandemic.

Harbour - substance abuse and isolation is impacting youth and it is happening more in school. School is resorting to locking the bathrooms to prevent substance use.

Jackson - Schools are always looking for new ways to meet the needs of students. Tiered approach to meeting student needs.

### **How is what is happening in Alexandria related to trends in the region?**

Hughes - Challenges have been increasing even before the pandemic, although pandemic increased and intensified challenges. Half of students in Alexandria have current, recent, or past year mental health needs, meaning they would screen positive in a diagnostic test for anxiety or depression.

Rocha - Social media creates a constant state of interaction with peers positive and negative. Little opportunity for emotional break.

Hughes - Social media can exacerbate existing issues especially to the most vulnerable students.

### **What are effective strategies to combat or resolve issues with social media?**

Rocha - Social media and technology can be a resource. Crisis line texting or calm apps can be supportive. Students are receptive to these supports.

Fuller - Students take videos of their therapist saying something that they can look back to. Pandemic of loneliness needs to be solved through true connection to reduce loneliness and isolation. Students are missing connections.

Harbour - no where to get away from social media challenges. Nothing to do to fix it, because it is so challenging. More visibility of adults who students trust who are trying to connect to students and can relate to their experiences.

Hughes - no respite from daily life (social media). Among adults a source of burnout and depression was lack of division between work and home stressors.

### **What is going well in terms of youth mental health in the city and region?**

Jackson - A majority of our students do have developmental assets and are adjusted in some ways well. Social emotional and academic learning makes sure that students are building skills.

Marzelli - Expressed hope because of students like Kate and collaboration across the city. There is a shared mission and collaboration across the city.

Rocha - Alexandria has strong collaboration and students are having strong conversations about mental health. Stigma associated with mental illness is starting to chip away generationally.

Fuller - Collaboration across systems and programs.

Hughes - interaction with students is heartening. Research suggests that students can get help with mental health by being in leadership roles.

Harbour - School therapist at ACHS is very helpful and provides support students need. A lot of people are working hard together for a better, healthier Alexandria.

### **What resources, strategies, or programs would or have been effective at addressing these mental health challenges?**

Marzelli - Needs are really complex and solutions often have to be very creative and collaborative. Parenting and outpatient services are provided, but working with other folks to support other needs is critical. Substance use intervention program for court involved youth is making comprehensive treatment recommendations.

Jackson - Ruler program helps adults and youth identify feelings and emotions. Youth voice is powerful and being open minded to youth responses is critical.

Rocha - Ruler helps start with adults and normalizes talking about emotions. Teachers are with students every day. For teachers to be more trauma informed is very important.

### **What about other programs across the region?**

Hughes - Adults with the highest levels of depression and anxiety. Students who experience food insecurity increase feelings of sadness. Increasing mental health targets can help, but addressing economic insecurity with direct resources can also help.

Fuller - Access is critically important, barriers exist for families. Being in school jumps over those barriers. Kids are 400% more likely to get mental health services if they are in school.

Harbour - Teachers who are able to spot mental health crises when they are starting is very important because many students feel isolated. Teachers are able to reach out quickly and quietly without students needing to reach out themselves.

Hughes - Mental health literacy course focused on changes in performance is a sign of mental health. If teachers are recognizing signs of mental health this can improve student support.

Marzelli - positive adult mentorship is very important.

Jackson - the iceberg of behavior which sets communication as a strategy to deal with behavior.

Harbour - Visibility and discussion about challenges out in the public is critical.

Rocha - ask students directly about their mental health.

Fuller - provide forums for parents to have hard conversations with students.

Hughes - make sure you are taking care of your own mental health as well. Model healthy behaviors as much as you can.

### **What resources need to be amplified?**

Fuller - Everything is constantly being utilized. Need is a database of resources that can be created and maintained.

Hughes - Youth mental health first aid. Low or no cost course that is worthwhile. Not sure what uptake is. Time off for city employees who want to engage in mentoring.

Marzelli - parenting resources that are court ordered a lot. Father-in-Touch program through Capitol Youth Empowerment Program. SCAN of NoVA has great parenting programs that are often court ordered. Additional positions within the city for mental health support.

Harbour - most of these resources Kate has never heard of, so expanding knowledge or marketing of these services.

Rocha - yes to the database.

Jackson - more mentorship would be useful. For students who have stress around economic challenges. Internship or workforce development opportunities are always needed.

Fuller - volunteers! Voices for Virginia's children.

Goal group are charged with determining what they will do with this information and discussing next steps.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.