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Senate Health & Welfare Testimony, S. 90

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Testifying on behalf of the commissioner -

Sec. 49 of Act 46, the school consolidation law, required AHS and AOE to “develop a plan for maximizing collaboration and coordination between the Agencies in delivering social services to Vermont public school students and their families.” The agencies filed a report in January of 2016 detailing that plan – one action step in the plan was for AOE and DMH to conduct site visits at schools to identify next steps to improve collaboration and coordination. I’m going to give you a brief report about the first site visits.

A team from AOE and AHS visited two supervisory unions (Orange North & Orleans Southwest) and one school district (Winooski) last spring.

Overall, what the team heard was not surprising;

- the schools are facing the effects of complex, broad-scale societal issues that have no easy solutions.
 - growing poverty and concerns about early childhood development;
 - lack of resources ranging from lack of staff to losing access to group therapy due to a cut in reimbursement rates;
 - need for community-level leadership to help communities focus on building resources and creating some concrete solutions locally.

As a result of these visits and consulting recent trainings and publications on finding community-level solutions to broad-based societal problems, the team determined:

- 1) Neither AHS nor AOE, alone or in partnership, can solve all the problems.
- 2) Transformative efforts will be more successful if we support building local capital within the communities rather than offering solely a “top-down” approach from the agencies
- 3) We need to build local leadership from a systematic and community-based perspective
- 4) - even while we continue to work at a state leadership level, which might include a shared AOE/AHS System of Care Plan

Concrete steps:

- 1) Refocus on ACT 264 – it is foundational to this work, but resources to support the work under ACT 264 have slowly been lost
 - a. Support and sustain the Local Interagency Teams
 - b. Agency leadership should model shared values of and commitment to solving trauma-relevant systemic problems – having all divisions within and across the two agencies on the same page with respect to the centrality of addressing SED and trauma, as well as coordinating our activity moving forward, would go a long way toward creating the culture change needed. [trauma informed services director]
- 2) Build on the successful model between WCMHs and Orange North, to support roll-out of PBiS.
 - a. Build on the new population-level payment mechanism for School Based Clinicians to support PBiS to get more schools involved.
- 3) Build a bridge for kids in CIS services, so that when they turn 6, they can continue to get services through the DA. Right now, children in CIS lose all services as of their 6th birthday.
- 4) Make sure the bridge includes a “family lane” so that the families of children in CIS can work with the DA.
- 5) Consider re-mapping AHS districts either state-wide or in areas such as Orleans, where two districts overlap and create confusion regarding where services should be accessed.
- 6) Explore options for expanding Alternative Schools – wait lists are long

What has already happened:

- 1) First LIT extravaganza, to bring everyone together and begin to re-invigorate Act 264; second one is in planning

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- 2) Continued work to educate public on ACEs – showing of movie Resilience, for example
- 3) Met with superintendents, principals' association, spec education association, attended their conferences to network
- 4) Developing trauma-informed toolkits for educators that include concrete interventions as well as education about trauma
- 5) Training of school-based clinicians in Child Parent Psychotherapy and evidence-based practice for parents and their children 1-5 years old has begun.
- 6) AOE and AHS working in partnership to identify ways to provide technical assistance and training to communities regarding Coordinated Service planning and addressing SOC issues through the LIT
- 7) Building Flourishing Communities Summit, December of 2016