

Minutes

Behavioral Health Council

Date March 18, 2025

Time 1:00 PM – 2:45 PM

Meeting called to order by Dr. Christina Finello, Esq., Executive Director, Behavioral Health Council

IN ATTENDANCE

Commonwealth Representatives:

1. Deputy Secretary of Policy and Planning, Meghna Patel on behalf of Secretary of Policy and Planning, Akbar Hossain
2. Secretary of the Department of Human Services, Dr. Valerie Arkoosh
3. Secretary of the Department of Health, Dr. Debra Bogen
4. Commissioner of Pennsylvania Insurance Department, Michael Humphreys
5. Secretary of the Department of Aging, Jason Kavulich
6. Secretary of the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, Dr. Latika Davis-Jones
7. Special Assistant to the Secretary, Cathy Hall, MPA on behalf of the acting Secretary of the Department of Education, Dr. Carrie Rowe
8. Spec. Asst. to Adj. Gen. John Noll on behalf of Adjutant General of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Major General John Pippy
9. Policy and Legislative Affairs Office Director, Captain Leslie Barr on behalf of Commissioner of Pennsylvania State Police, Colonel Christopher Paris
10. Regional Licensed Psychologist Manager, Corrections, Dr. Elicia Stein on behalf of Secretary of the Department of Corrections, Dr. Laurel Harry
11. Secretary of the Department of State, Al Schmidt
12. Exec. Dir. Rural Dev. Council, Western Reg. Dir. PA Dept. of Agriculture, Mr. Mark Critz, on behalf of the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Russell Redding
13. Director of Policy and Planning, Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Samantha Koch on behalf of Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Michael Pennington
14. Bureau Director, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, PA Dept. of Labor and Industry, Denise Verchimak, on behalf of Secretary of Department of Labor and Industry, Nancy Walker
15. Digital Services Director at the Governor's Office, Sadie Smiles on behalf of Director of Digital Strategy at the Governor's Office, Annie Newman
16. LETI Director, Lauren Diller on behalf of Pennsylvania Attorney General's Safe2Say Program Director, Brittney Kline
17. Deputy Secretary, Department of Human Services, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Jennifer Smith

Representatives with lived or living experiences and family members:

18. Robert Hamilton, MPPM - Westmoreland DHS Dir.; Formerly homeless veteran & person in long-term recovery
19. Kate Favata - Community Engagement Manager, Crossroads, Treatment Advocate
20. Jennifer Wilt - Parent of a loved one with mental illness, President NAMI of Cumberland, and Perry Counties

County Representatives:

21. Tina Clymer, County Mental Health Office representing Carbon, Monroe, and Pike counties
22. Kristin Varner, Single County Authority from Dauphin County
23. Lynn Deardorff, Area Agency on Aging from Adams County

Clinical Representatives:

24. Dr. Amy Kim, an expert in child and family behavioral healthcare
25. Dr. Margaret Jarvis, an expert in addiction medicine and substance use disorder treatments
26. Dr. Jack Todd Wahrenberger, an expert in primary healthcare
27. Dr. Wendy Ross, an expert in treating individuals with co-occurring intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism with mental illness

Legislative Representatives from the General Assembly:

28. Representative Mike Schlossberg (D) (John O'Donnell, designee)
29. Representative Jim Struzzi (R) (Jenna McCarthy, designee)
30. Senator Maria Collett (D) (Molly McMenamin, designee)
31. Senator Michele Brooks (R) along with David Burnett

REPORTS

Dr. Finello took roll call. Deputy Secretary Patel introduced the topic for the meeting, which was criminal justice and the entry point. Deputy Secretary Patel explained that the meeting would focus on understanding the initial interaction between individuals with behavioral health concerns and the criminal justice system. She hoped the presentations would provide insights into what's currently happening with efforts across Pennsylvania.

Before the presentations, a short video by Governor Shapiro was shown to the members of the Council.

The speakers were: Director of Policy and Planning, Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Samantha Koch; Deputy Secretary, Department of Human Services, OMHSAS, Jennifer Smith; Bureau of Training and Education, Pennsylvania State Police, Lieutenant Alan Zulick; Penn State Health, Stephanie Harvison, LPC & Theresa Brosche, MSN, RN, CHSE; Behavioral Health Administrator, Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts, Michael Harper; Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Kevin Dougherty; and Berks County District Attorney & Communication Chair of Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association John Adams

Following the presentations, Dr. Finello led a facilitated discussion with questions that were given to the members of the Council prior to the meeting. Comments from that discussion are going to be incorporated into the Statewide Action Plan.

Deputy Secretary Patel ended the meeting with some closing remarks and thanked the Council members for their time.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Behavioral Health Council Meetings will take place on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 1:00 PM. Quarterly meetings will be in person. The next in-person meeting is in June. The next meeting of the Council is April 15, 2025, and it will be virtual via Teams. The topic will continue with the second part of our Criminal Justice topic.

NEXT MEETING

April 15, 2025, 1 PM, Virtual via Microsoft Teams