Behavioral Health Task Force (BHTF)
Meeting Summary
January 13, 2010

Members Present:
Peter Buckley; Margaret Evans; Richard Harrison; Greg Hoyt (for Mary Lou Rahn/David Sofferin);
Anita Hufft; Jan Ligon; Steve Miller; Cayce Kump

Center for Health Workforce Planning and Analysis (CHWPA) staff present:
Kristi Fuller; Ben Robinson

Meeting Commencement and Opening Remarks:
Ben Robinson opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and providing an overview of the agenda.

Individual Introductions:
Members of the task force introduced themselves.

Future Meeting Dates:
Due to scheduling considerations for members who regularly have conflicts with the previously
determined meeting dates, it was decided to change the meeting frequency and timing to the fourth
Thursday of every third month. The upcoming meetings will be held on April 29th and July 22nd from
10-12

Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing Consortium:
Anita Hufft provided a presentation on the recently implemented consortium that is addressing the
specific issues regarding behavioral health nursing. Dr. Hufft also discussed some of the priorities that
the group identified at the December 2009 meeting.

Behavioral Health Workforce GIS Maps:
Kristi Fuller gave a presentation that provided an overview of the production of behavioral health
professionals statewide. The Center has developed GIS maps to provide a graphic representation of
capacity which provides further understanding of existing programs as well as future needs.

MCG/DBHDD Partnership:
Peter Buckley presented on the relationship between DBHDD, particularly East Central Georgia
hospital, and MCG. Dr. Buckley gave statistics regarding the state of mental health and the mental
health workforce in Georgia, and explained the consequences of the low staffing levels in the state’s
hospitals. Dr. Buckley also provided insight into the collaborative relationship between the partners and
the benefits of establishing such a partnership.

Workforce Development Needs:
Discussion was held regarding areas to focus efforts for work regarding the behavioral health
workforce, including nursing.
• Expansion of the psychiatric/mental health technician programs (currently at Darton College
  and Savannah Technical College) were discussed as a way to improve the care provided by
HSTs/direct care staff. Currently the salary for HSTs is currently very low, the educational requirement is a high school diploma or GED and high turnover exists. It was stated that some HSTs may be interested in continuing education, but that the large majority would not, unless the ability to pay a higher wage is implemented. The capability to expand these programs and offer distance education may be very feasible and could increase the quality of care provided by HSTs. An identified need of raising the expectations of the HSTs was discussed, as at one time a baccalaureate degree was expected. Key to raising the bar may be increasing the salary/benefits of the position. Offering additional psychiatric/mental health tech programs will be examined by the group.

- DBHDD is also seeking to hire behavioral analysts, with certification, at both the master and doctoral degree levels. Additional service agencies may also be seeking behavioral analysts, including the CSBs, the DOC and the DJJ. A consideration in increasing opportunities to educate behavioral analysts is the ability to bill insurance and Medicaid for payment of their work. There appears to be overlap in the expectations of the behavioral analysts and existing psychologists. The creation of behavior analysis as a field of practice evolved from the DD community. Georgia State University currently offers a certificate in behavioral analysis through the School of Education. Additional consideration of the development of behavioral analysis programs/certificates will be further examined by the group.

Funding and Partnership Opportunities:
No current opportunities were seen by the staff, but all were encouraged to seek opportunities that could be sought through the partnership of the task force.

Meeting Dates:
April 29, 2010
July 22, 2010