



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH LOCAL
ADVISORY COUNCIL
FOR LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY

Meeting Date/Minute Summary for 12/03/2024

LCC BH Local Advisory Council:

Overview

The team discussed the 2025 legislature and priorities, focusing on Medicaid expansion and the importance of personal stories in convincing legislators to reauthorize it. They also emphasized the need for preparation and practice in giving effective testimonies to legislators, and the importance of understanding what motivates them. Lastly, they announced upcoming events such as the Invisible Shield film screening and community conversations, and the move of Aware into the CTI Building.

Next steps

- *All attendees to identify individuals in the community using Medicaid expansion and encourage them to share their stories on the Healthy Montana website by December 6th.*
- *Emily McVey to create and post a Facebook message about Medicaid expansion story recruitment on United Way's page.*
- *Jolene to send out the "Having Your Story" brochure and legislative website information to all LAC members.*
- *All attendees to consider participating in a Capitol tour and mock testimony session (to be scheduled).*
- *Interested attendees to contact Jolene about tabling at the Invisible Shield film screening on January 7th.*
- *All attendees to inform Teresa Ortega of any known homeless individuals who died in the past year for the Longest Night event on December 21st.*

Summary

New Team Members and Meeting Agenda for December 2024

In the meeting, Jolene facilitated introductions for new members of the team, including Rachel Jeffries, Villette Burke, Jacob Miles, Linda Kinsey, Emily Dean, Drenda Neiman, Nick Griffith, Teresa Ortega, Julie, Matt Furlong, Annette Lockett, Vivi Tyler, Jillian, Kayleigh, Lisa Curry, and Suzanne Morgan. The team also discussed the agenda for the meeting, which included October minutes. Jolene started meeting as Kayleigh and Todd were unavailable and Jadin joining later.

Medicaid Expansion and Behavioral Health

Jolene and Drenda discussed the 2025 legislature and priorities, with Drenda representing the behavioral health continuum of care work group. The group's focus was on Medicaid expansion, which was set to sunset by June 30th of the following year. Drenda explained that the work group had been strategizing on how to help in the reauthorization process during the legislative session. She also shared a document from the Montana budget and policy center that explains the history and importance of Medicaid expansion. Drenda further presented data showing the impact of Medicaid expansion in Lewis and Clark County, highlighting the increase in access to mental health and substance use services. She also mentioned the Healthy Montana website, where stories of individuals benefiting from Medicaid expansion are being collected.

Identifying Medicaid Expansion Storytellers

Drenda asked the team to identify individuals in the community who are on Medicaid or Medicaid expansion and are willing to share their stories. She suggested directing these individuals to the Healthy Montana website. Drenda emphasized the importance of personal stories in convincing legislators to reauthorize Medicaid expansion. She also mentioned that the local Advisory Council could play a significant role in advocacy and sharing voices. Emily agreed to post a message on the United Way Facebook page to encourage people to share their stories.

Medicaid Expansion Story Collection Concerns

Drenda discussed the purpose of recruiting stories about Medicaid expansion and the role of Healthy Montana in assisting individuals in sharing their stories. Jolene raised a concern about the number of stories collected so far, which was one, and asked if there were any regional or local efforts to collect stories. Drenda clarified that all stories were being pushed through the website for a consistent approach across the state. Nikolas asked if the work being done was discussing the impact of unwinding, to which Drenda responded that they were using existing talking points and resources. Jolene emphasized the importance of collecting stories and entering them into the website by the upcoming deadline of December 6th. Drenda and Jolene both expressed that they were unaware of this deadline until recently.

Condensing Stories for Legislative Testimonies

Jolene discussed the importance of condensing stories for legislative testimonies, emphasizing the need for practice and training. She shared a brochure and a 2019 guide to the Montana Legislature as resources for understanding the legislative process. Jolene also proposed organizing a mock testimony session and a tour of the Capitol for the group. She encouraged everyone to express their interest in participating in these activities.

Montana Legislature Website and Testimony

Jolene and Matt discussed the Montana Legislature website and its features, including the participation page, bill tracking, and committee information. Jolene emphasized the need to register to testify on Zoom by 5 PM the day before the hearing. Matt shared the success of the local advisory councils and the Montana peer network in passing peer support certification legislation and Medicaid reimbursement for peer support services, attributing these achievements to the personal stories of those with lived experience. He also mentioned the NAMI SMARTS program, which provides a framework for telling one's story to legislators. The conversation ended with Jolene planning to conduct a poll to gauge interest in participating in a tour and testimony.

Emphasizing Personal Stories for Change

Matt emphasized the importance of asking for help and support when discussing issues with legislators. He suggested that personal stories and experiences can be powerful tools in connecting with legislators and motivating them to make positive changes. Matt also highlighted the need for more people to share their experiences and the importance of understanding what motivates legislators. He concluded by suggesting that everyone has a stake in the issue of Medicaid expansion and that it's not an "us versus them" situation. Matt also mentioned that he would post a helpful link in the chat for those looking to improve their skills in this area.

Effective Testimony Preparation and Practice

Matt discussed the importance of preparation and practice in giving effective testimonies to legislators. He suggested watching other people's testimonies on bills to learn from their experiences and improve one's own skills. Matt also emphasized the value of navigating the legislative website to find information about bills and amendments, and how to contact legislators. He stressed the need for organization and practice in preparing testimony and suggested handing out written copies of the testimony to legislators for their convenience. Lastly, he mentioned the significance of emails to the committee, which appear on the legislators' desks during committee hearings.

Crafting Effective Testimony for Legislators

Matt emphasized the importance of concise and impactful testimony during legislative hearings. He advised participants to prepare a 5-minute speech, then condense it into a 1-minute version for in-person delivery. Matt also stressed the need to tailor testimony to motivate legislators based on outcomes and to avoid duplication of previous statements. He suggested using handouts to provide key outcomes and personal stories. Jolene added that personal stories can be powerful in connecting with legislators, as demonstrated by a woman's emotional testimony about her disabled child. Matt also encouraged the audience to identify individuals with leadership skills and lived experience to join their organization.

Upcoming Events and Legislative Focus

Jolene announced the upcoming Invisible Shield film screening and community conversations on January 7th, which will coincide with the next LCC meeting. She also offered to pass on information about tabling opportunities at the event. Drenda mentioned that legislators would be in town and encouraged attendees to interact with them at the event.

Suzanne announced that AWARE is moving into the CTI Building and will have an open house in February or March.

Theresa reminded the group about the Longest Night event on December 21st at Women's Park and asked for nominations of individuals who died this year because of homelessness. Matt announced that the group decided to focus their legislative efforts on Medicaid expansion, and Jolene encouraged new members to take initiatives in the policy and advocacy work.

AI-generated content may be inaccurate or misleading. JJ reviewed and edited for accuracy. 12.30.24

Next LAC General Meeting Date: January 7, 2025

Two group meetings scheduled based on member interests:

- **Group 1: Capitol One-Hour Tour at 11am -must be pre-registered**
- **Group 2: Online Zoom Meeting with Spotlight Presentation of LCC Mobile Clinic Van 11:30am-12:30pm**
- **Special Event Reminder: Last of the Invisible Shield Public Health series and discussion is January 7th at the Myrna Loy from 6:30pm-8:30pm**