

Minutes

Behavioral Health Council

Date April 15, 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. Director – Life, Accident, and Health Rate and Policy Form Review, Bureau of Life, Accident, and Health Insurance, Pennsylvania Insurance Department Lindsay Swartz, MBA, MCM on behalf of Commissioner of Pennsylvania Insurance Department, Michael Humphreys
5. Secretary of the Department of Aging, Jason Kavulich
6. Director of Bureau of County Program Oversight, Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, Erica Nocho on behalf of 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. Richard Hamp 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. Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Kirsten Kenyon
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. 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. Dr. Tamra Williams, County Mental Health Office from Montgomery County
23. Ryan Hogan, Single County Authority from Luzerne County

24. Kristin Varner, Single County Authority from Dauphin County
25. Lynn Deardorff, Area Agency on Aging from Adams County
26. Dr. Shannah Gillam, Area Agency on Aging from Allegheny County

Clinical Representatives:

27. Dr. Amy Kim, an expert in child and family behavioral healthcare
28. Dr. Margaret Jarvis, an expert in addiction medicine and substance use disorder treatments
29. Dr. Jack Todd Wahrenberger, an expert in primary healthcare
30. 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:

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

REPORTS

Dr. Finello took roll call. Deputy Secretary Patel introduced the topic for the meeting, which was criminal justice and behavioral health care within the system. Deputy Secretary Patel explained that the meeting would focus on understanding behavioral health services for individuals in the criminal justice system, including juvenile and adult populations. She hoped the presentations would provide an understanding into what's currently happening with efforts across Pennsylvania and would show how behavioral health care is provided within correctional and juvenile facilities, address forensic behavioral health needs, and talk about challenges in integrating care for individuals transitioning back into the community.

The speakers were: Deputy Secretary, Department of Human Services, OMHSAS, Jennifer Smith; Special Advisor, Department of Human Services, David Grande, MD, MPA; Deputy Secretary, Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth, and Families, Laval Miller-Wilson, JD; Director of Bureau of County Program Oversight, Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, Erica Nocho; Executive Director, Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Kirsten Kenyon and Director of Office of Justice Programs, Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Jackie Weaknecht; Regional Licensed Psychologist Manager, Department of Corrections, Dr. Elicia Stein; Executive Director, Juvenile Court Judges' Commission, Robert J. Tomassini; and Behavioral Health Administrator, Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts, Michael Harper, Esq.

Following the presentations, Dr. Finello led a facilitated discussion with questions that were given to the members of the Council before the meeting. Comments from that discussion will 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 May 20, 2025, and it will be virtual via Teams.

NEXT MEETING

May 20, 2025, 1 PM, Virtual via Microsoft Teams