

**Smoky Mountain Center
Local Business Plan
Planned Expansion of LME into the New River Catchment Area**

This additional section of the Local Business Plan addresses the issues and objectives that are specific to the planned expansion of Smoky Mountain Center's (SMC) catchment area to include Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Watauga, and Wilkes Counties. This expansion of SMC and related LME functions into this region is planned for July 1st, 2007. All of the strategic objectives defined in the main body of the SMC Local Business Plan were developed with the involvement and participation of New River area providers and community stakeholders and will apply to the 12 county catchment area. This section defines the unique issues brought about by the planned expansion that will need to be addressed as this process moves forward.

GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Key Issues

A. Governance

Board Composition- One of the more challenging issues related to the expansion of SMC to include the New River counties is the dissolution of the New River Board of Directors and the re-composition of the SMC Board of Directors. With the mandate to operate within the statutorily defined limit of 25 members and having twelve counties that need appropriate representation presents a unique challenge. To date, both Boards are constituted based on representation that includes one ex-officio member appointed from each county's Board of Commissioners and at-large members representation based on a proportionate number of seats based on the population size of the counties in the catchment area. Members of both Boards will need to determine how representation will be established on the new SMC Board.

Additionally, the Board will have to determine how the Eastern Band of Cherokee's are represented on the re-constituted Board. The Qualla Boundary crosses over Jackson and Swain Counties, with additional Eastern Band members having communities in Graham and Cherokee Counties, all within the SMC catchment area.

Board Relationships- One of the most vital components of a successful Board of Directors is not only the relationship between the Board members themselves, but their relationship with the Administration. Bringing membership together from 2 Boards with a unique history of service will require a focus on finding ways to build trust and positive relationships between these individuals across a large, geographically dispersed area.

The Administration of SMC will also seek to reach out to new Board members from the New River catchment area to foster positive relationships and to find ways to continue to be responsive to the concerns of individual Board members and to address any county specific issues.

Community and Family Advisory Council (CFAC) – Both SMC and New River have long-time CFAC members that have committed significant time and energy to the formation and meaningful participation of the CFAC in their role as advisory council's to the LME's Board and administration. SMC will work to bring the membership of both CFAC's together under one structure, with new bylaws, and to facilitate their joint planning and work together as one CFAC.

With the geographic disparity and projects that have already evolved in each region, SMC will also facilitate the CFAC's ability to continue to have a northern and southern sub-committee structure to allow members from both areas to develop and implement projects specific to each region.

B. Administration

Governmental and Community Collaboration in New River Counties- SMC will have the charge of building new and lasting relationships with county government, community stakeholders and consumers and families in the 5-county New River area. SMC will seek to carve out a distinct and valuable role for the LME in community collaboration activities, and to be responsive to the needs of local government and constituent groups. This will take time and effort, but will foster a unified LME and Board.

Opportunities

- Strengthened political relationships and reputation in meeting goals of reform with the Division of MH/DD/SAS, Legislature and county government.
- Demonstration that LME's can have broad, non-contiguous catchment areas. Demonstration that a LME can successfully implement a model that is both locally responsive and efficient through centralization of "back office" functions in a cost effective manner.
- Ensuring the long-term autonomy and viability of the SMC LME through consolidation of LME funding and LME functions.

Challenges

- Meeting times and location for the Board and CFAC- SMS will be dynamic in at promoting participation of Board and CFAC members at all meetings.
- Being responsive and timely in communication to a 12 county catchment area and developing a structure that can respond to 12 sets of county government, community stakeholders, providers, consumers and family members.

Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective: *Create a unified Board of Directors that can successfully represent the 12 county catchment area as a single LME.*

Responsible Department- Administration

Timeline-July, 2007 and ongoing

Stakeholders Engaged- Board of Directors

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Both Boards have explored a reformation based on several models including 1) equal representation based on one ex-officio and one at-large member, and 2) proportionate representation models that would result in several of the smaller counties having no at large members or reduced county commissioner representation. To date, both Boards have agreed that the equal representation model would be the preferred model to follow.

In addition, as the reformation of the Board moves forward, the terms of all at-large members are proposed to come to an end. New members would be appointed based on the model selected. This would mean that the SMC Board would have all currently appointed at-large members terms expire to facilitate the appointment of all the new at-large members effective July 1, 2007. The 12 ex-officio members appointed to the SMC Board would appoint the remaining at-large members, based on recommendations from the current Boards' Nominating Committees.

Stronger participation and relationships will be fostered by alternating meeting locations between the northern and southern regions, providing group transportation to meetings and utilizing teleconferencing capabilities for those who cannot travel..

Strategic Objective: *Creating a unified Consumer and Family Advisory Council that reflects the unique needs of both regions.*

Responsible Department: Administration & CFAC Liaisons

Timeline: July, 2007 and ongoing

Stakeholders Engaged: Members of SMC and New River CFAC's, Division's CFAC liaison

The CFAC liaisons from both regions will begin to facilitate meetings between members of both New River and SMC to discuss and decide on membership and bylaw issues, establish meeting times and locations for unified CFAC, and to begin working an agenda of common goals and activities.

In addition, a structure will be developed that will allow each region to have a CFAC sub-committee to work on initiatives unique to each region.

Stronger participation and relationships will be fostered by alternating meeting locations, providing group transportation to meetings and the use of teleconferencing capabilities.

Strategic Objective: *Establishing relationships with county governments and community stakeholders in New River area.*

Responsible Department- Administration, Northern Region Staff, Community Relations

Timeline- July 2007 and ongoing

Stakeholders Engaged- County government, community stakeholders, consumers and family members

SMC has established an organizational structure that will support a Northern Regional office with a northern regional director with staff devoted to qualified provider

community issues, community relations activity, customer services, care coordination and quality management. SMC will initiate strategies to engage local government and stakeholders through existing community meetings, attending county commissioner meetings, and community open houses to inform consumers, family members and interested individuals with information about SMC and the role of the LME.

Staff in the northern region will participate in county collaboratives and be involved in community activities on behalf of the LME. SMC will also extend these efforts through community education activities as defined in the Customer Services section of the LBP.

BUSINESS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Key Issues

Consumer Data Conversion- With the planned expansion, SMC will have to take on the task of converting all consumers currently in the New River system that receive state-funded services to the SMC system. This is necessary to ensure that all consumer information data; demographic, CDW, IPRS and outcome data is tracked and documented in accordance with Division of MH/DD/SAS standards.

Converting and Evaluating New River Budget and Allocation Information- SMC will have to develop an understanding of New River funding and allocations for budget and planning purposes. This information will then be utilized to develop a Utilization Management Plan for the northern region, and to initiate contracting, authorization, payment and adjudication processes. The northern Utilization Management Plan will be distinct from the development of the Utilization Management Plan for the southern region, but related business processes will be unified.

Opportunities

- Achieving economy of scale by having a standardized reporting process of all consumer information across a 12 county region.
- To strengthen the infrastructure of SMC LME by creating greater economy of scale by combining LME functions across 12 counties and funding the required additional LME positions through consolidated LME funding.
- To achieve greater standardization of business processes created by joining 2 LME's into one administrative structure.

Challenges

- Short term manpower needed to convert large volume of consumer data.
- Understanding the service availability and service needs in the northern region to create a Utilization Management Plan responsive to consumers and families.
- Avoiding duplication of efforts and business practices. Creating streamlined systems that work efficiently across 12 counties.
- Technological connectivity and communication with northern region.

Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective: *Establish a seamless, unified business and IT process across 12 counties.*

Responsible Department- Finance/IT and Utilization Management

Timeline- July, 2007 and ongoing

Stakeholders Engaged- Providers

SMC will seek to integrate all business and related information technology processes to ensure that there is consistency across all 12 counties in the areas of finance and budgeting, contracting, authorization and utilization management analysis and monitoring, payment and claims adjudication and consumer and financial data reporting to meet Division of MH/DD/SAS requirements.

Strategic Objective: *Establishing a northern regional budget and Utilization Management Plan that maximizes state funds and meets service needs in the community.*

Responsible Department- Finance/IT and Utilization Management

Timeline- July 2007

Stakeholders Engaged- CFAC, NR LME, Provider Community

SMC will work with New River LME in the Spring to develop an understanding of the region's funding and allocation from the Division of MH/DD/SAS and how these funds have been designated for services in the budgeting process.

From this information, SMC will work to establish a 2007-2008 budget and associated Utilization Management Plan for the northern region that maximizes funds in a manner that enhances service provision for consumers, and that promote the use of evidence based practices in the region.

PROVIDER RELATIONS

Key Issues

Transition of New River Provider Contracts to SMC Provider Contracts- The initial transfer of and transition of the provider contracting process will be time-consuming and will require a concentrated effort to ensure that provider contracts are completed in a timely and correct manner consistent with the SMC contracting process.

Transition of Provider Operations to Establish a Unified Process to Include New River Providers- SMC staff will work to identify and transition distinct provider operations processes to a unified process consistent with SMC practices. Areas to be addressed will include: establishing new processes, if necessary in web-site usage, electronic documentation submission, authorization and person-centered plan approval, use of SMC's Provider Manual, and related claims submission and adjudication submission.

Building Relationships with New River Region Provider Community and Analysis of Provider Community Capacity and Service Needs in the Region-

SMC will work to build relationships and partnerships with the provider community in the New River area and to duplicate provider forums, training and technical assistance, consortium opportunities (see Provider Relations section of LBP), and opportunities for communication and problem-solving.

Additionally, SMC will begin an assessment of the capacity of the provider community in the New River area, and to identify opportunities to expand the provider community to meet unmet service needs, as well as to enhance the use of best-practice models in the service delivery system.

Opportunities

- Building on the unique service and provider strengths in the use of evidence based practices and disseminating models of care across both regions.
- Expanded opportunity to use providers across all counties. Providers serving either region can be recruited to provide needed services in alternate region.
- Demonstration of a public/public model. This expansion of SMC will allow for the demonstration of the strengths and challenges of utilizing a publicly funded provider organization (160-A Organization) overseen by a public management entity to serve mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse consumers.

Challenges

- Managing the 2007-2008 provider contract renewal process to meet established Division timelines.
- Ensuring adequate provider capacity in rural, geographically dispersed region.
- Balancing the development of New River's 160-A, while still promoting and providing choice to consumers by cultivating providers in the region as needed.

Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective: *Establish a seamless provider contracting and operations process inclusive of providers in the 12-county catchment area.*

Responsible Department- Provider Relations, Finance/IT

Timeline- July, 2007 and ongoing

Stakeholders Engaged- Providers

SMC staff will review the current New River contracting process and identify any differences that need to be addressed. SMC staff will then be responsible for initiating the 2007-2008 contracting process with New River area providers, and communication with the provider community regarding any changes and steps that will be implemented for developing contracts for services in this region. This will be done in a manner consistent with current SMC processes. SMC Northern Region staff will work with Provider Relations staff to provide technical assistance to providers in this new process.

New River Expansion Addendum

This will include transitioning New River area providers to the use of the SMC website, electronic STR, authorization and person-centered plan review, submission of consumer data, claims and payment information, use of the SMC Provider Manual and related provider operations functions. Endorsement and monitoring functions will also be duplicated and expanded into the northern region.

Strategic Objective: *Initiate proactive relationships with provider community in the New River area, to support the development of an array of needed providers to meet community service needs.*

Responsible Department- Provider Relations

Timeline- July, 2007 and ongoing

Stakeholder Engaged- Providers, CFAC, community stakeholders

Provider Relations staff and northern regional staff will initiate individual communication, contacts and provider forums to establish knowledge of and relationships with providers in the northern region. Staff will initially focus on the role of SMC LME and new processes being established to build consistency of operations.

SMC staff will also begin an assessment process that will identify the services provided by county, and by disability population, and work with community stakeholders and CFAC to continue the identification of service gaps that was initiated as part of the planning in development of the LBP. This assessment will be incorporated into the SMC Provider Community Development Plan in October.

Additionally, SMC will identify best practice service models available in the northern region and work to introduce Recovery and Recovery Education Centers into the service array. Evidence-based practices used for special populations related to domestic violence, sexual abuse, juvenile justice and other specified areas will also be identified and expanded as is appropriate.

CUSTOMER SERVICES AND CONSUMER RELATIONS

Key Issues

Community Education Regarding the Role of SMC as the LME- New River LME has been working over the last several months to inform county government, community stakeholders, CFAC, consumers, family members and providers of the plan for New River to establish a public, intergovernmental provider organization and the related need to identify another LME to perform management functions in the 5 county region to meet the legislative mandates defining the requirements for a 6 county/ 200,000 population LME area. Most of this effort focused on gaining support by counties for developing the intergovernmental provider organization and related separation of provider and LME functions.

SMC will work to education the community on the distinction between the LME and provider organization and to inform the community of the role of the LME in the delivery of mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse services.

Opportunities

- SMC will provide a greater focus on community education as a LME function.
- Existing relationships between northern regional staff and community stakeholders.
- New River 160-A has facilitated a positive view of SMC to the community, county government and CFAC paving the way for a smooth transition.

Challenges

- Gaining community understating of the distinct roles of SMC as the LME and New River 160-A as a provider in the community.
- The strong community recognition of “New River” as the manager of mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse services will need to transition to SMC.
- SMC gaining understanding of the unique characteristics of each county in the region.
- Initiating and developing strong relationships with key constituent groups across a rural, geographically dispersed region.

Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective: *Promote the understanding and value of the role of SMC as the LME in the northern region.*

Responsible Department- Administration, Northern Regional staff, Community Relations

Timeline- July, 2007 and ongoing

Stakeholders Engaged- County government, CFAC, community stakeholders

SMC staff in the northern region will continue to participate in county collaborative activities as LME representatives and provide information and education at these forums. In addition, SMC will develop and initiate distinct community education activities to include written materials, community forums, newspaper articles, newsletters and community events. These activities will be incorporated into the larger SMC community education plan (see Customer Services section of LBP).

SMC administration and community relations coordinator will seek to establish quarterly meetings with county Boards of Commissioners and community stakeholders to provide opportunities to share information and discuss concerns and issues in each county. It is hoped that CFAC will also desire to plan consumer and family member open house/ community education initiatives to share the role of SMC and to help consumers better understand how to access services and to know of available services offered through the provider community.

SMC will also engage the New River area legislators to provide information on the role of the LME and SMC as an organization.

SERVICE MANAGEMENT

Key Issues

Understanding the Service Needs of the Northern Region- As discussed in the Business Management section above, one of SMC's greatest challenges with the planned expansion, is to develop an understanding of the service availability and consumer needs in the 5-county area. This understanding is critical to the development of an Utilization Management plan to efficiently use state dollars in a manner that reflect the service priorities of the northern region.

Managing Crisis Services in the New River Region- SMC will be responsible for reviewing and ensuring that the array of decentralized crisis services in the New River region are financially stable and able to continue in a manner that is responsive to community preferences.

Opportunities

- Single stream funding will allow greater flexibility for service delivery and the implantation of Recovery oriented approaches to care.
- Single stream funding will also allow for the expansion of evidence based practices for specialized target populations and in supporting under-funded services.
- Learning gained from the strengths of both regions' crisis services and expanded capacity to create community-based crisis services.

Challenges

- Analyzing the financial stability of current crisis services in northern region.
- Navigating guardianship issues between two government agencies.
- Building strong collaborative links and relationships with providers and non-profit organizations to promote evidence based practices.

Strategic Objectives

Establishing a northern Utilization Management Plan that maximizes state funds and meets service needs in the community.

Responsible Department- Finance/IT and Utilization Management

Timeline- July 2007

Stakeholders Engaged- Board of Directors and CFAC

SMC will work to establish a 2007-2008 Utilization Management Plan for the northern region that maximizes funds in a manner that enhances service provision for consumers, and that promote the use of evidence based practices in the region. Single steam funding will give SMC the ability to analyze service needs and be more flexible in working with providers to incentivize the implementation of Peer Support, Recovery, System of Care and Self-Determination practices, as well as the flexibility to fund programs for specialized populations.

New River Expansion Addendum

As part of the development of the Utilization Management Plan, SMC will evaluate the New River region's decentralized crisis services system to determine if it can be sustained in the current manner, or if modifications will need to be made to ensure that they continue in a manner that is responsive to the community and meet consumer needs in the most efficient manner possible.

This will be accomplished with the participation and input from the Board of Directors, CFAC community stakeholders and providers.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Key issues and strategic objectives for the New River area are encompassed in the Provider Relations section of this document related to endorsement quality improvement and monitoring and would be consistent with the strategic objectives defined in the Quality Management section of the LBP.