



**Executive Director's Staff Report**  
**September 18, 2025**  
**(August 22, 2025 – September 18, 2025)**

**BOARD / STAFF**

- **Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee** – The committee met during the Executive Committee's regularly scheduled meeting time on September 9, 2025 at 2:00 PM. EMD Consultants Kari McAvoy and Eulonda Nevels presented EMD's strategic planning philosophy, discussed the strategic plan refresh process and timeline, and led a discussion with the committee focused on the current strategic plan and the future direction of MHB. The meeting was recorded and shared with the two committee members unable to attend.
- **Executive Committee** – The committee did not meet on September 9, 2025 at 2:00 PM as two of the three officers were traveling; therefore, a quorum was not established.
- **Housing Committee** – The committee met virtually on September 15, 2025 at 5:30 PM to review and discuss an application submitted by Peter & Paul Community Services to create 34 permanent supportive housing studio units at the agency's north city campus in the St. Louis Place neighborhood. Peter & Paul Community Services' Chief Executive Officer Anthony D'Agostino was invited to attend a portion of the meeting to answer the committee's questions. The committee requested additional information to be submitted for review, and they are currently in the process of scheduling a follow-up meeting to determine whether or not the project will be recommended to the full board for funding at the October 16 board meeting.
- **Please Welcome Practicum Student Denise Antimango** – from Washington University's Brown School of Social Work as MHB's Fall 2025 and Spring 2026 practicum student. Originally from Uganda, Denise has experience with project planning, tax administration, grassroots advocacy, and nonprofit engagement. Denise will support MHB's System of Care work and other collective impact-related work. Denise began her 9-month concentration-level field experience on September 3, 2025. She will work from 9 AM to 5 PM on Wednesdays and Thursdays in the MHB Office. Clinical Partnership Director Poli Rijos, LCSW will serve as her field instructor.
- **Farewell Summer Practicum Student Linda Aguirre** – Linda graduated from Southern Illinois University – Edwardsville in August 2025 with her Masters in Sociology following the completion of a summer field experience (May 13 – September 16, 2025) under the supervision of Poli Rijos. The focus of her practicum was a comprehensive plan for the development of financial and sustainability plans for the System of Care after the 4-year SAMHSA grant concludes in September 2027. Linda presented the comprehensive plan and

Gantt chart at the weekly staff meeting on September 16, 2025. Denise will continue Linda's work over the next nine months.

**COMMUNITY INVESTMENTS / ALLOCATIONS**  
**(CCSF, CMHF, Funding Partnerships & Initiatives)**

- **FY26 – 28 Application Cycle Planning** – MHB program staff are actively engaged in planning for the upcoming grant cycle. Recommendations will be presented to the Program Committee at their next meeting.

**FEDERAL PROGRAMS / STRATEGIC INITIATIVES**

- **St. Louis Region System of Care (SOC)** – SAMHSA issued new guidance for the System of Care St. Louis which required MHB to revise its continuation application for Year 3. The revised continuation application was edited to remove any references to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) activities in compliance with Executive Orders #14151. As a result, MHB staff made the difficult decision to remove a key partner from the grant. However, MHB will continue to provide funding from non-federal sources to ensure that the partner's important work continues in the community in service to the SOC children and families.

**ADMINISTRATION**

- **FY24 & FY25 Audits** – CliftonLarsonAllen (CLA) will begin their field work for the FY24 audit the week of September 22, 2025. Following completion of the FY24 audit, the FY25 audit work will begin immediately. It is anticipated that the FY24 audit will be presented to the board at its November 20 meeting and that the FY25 audit will be presented at the February 19 meeting. In both instances the Finance-Investment Committee will be convened in advance to review the draft audited financial statements.

**OTHER**

- **Tuesdays & Thursdays in August and September** – Deputy Director Serena Muhammd regularly attends the Housing for At-Risk Populations virtual meeting convened by the St. Louis Area Agency on Aging. This meeting supports tornado recovery for vulnerable populations. Additionally, Serena represents MHB and behavioral health at the St. Louis City-County Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) meetings.
- **Wednesdays in August & September** – Prevention Partnership Director Jessica Meyers is a member of the Save Lives Now! Regional Implementation Team and attends their weekly meetings. Save Lives Now! is a regional initiative of the East-West Gateway Council of Governments to rapidly reduce street crime by 20% over three years starting in 2025.
- **August 22** – MHB staff participating in Funder Fridays sponsored by Philanthropy Missouri included Early Childhood Program Director Denise Carter, Prevention Partnership Director Lisa Potts, and Poli Rijos. Funder Fridays are free, confidential opportunities for staff from community organizations to meet with funder representatives outside of a formal grantmaking process for a 45-minute technical assistance meeting. The conversation is

intended to build the capacity of the community organization and support their successful navigation of the regional philanthropic sector. This program replicates MHB's successful First Fridays open office hours program.

- **August 25** – Denise Carter and Lisa Potts participated in the City of St. Louis Senior Fund's convening working with the Public Design Bureau to reimagine the aging services network in the St. Louis region.
- **August 27** –
  - Dave Haasis conducted a site visit at the Criminal Justice Ministry's permanent supportive housing apartments in the Dutchtown neighborhood, as part of their annual recertification.
  - Poli Rijos and Program Assistant Cameron Saari attended the Immigrant Services Providers' Network Meeting.
  - Lisa Potts delivered a Handle with Care presentation to the Juvenile Division of Child Protective Services.
- **August 28** – Jessica Meyers attended the Missouri Budget Project's state and federal legislative call to learn about the proposed redistricting process.
- **September 2** – Jessica Meyers attended the Life Outside of Violence Full Committee meeting.
- **September 3** – Jessica Meyers attended the Family Violence Council meeting.
- **September 4** –
  - Dave Haasis attended a Corporation for Supportive Housing webinar on *How HR 1 Medicaid Provisions will Impact Affordable and Supportive Housing*.
  - Director of Administration Sue Culli-Wilson and Cameron Saari participated in a Foundant webinar *Trust Then Tech: Practical AI*.
  - Accountant Anjanette Washington participated in Philanthropy Missouri's Finance Committee meeting.
  - Cassandra Kaufman and Serena Muhammad met with the administrator of the Coro Leadership program to discuss the placement of two Coro Fellows at MHB for their government rotation. The Fellows will work on two projects that will increase MHB project management capacity. One Coro Fellow will focus on understanding the Out of School Time landscape and present recommendations to the board to help inform MHB's FY27 – 29 Application Cycle. The second Coro Fellow will help design a funding initiative to support MHB's ability to respond to natural disasters and emergencies more effectively through the creation of a local Behavioral Health Care Team modeled after the Missouri Department of Mental Health's Disaster Services Office.
- **September 5** –
  - Dave Haasis participated in the Behavioral Health Network's Adult Services Advisory Board meeting.
  - Denise Carter and Serena Muhammad met with Suzanne King, Executive Director of Mental Health America to discuss the future direction of the organization. During the meeting, Suzanne shared some challenges that the

organization has faced recently and some possible opportunities to sustain some of their key initiatives. Although it was not discussed during the meeting, Suzanne later sent an announcement to Denise and Serena that the Mental Health of America Board of Directors had made the difficult decision to close their doors. The letter cited the main reason for their decision being the unexpected loss of a key funding source.

- **September 10 –**
  - For the first time, MHB and the Department of Mental Health hosted a joint presentation for the School Social Worker Workgroup hosted by EducationPlus. The presentation walked school social workers through how to connect the students and families they serve to services funded by MHB and DMH. The main focus of the presentation was the Handle with Care program, supported by VPC, the Children’s Mental Health System of Care, supported by VCR, and the Youth Behavioral Health Liaison program, supported by DMH Administrative Agents. The presentation was very well received, and the group is planning a series of informational sessions for Superintendents, School Counselors, and other school staff. Lisa Potts and Serena Muhammad co-presented.
  - Dave Haasis and Cassandra Kaufman attend the ribbon cutting for Gateway Housing First’s Francie’s Place one-bedroom permanent supportive housing apartments in the Marine Villa neighborhood.
  
- **September 10 & 17 –** EMD Consultants conducted two separate focus groups with MHB staff as part of the strategic plan refresh. The Leadership Team did not participate in the sessions. Additionally, all staff completed an anonymous values survey in advance of the focus groups.
  
- **September 11 –** Susan Kabat and Anjanette Washington participated in the AICPA Town Hall Series.
  
- **September 15 –** Cassandra Kaufman attended the City of St. Louis Senior Fund’s Aging Funders Convening to learn about and provide feedback on recommendations for reimagining the aging services network, led by the Public Design Bureau.
  
- **September 16 –**
  - Dave Haasis participated in the Community Health Commission of Missouri’s Community Advisory Board meeting.
  - Dave Haasis also attended the Behavioral Health Network’s Housing Collaborative meeting.
  - Denise Carter attended the Northside Economic Empowerment Center’s open house for their new location at STLCC’s Harrison Education Center.
  - Jessica Meyers attended the St. Louis Ending Domestic and Sexual Violence Network monthly meeting.
  - Poli Rijos attended the Marrillac Mission Fund’s Program Committee meeting.
  - Anjanette Washington attended the MOCPA Pulse virtual meeting.
  
- **September 17 –**
  - Denise Carter co-hosted the 2025 Camp Summit in partnership with Blueprint4 Summer. The event was attended by more than 100 out of school time providers interested in expanding their services and partnerships. This is the second year

that MHB has helped to sponsor the event (\$5K from CCSF Emerging Needs Fund) in an effort to improve the quality of youth development and enrichment programs available to school aged children.

- Jessica Meyers participated in the U.S. Attorney's Hate Crimes Task Force meeting.
- **September 17 & 18** –Cameron Saari attended the Foundant (MHB's grant management software) Regional Training Conference in Milwaukee, WI.