

Texas Peer Assistance Program for Nurses Advisory Committee

This is an informational agenda item. The Texas Peer Assistance Program for Nurses, or TPAPN, Advisory Committee meeting was held virtually on Friday, December 4, 2020. Board staff personnel in attendance were Anthony L. Diggs, Director of Enforcement, Dusty Johnston, General Counsel, and Denise Benbow, Nursing Consultant for Enforcement.

TPAPN Program

The Advisory Committee was given an update on the TPAPN Program. The program director reported on the quarterly reports and annual report delivery to the Board of Nursing (BON). TPAPN has engaged in outreach activities including mailing postcards to nurses, participating in the National Alliance on Mental Illness walk and the program director was one of the persons interviewed on CBS news related to TPAPN and relapse during the pandemic. There was information shared about staff development activities and activities available to enhance TPAPN participants experience in the program.

The TPAPN Case Management Supervisor also provided an update about case management to the Advisory Committee. Employee retention, policies for consistency and the solid communication to enhance the team were discussed. TPAPN is starting to reach consistency in case management. With the exception of an outreach coordinator, TPAPN is fully staffed.

There was discussion about the caseloads looking good but are not evenly distributed due to new staff being trained. The Case Management Supervisor and Program Director discussed the number of cases assigned to case managers and how, over time, the caseloads are more balanced now than in a number of years. Additionally, they reported an increase in the number of participation agreements being signed. The letters being sent from TPAPN were also discussed including the welcome and end of monitoring letters. The participant handbook has been updated.

There was discussion related to positive urine drug screens, including a review of every positive. With the review of a positive screen, a differentiation between a relapse and some other issue, such as a valid prescription or environmental exposure is examined. There is a medical review officer and the discussion included forensic toxicology and the US Department of Transportation regulations related to urine drug screens.

The percentage of positive urine drug screens has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. There was discussion about jobs, job stress, and the impacts of the pandemic related to TPAPN participants.

TPAPN evaluations and evaluators were discussed. The matrix seems to be doing well, per the TPAPN Case Management Supervisor. There was some discussion about a possible, eventual training for the evaluators. An advisory committee member mentioned the training would be a good idea and also provide an opportunity for the evaluators to get to know each other.

Peer Support Partners

TPAPN held a virtual Peer Support Partner workshop on November 13, 2020. The next Peer Support Partner workshop will be held on February 12, 2021. When things return to a semblance of normalcy, TPAPN may continue to offer supplemental virtual workshops between the in person workshops. The list of Peer Support Partners was examined and updated to ensure accuracy. There were a number of partners who had been out of contact with TPAPN for over a year who were removed from the active list. There are about 130 active, current Peer Support Partners. TPAPN is looking for an outreach person.

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee examined the draft policy and procedure related to the advisory committee. Some elements discussed included method of voting (consensus versus voting), membership (including length of membership on the committee), and alignment with the contract between the Board of Nursing and the Texas Nurses Foundation. The work on the draft policy will continue between this meeting and the next meeting of the Advisory Committee.

The next TPAPN Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled to occur on Friday March 5, 2021. This is a non-action item for informational purposes only.