

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 3, 2021. 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 stated she turned in the quarterly report. While the next quarterly report had not been completed on the date of the Advisory Committee meeting, TPAPN is seeing an increase in referrals. TPAPN has been doing the usual outreach including mailing out self-care wallet cards. The last lunch and learn presentation had no attendees. Now the lunch and learn has 1.2 CNE hours and there are 19 individuals signed up to attend (March 9, 2022).

TPAPN had two case manager positions open. They have hired a new case manager to start on January 3, 2022. There is a second hire pending at the time of the Advisory Committee meeting with a hope this person can also start on January 3, 2022.

Peer Support Partners

The TPAPN Program Director reported ramping up the peer support partner program this year with a need for more peer support partners. As of 11/30/2021, there were 136 peer support partners, an increase of 5 since August 31, 2021. There were 219 participants paired with a peer support partner with 57 participants awaiting an assigned peer support partner. There were 29 peer support partners that did not have a participant and an average of just under two participants per peer support partner (1.61).

To provide information about the peer support partner role, TPAPN continues to offer monthly informational sessions with the next sessions scheduled for January 25, 2022, February 22, 2022, and March 22, 2022. The Peer Support Partner Workshop is required for a new peer support partner and supports current peer support partners. The next Peer Support Partner Workshop is February 11, 2022. Additionally, current peer support partners are supported in part through monthly peer support partner educational groups with scheduled meetings on January 20, 2022, February 24, 2022, and March 24, 2022.

Advisory Committee

Between the last advisory committee meeting and this one, the advisory committee divided into three workgroups to examine a nurse support track, employer referrals, and lessons from employee assistance programs applicable to TPAPN.

Roland Rodriguez, Case Management Team Lead, provided an update related to the workgroup examining the possibility of creating a TPAPN track that was “Nurse Support” only. This workgroup also included the BON staff representatives (with April Liwanag attending for Dusty Johnston) and Dr. Lehman. There is a possible barrier to this type of track within the statutes and in the contract between the Texas Nurses Foundation and the Board of Nursing.

Dawn Webb, MSN, RN-BC, TPAPN Program Director, indicated the workgroup examining employer referral to TPAPN along with the issues of stigma, employment, and employer role, met after the above group and was aware of the identified potential barrier. The workgroup focused on employer referral without termination of the nurse, decreasing the stigma associated with TPAPN participation, a wellness component, and the relationship between employee assistance programs with employers. There was continued discussion among the advisory committee related to each of these topics.

Katy Davila, TPAPN Program Operations Coordinator reported on the workgroup focused on what TPAPN can learn from employee assistance programs. Some of the specific focus areas of the workgroup, discussed with the advisory committee, were lessons TPAPN can learn from the evolution of employee assistance programs, and the five step formula for substance use disorder intervention.

Committee discussions included employer engagement and TPAPN outreach. Also discussed was the Texas Health and Safety Code pertaining to peer assistance programs, the continuum from wellness to impairment, behavioral risk management and resources such as those from the American Nurses Association and the Texas Nurses Association. The discussion included the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on nurses and rebranding of TPAPN.

The next TPAPN Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled to occur on Friday March 4, 2022. This is a non-action item for informational purposes only.