

Minutes

Behavioral Health Council

Date December 11, 2025

Time 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

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

IN ATTENDANCE

Commonwealth Representatives:

1. 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. 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. Regional Program Outreach Coordinator Sara Gligora 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. Pam Howard. County Mental Health Office from Montgomery County
23. Kristin Varner, Single County Authority from Dauphin County
24. Lynn Deardorff, Area Agency on Aging from Adams County
25. Dr. Shannah Gillam, Area Agency on Aging from Allegheny County

Clinical Representatives:

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

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

REPORTS

Dr. Finello took roll call. Secretary Hossain welcomed the members. Dr. Finello reviewed the work the Council had completed so far. She then provided an overview of the draft recommendations and goals of the Action Plan. Dr. Finello then explained the logistics of how members would review and provide comments on the Action Plan.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The staff of the Behavioral Health Council will send out the draft of the Action Plan. The members of the Council will review this draft and provide feedback in the spreadsheet provided.

NEXT MEETING

TBD