Work and Performance Plan FY2022 (CSS)

Stacy M. Lowry, Community Support Services

SECTION 1: DEPARTMENT KEY INITIATIVES

Key Initiative #1 -- Strengthen intervention efforts

Link to Strategic Business Plan:
No

Description:
Strengthen interventions to meet the needs of veterans and to reduce the incidence and impact of domestic violence, community violence and substance use. During the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic violence, community violence, and substance use have persisted if not escalated across Mecklenburg County. CSS evolved its service delivery methods to provide a safe way for clients to access related supports during the pandemic. The implementation of telehealth platforms has enhanced access to services for clients in Substance Use Services and Domestic Violence Services. The implementation of other virtual meeting platforms has enhanced access to non-clinical programs including Violence Prevention Services and the NOVA Domestic Violence Intervention Program. During FY22, CSS will intervene in domestic violence, community violence, and substance use through in-person, telehealth, and virtual interventions.

Rationale:
CSS is undertaking specific intervention efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic that will better meet the needs of veterans, individuals impacted by domestic violence and/or community violence, and individuals with a substance use disorder.

A 2020 study released by UNC Charlotte found that the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with concerning mental health effects among Charlotte's most vulnerable community members. Recommendations to address these mental health issues emphasized prevention and intervention efforts that include more community-based and online mental health and suicide prevention programming. During the pandemic, many individuals have been more isolated with reduced access to supports via in-person methods. At the same time, domestic violence, community violence, substance use and mental health issues have remained prevalent. For these reasons, the need for CSS services and flexible, safe delivery methods for these services is significant. CSS will rise to this need in FY22 by offering virtual services related to community violence, domestic violence prevention, and domestic violence offender programs. CSS will offer clinical services via telehealth for domestic violence and substance use. CSS will also offer services in-person or via hybrid methods.

Completion Date:
6/30/2022

Updates/Project Milestones:
Prevention and Intervention Services
- Implement and evaluate telehealth as a service delivery method for clinical domestic violence and substance use services. Evaluate telehealth by measuring utilization of the platforms by staff and clients; demand for telehealth by clients; and comparative analysis of clinical outcomes achieved via telehealth methods versus in-person or hybrid methods.
- Implement and evaluate virtual service delivery method for the NOVA Domestic Violence Intervention Program. Evaluate virtual services by measuring demand for virtual services by clients and comparative analysis of outcomes achieved virtually versus through in-person or hybrid methods.
- Implement virtual service delivery method for Violence Prevention programs including the LoveSpeaksOut teen dating violence prevention program and the Do the Write Thing Essay Challenge. Evaluate virtual prevention programs through pre- and post-tests with participants.

Veterans Services
- Co-lead local pre-implementation measures for the SAMHSA Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Military Service Members, Veterans and their Family (SMVF) (local initiative is MissionCLT) to reduce veteran suicide in North Carolina.
- Participate in NC Governor's Working Group (NCGWG) to support established priorities to reduce veteran suicide.

- Connect community stakeholders and seek one to three stakeholders to obtain grant funding to strengthen intervention efforts by reducing access to lethal means (NCGWG priority) in order to reduce the veteran suicide rate.
- Work with the Governor's Working Group to identify data sources and/or make recommendations regarding data collection in order to establish baseline for the NC veteran suicide rate.
- Engage at least two county departments and/ or community stakeholders to add/collect veteran specific data in support of NCGWG to enhance data reporting on veterans.

Outcomes/Measures:
End of year reporting

Director Comments: (Year-end)

Executive Team Comments: (Year-end)

Key Initiative #2 -- Provide Leadership around the Community 2025 Housing & Homelessness Strategic Plan

Link to Strategic Business Plan:
No

Description:
The 2025 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Housing & Homelessness Strategy (CMHHS) is the first comprehensive effort to address housing instability and homelessness in Charlotte-Mecklenburg involving the public, private and non-profit sectors. The effort, which is led by executives at Bank of America and Atrium Health, is supported by leaders from Mecklenburg County, City of Charlotte, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Continuum of Care and Charlotte Center City Partners. With the help of Mecklenburg County Community Support Services (CSS), McKinsey & Company, which is providing a fact-based analysis on a pro bono basis, has collected data and research on gaps in the existing housing continuum in Charlotte-Mecklenburg; compiled best practice solutions, including a community survey, in-depth interviews, and focus groups with over 100 homeless service providers, community and business leaders, funders, people with lived experience, local government staff, housing advocates, residents, and research institutions. These activities are further informed by the work that CSS completes in partnership with other agencies in the community to end and prevent homelessness by providing leadership, high quality data and context, funding, and supportive services to support homeless households to obtain and sustain housing. This includes management and maintenance of a communitywide Housing & Homelessness data dashboard, includes current data, research and a blog that addresses current issues and initiatives related to homelessness and housing, and annual Charlotte-Mecklenburg Housing Instability & Homelessness Report Series, which is a local series funded by CSS.

In addition, CSS helped develop and design the approach and governance structure to lay the foundation for a comprehensive, sustainable plan with shared ownership. This structure includes a working group, technical committee, and nine workstreams. Four workstreams are focused on: Strengthen Prevention System (Evaluate Upstream); Optimize Temporary Housing/Shelter System; Grow Permanent Affordable Housing; and Strengthen Cross-Sector Supports. Five additional workstreams focus on how the work will be accomplished, including: Unified Policy Advocacy; Coordinated Funding Alignment; Innovative Data Analytics; Effective Communications; and Ongoing Strategy Support. Staff from Mecklenburg County Community Support Services serve on the Project Management Team; and lead and support the Technical Committee as well as multiple workstreams.

As of June 2021, more than 170 individuals have signed up to participate on at least one of the nine project workstreams, which are tasked with developing recommendations for the CMHHS strategy. By October 2021, CMHHS will produce a comprehensive plan which aligns strategic objectives; employs a common lexicon; describes clear metrics; and develops a multi-year approach to prioritized actions.

Rationale:
Charlotte-Mecklenburg and CSS has a longstanding commitment to ending and preventing homelessness. Over time, there has been significant investments in prevention, emergency shelter and permanent housing. These efforts have only ramped up in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that every person as a safe place to isolate or quarantine. And yet housing instability and homelessness continues to grow in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. On a single night in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, there are at least 3,000 individuals experiencing literal homelessness, including in sheltered or unsheltered locations. The number of households experiencing housing instability has also risen. And because of the financial ramifications of the pandemic, as of January 2021 there was almost $70 billion owed by U.S. renters in combined back rent, utilities, and late fees. Such a seemingly intractable problem like housing instability and homelessness necessitates a comprehensive, systemic approach to address the full continuum of need. It also requires both the public and private sector at the table. This new effort marks the first time in Charlotte-Mecklenburg's history that the public and private sector have come together to address the full housing continuum, from street homelessness, upstream to households experiencing cost-burden.

Completion Date:

| Development & Launch of Strategic Plan: 10/31/2021 |
| Implementation of Plan: 2026 |

Updates/Project Milestones:
• Support activities of CMHHS, including project management team and workstreams
• Provide leadership for Technical Committee
• Co-lead Innovative Data Analytics Workstream, including submitting plan recommendations
• Provide CMHHS updates to community stakeholders
• Utilize existing infrastructure including report series and dashboard to support CMHHS goals
• Ensure the release of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Housing Instability & Homeless Report Series (ongoing)
• Ensure the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Housing & Homelessness Dashboard is maintained (ongoing)

Outcomes/Measures:
End of Year Reporting

Director Comments: (Year-end)

Executive Team Comments: (Year-end)

Key Initiative #3 -- Health and Human Services Integration Initiative

Link to Strategic Business Plan:
No

Description:
Health and Human Services (HHS) Integration seeks to better coordinate service delivery across Mecklenburg County's Consolidated Human Services Agency which includes the Department of Community Resources (DCR), Community Support Services (CSS), Department of Social Services (DSS) and Public Health (PH). HHS Integration will be achieved by:

• Connecting data software systems across HHS departments to help customers receive information and/or referrals for needed services regardless of which HHS department they first interact with.
• Fully expanding usage of the Single View of the Customer technology platform that streamlines HHS programming to help customers easily access services.
• Ensuring Mecklenburg County residents can receive HHS services as close to their homes as possible through Community Resource Centers.

Rationale:
Many residents receive services from multiple HHS departments, but efficient coordination of these services is difficult because of operational, policy and technology constraints.

HHS Integration takes a broader look at how the HHS Agency can be best organized to serve Mecklenburg County residents. HHS Integration is important because the initiative will:

• Enhance collaboration across HHS departments to offer programs and services in a more coordinated and comprehensive manner.
• Expand the functionality of the Single View of the Customer technology platform to improve customer experience when seeking or receiving services across HHS departments.
• Help HHS customers have a clearer path to independence and stability through greater access to HHS benefits and programs.

Completion Date:
This is a multi-year plan with the final completion date yet to be determined. (The updates or milestones below will be completed during FY22.)

Updates/Project Milestones:
• Revise the Community Resource Center governance charter to ensure appropriate staffing levels and performance expectations for each HHS department.

• Develop and implement standardized integrated Health & Human Services policies and procedures designed to holistically assess customer needs across CSS, DCR, DSS and PH.
• Develop and implement a project plan for the full implementation of the Single View of the Customer and NCCARE 360.
• Develop a communication strategy outlining how HHS Integration will affect each HHS department, specifically the implications for staff and customers.
• Create and utilize a survey tool to assess staff understanding of HHS integration.

Outcomes/Measures:
End of Year Reporting

Director Comments: (Year-end)

Executive Team Comments: (Year-end)

Key Initiative #4 -- Provide Leadership to Improve Homeless Response Systems

Link to Strategic Business Plan:
No

Description:
The impact of COVID-19 highlighted gaps in the homeless response systems which led to the County's creation of the Housing Innovation Strategy & Alignment Division in Community Support Services.

The purpose of this division is to create innovative programming across the housing continuum in order to reduce the number of households experiencing homelessness, improve access to homeless system, and ensure stability of households transitioning to housing. The Division is focused on both alignment of the cross-cutting elements within the Community Support Services Department as well as the system-focused efforts to address housing instability and homelessness, violence prevention and intervention.

Providing this leadership positively impacts outcomes for vulnerable populations throughout the County.

Rationale:
Along with the health and economic impact of COVID-19, there was a 55% increase in overall homelessness and an increase in the length of time people experienced homelessness during FY21. Homelessness and the lack of affordable housing requires a community-wide strategic response.

At the onset of COVID-19, CSS and community homeless shelters partnered to open hotels as non-congregate emergency shelter options to allow for social distancing. This included opening an 80-room hotel serving specifically as emergency shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness who are 60 years of age or older with underlying medical conditions.

Concurrently, a large encampment of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness developed in the "North End" area of uptown Charlotte. In February 2021, CSS led efforts to close the North End Encampment and moved the 215 individuals residing there to hotels. CSS has partnered with advocacy groups and community organizations to offer on-site supportive services and identify housing solutions for guests at the hotels. A plan to transition the remaining hotel guests to permanent housing is being finalized and will be implemented throughout FY22.

In order to increase the long-term availability of affordable housing, a plan will be developed and implemented for purchasing and upfitting a hotel to serve as permanent housing for individuals experiencing homelessness. The hotel will also provide housing for individuals with criminal justice system involvement and limited housing resources.

In addition to affordable housing efforts, CSS will develop and implement a plan to create the Connections Center, a new day-services center for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

Completion Date:
This is a multi-year plan with the final completion date yet to be determined with milestones being accomplished in FY22.

Updates/Project Milestones:
• Provide direct leadership and oversight of encampment hotel transition that includes:
o Partnering with housing providers to create connections to permanent supportive housing.
o Partnering with Mecklenburg County's Criminal Justice Services to expand a transitional housing program for eligible guests.
o Providing incentives to landlords for timely housing placement.

• In partnership with Asset and Facility Management, explore the feasibility of creating and expanding access to permanent supportive housing through the purchase and conversion of area motels.

• In partnership with Asset and Facility Management, explore the feasibility of opening a day services center for households experiencing homelessness or who are housing insecure. If feasible and approved, identify a center operator through a Request for Proposal process.

• In partnership with community partners, assess current community resources, identify gaps, and develop a comprehensive strategy to help people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Mecklenburg County

• Lead and work in conjunction with Continuum of Care (CoC) and Charlotte Mecklenburg Housing and Homelessness (CMHHS) 2025 Plan to ensure development of a multi-faceted response to homelessness and housing.

Outcomes/Measures:
End of Year Reporting

Director Comments: (Year-end)

Executive Team Comments: (Year-end)

Key Initiative #5 -- Workplace Culture, Staff Development & Communication

Link to Strategic Business Plan:
No

Description:
As Mecklenburg County emerges from a year of disruption, leaders are determining the right return-to-workplace strategies for their departments. With a variety of elements to consider – including timing, health and safety, engagement, and work models – leaders are challenged in navigating the road ahead.

The move from shelter-in-place to normal operations is likely to impact company cultures and create uncertainty for many businesses and employees. After an entire year of completely reimagining work structures, overcoming hardships and worrying about wellbeing, asking employees to return to the workplace can feel like yet another challenge for leaders to overcome.

Rationale:
According to a Forbes survey, culture was the top concern cited by 32% of respondents stating they were worried about "maintaining company culture" in a post-pandemic world.

Going forward, employees will be distributed across a more varied mix of work arrangements, which could lead to differences in employees' opportunities and experiences if not effectively managed. Connectivity and positive communication are necessary to enhance and maintain the critical elements of a positive workplace culture.

Completion Date:
06/30/2022

Updates/Project Milestones:
• Create an environment that encourages connection by supporting employee morale through both in-person and virtual engagement activities
• Measure employee sentiment for returning to office; address any concerns
• Develop communications plan to provide information through identified lines of communication most used by employees
• Work with staff to develop IDPs
• Support staff in completing professional growth opportunities
• Department Director will attend team/division meetings up to two times per year (in person – if allowable)
• Division Directors will facilitate division meetings with enough frequency to ensure staff are knowledgeable on any County or department updates.
• Division Directors will conduct visits to outposted staff at least two times per year.
• Division leader will be actively engaged in the Restart Internal Communication Plan and associated activities.

Outcomes/Measures:
End of Year Reporting

Director Comments: (Year-end)

Executive Team Comments: (Year-end)

Key Initiative #6 -- Equity and Inclusion Initiative

Link to Strategic Business Plan:
Yes

Description:
Continue the implementation of the County's Equity Action Plan.

Rationale:
Mecklenburg County is committed to addressing its racial inequities through an intersectional analysis. In order to become a more equitable institution, strategies must be implemented and enforced that enhance the work Mecklenburg County has already completed to promote equity and inclusion. The County has partnered with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) to create both a racial equity training curriculum for County staff, an Equity Action Toolkit and a three-year enterprise-wide Equity Action Plan. To continue to build the capacity of the organization, it is critical that the County continue to implement the agreed upon action items identified in the Equity Action Plan despite COVID-19.

Completion Date:
This is a multi-year project (FY2020-FY2022).

Updates/Project Milestones:
Continue implementation of the County's Equity Action Plan that were postponed due to COVID-19:
• Continue rollout of "Advancing Racial Equity Training" for all County employees to enhance abilities to advance racial equity.
• Re-establish Department Equity Action Teams (DEAT) for select Departments to begin training and to initiate development of department specific equity action plans (pending further guidance from the County Manager's Office); and
• Provide training on Racial Equity Tool usage to County mid-senior management.

Implementation of FY22 Equity Action Plan items for those departments with specific accountabilities.

Outcomes/Measures:
End of Year Reporting

Director Comments: (Year-end)

Executive Team Comments: (Year-end)