

NEW JERSEY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PLANNING COUNCIL
Minutes

December 10, 2025, 10:00 am

This meeting was conducted exclusively through MS Teams video teleconference & conference call

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Dial-in Number: +1 609-300-7196, PIN: 306216820#

Notices of the meeting were sent to the Asbury Park Press, The Times (of Trenton), and the Bergen Record.

Participants:

Heather Simms (Chair)	Connie Greene (Vice-Chair)	Brielle Easton (DMHAS)
Jennifer Rutberg (DoA)	Maurice Ingram (DoE)	Angela Calzone
Jennifer Gietka (DFD)	Darlema Bay	Jessica Tober (DoH)
Morgan Thompson	Jonathan Sabin (DDD)	Filomena DiNuzzo (JJC)
Christina Nicodemus (DoC)	Elisabeth Marchese	Susan Loughery (DoH)
Julia Barugel	Wyndee Davis (CSOC)	Tatyana Brown (DoL)
Jada Abdullah (NJAMHAA)	Winifred Chain	Lisa Federico (CDADA)

DMHAS, CSOC, DDD, DMAHS, DoAS & DoH Staff:

Yunqing Li	Zui Han	Clarence Pearson
Limei Zhu	Susannah Combs	Sucharitha Reddy (DMAHAS)
Mark Kruszczyński	Becky Cocito	Nancy Edouard (DoA)
Siobhan Pippas (DoH)	Ben Magnussen (CSOC)	

Guests:

Rachel Morgan	David Armstrong	William Cole
Nina Smuklavskaya	Elena Kravitz	Andrea Bakun
Ken Rouer	Mya Caba	Jessica Groelly (DoC)
Becky Diliscandro	Shawn Buskirk (CDADA)	Lasheema Sanders-Edwards
Mary Abrams (NJAMHAA)	Serena Zuppardo	Bill Morgan
Michelle Jeneby (Somerset County Prosecutors Office)		

I. Administrative Issues/Correspondence (Heather Simms)

- A. Acknowledgement of our Veterans
- A. Attendance, 21/34, 61.7% attendance, quorum *exceeded*.
- B. Minutes of November 12, 2025 meeting, approved.

II. Synar Tobacco Sales to Youth Report (Limei Zhu, DMHAS, Siobhan Pappas, NJ DoH)

- A. See PowerPoint presentation sent to the Council on 12/10/25
 - 1. Synar Amendment
 - 2. Requirements
 - 3. Tasks, Activities
 - 4. Inspection
 - 5. Retail Violation Rates (RVRs): By Year, Top Municipalities, Store Types, County

6. Synar vs. FDA Inspection
7. Challenges
8. Q&A
 - a. Q: How can the Council be of help?
 - b. Q: Does vaping get captured?
A: FDA does collect vaping, but Synar does not.
 - c. Q: School Based Education Programming
A: Present, but the proliferation of new, unregulated products are a problem.

III. Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services Block Grant (SUPTRS) and Community Mental Health Services Block Grant Implementation (CMHBG Reports) (Brielle Easton, Yunqing Li, Wyndee Davis)

- A. URS Data Tables, Adults (Brielle Easton)
 1. Client services
 2. Client status tables
 3. Consumer Perception of Care (Presented in November 2025)
 4. Fiscal Tables (presented in November 2025)
 5. NRI Data Edits
 - a. 20% increase in consumers served (as reported in USTF+) due to increased use of the USTF+ system
 - b. Edits due later in December 2025, final edits to post in April 2026.
- B. Children's System of Care (Wyndee Davis)
 1. URS Data Tables
 - a. Table 9, consumer satisfaction, >70%
 - b. Table 11, 70% reported positively about access, and treatment planning. 49% reported positive responses to outcomes. 81% reported cultural sensitivity of staff.
 - c. Decrease in response rate from 4% last year to 2% this year.
 - d. Table 11a: Consumer responses by racial and ethnic groups. No large disparities observed.
 - e. Table 16: Evidence Based Practices, 146 in FFT.
 - f. Table 19a: Criminal justice involvement, 116 respondents, 38% consumers experienced fewer encounters within past 12 months.
 - g. Table 19b: 146 youth provided applicable data.
- C. WebBGas (the portal through which the community can view the Block Grant applications and Implementation Reports)

1. Access to WebBGas as a Citizen (view only)-
<https://bgas.samhsa.gov>
Username: citizennj
Password: citizen

IV. NJ Tobacco Quit Centers and Community Resources (Monica Hanna, RWJ/Barnabas Health)

- A. PowerPoint shared with BHPC via email 12/5/25
 1. Objectives
 - a. Explain tobacco use amongst those diagnosed with behavioral and mental health illnesses
 - b. Discuss impact of tobacco cessation for patients with SUD diagnosis
 - c. Discuss nicotine and tobacco services offered throughout New Jersey and RWJBarnabas Health Institute for Prevention and Recovery (IFPR)
 2. Nicotine Addiction: Know the facts (size of issue)
 3. Impact of Tobacco Use on Behavioral Health and Mental Health Diagnosis
 4. Supporting Patients with Behavioral Health Diagnosis with Tobacco Treatment
 5. Mental Health Dx vs Tobacco Quit Rates
 6. RWJBH Nicotine and Tobacco Recovery Program
 7. Spanish speaking groups are available as well as translation services
 8. For more information, Monica.hanna@rwjbh.org, 732-228-3657
And also quitcenter@rwjbh.org, 833-795-QUIT(7848)
Rwjbh.org/nicotinerecovery
- B. Q&A
 1. Q: Can a resident of any county get services at a Quit Center in any other county's Quit Center?
 2. Yes!

IV. System Partner Updates (Heather Simms)

Going forward all system partners are requested to provide the Council with brief, written updates by the Friday prior to the next BHPC meeting. Those updates will be provided to the Council prior to the meeting; this will give Council members an opportunity to pose questions to the system partners in a timely manner.

- A. Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (See above).
- B. Children's Systems of Care Wyndee Davis, DCF CSOC). See above
- C. Division of Developmental Disabilities (Jonathan Sabin)

1. The transition of the DDD Vendor Fiscal/Employer Agent (VF/EA) Self-Directed Services Model is nearing completion. Any individual who has an Self-Directed Employee (SDE) or vendor service through PPL but has not initiated or completed enrollment with Acumen should use this link to schedule time with an enrollment agent: [NJ Agent Transition Enrollment](#)

[Assistance](#)

2. In the Division's Supports Program and Community Care Program, individuals can choose to self-direct all or some of their services. Supports Brokerage is a service individuals can access for help coordinating and maintaining their self-directed services. In collaboration with the Division, The Boggs Center developed a new fact sheet to help people with disabilities and families better understand self-direction and the roles and responsibilities of Supports Brokers. It is available in English and Spanish on the Boggs Center's Publications page ([Supports Brokers: Assisting and Empowering You to Self-Direct](#)).

D. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) (Tatyana Brown): Nothing to report

E. Department of Education (Maurice Ingram): No updates

1. Collaboration with Students and Family Partners 12/18/25
<https://www.nj.gov/education/broadcasts/2025/dec/3/AllVoicesOneVisionPartneringwithStudentsFamiliesandCommunitiesforSchoolMentalHealth.pdf>

F. Division of Aging (Jennifer Rutberg): Two Grant Opportunities

1. Request for Proposals (RFP) to administer the Stress-Busting for Family Caregivers Program
 - a. New Jersey's Department of Human Services, Division of Aging Services (the "Division"), is pleased to announce a new Request for Proposals (RFP) to administer the Stress-Busting for Family Caregivers Program.
 - b. The Stress-Busting Program is an evidence-based program developed to support family caregivers of people living with dementia and is designed to teach a variety of techniques for navigating the emotional and practical challenges of caregiving, such relaxation exercises and stress-management strategies. It is delivered as a nine-week course, with one 90-minute class held each week.
 - c. Up to ten awards are available through this RFP, with one award available per county. For more information, please view the RFP here: [ADPI-RFP-Final- Clean.pdf](#)
 - d. Critical Dates:

1. 12/16/25 - Deadline for submission, Letter of Interest (3:00 p.m. ET)
 2. 12/23/25 - Deadline for receipt of proposals (3:00 p.m. ET)
2. Request for Proposals (RFP) to administer a Senior Wellness Pilot Program
- a. New Jersey’s Department of Human Services, Division of Aging Services (the “Division”), is pleased to announce a new Request for Proposals (RFP) Senior Wellness Pilot Program.
 - b. The Senior Wellness Pilot Program grant seeks to enhance social connections and support for older adults and people with disabilities at risk for social isolation to their communities. Social participation and inclusion are vital components of an age-friendly New Jersey and can mutually benefit the health and wellbeing of both socially isolated older adults and the people who interact with them. The program is designed to advance efforts that enable sustained social connections among this at-risk population, resulting in measurable improvement in wellbeing.
 - c. This Request for Proposals (RFP) is issued by the Department of Human Services’ (DHS) Division of Aging Services (DoAS) and seeks bidders to provide the services described in this RFP **beginning March 1, 2026 and ending on February 28, 2027**. For more information, please view the RFP here: [Senior Wellness Grant 25-Clean.pdf](#)
 - d. Critical Dates:
 1. 12/16/25 Deadline for submission of questions (3:00 pm)
 2. 1/13/26 Deadline for receipt of proposals (3:00 pm)

. Any prospective bidder may submit questions to Doas.Grants@dhs.nj.gov No questions will be directly answered. Rather, all questions submitted prior to the deadline of December 16, 2025 at 3:00 pm will be compiled into a single Q&A document which will then posted on the DHS website prior to the deadline to submit proposals.
- G. Youth Justice Commission, NJ Dept. of Law & Public Safety: (Filomena DiNuzzo), Nothing to report
- H. Department of Corrections (Christina Nicodemus). No updates
- I. NJ Div. of Medical Assistance and Health Services (NJ Family Care/State Medicaid) (S. Reddy). No updates
- J. Department of Health: (Jessica Tober):
1. Trenton Psychiatric Hospital held its first Harm Reduction Fair on December 5th. It was a multidisciplinary event involving Departments of Psychiatry, Medicine, Rehab, Psychology, Nursing and Chaplain Services. Teams of staff and patients came together to develop posters highlighting a wide range of topics in addiction medicine, involving prevention, harm

reduction, and treatment, and provided valuable educational materials as well as practical harm reduction tools for staff and patients in attendance.

- K. NJAMHAA (Mary Abrams): Nothing to report
- L. Division of Family Development (Jennifer Gietka): No updates provided
- M. Supported Housing Association (Kate Kelly, not present):
- N. NJ County Mental Health Administrators Association (Elisabeth Marchese). No update provided.
- O. NJ Hospital Association (Deena Tampi, not present). No update provided.
- P. NJ Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJ HMFA), (Donna Spencer, not present). No update provided.

VI. Open Public Comment and Announcements:

- A. Public Comment
 - 1. Medical uses of psilocybin / psychedelic medications for the use of PTSD
 - 2. Changes to Housing Resources
 - a. A discussion about housing in the January 2025 BHPC meeting
 - 3. Upcoming work requirements for Medicaid in 2027
 - a. 12/11/25 Garden State Coalition, a group of individuals with lived experience (NJ and national) to advocate on the impacts of HR-1, website accessed via DRNJ website. 12/11/25 a webinar will be hosted. In January 2026 a new webinar will be hosted.
see
- B. Announcements:
 - 1. NJPRA is having their first live and in-person annual conference tomorrow at the FEA Conference Center in Monroe Township, 12/11/25
 - 2. Coalition that is overseen by our Prevention Hub in Burlington county. They provide many trainings in schools for mental health and substance use prevention/which includes tobacco use. They also partner with NJPN along with other partnerships. <https://www.prevplus.org/>
See: <https://www.prevplus.org/youth-tobacco-action-group.html>
 - 3. Prevention Links is hosting an event tomorrow at 1pm in Union County on the changing landscape of adolescent substance use disorders. All are welcome and lunch will be served! Registration link:
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScOjMrQDApLorQ0NJWAVeALFbQiEVLc-DjimBWFpmpTdj7ew/viewform>.

V. Adjournment: Heather Simms: Time: 11:55: am.

- A. Next meeting 1/14/26 10:00 am –noon.
Join on your computer or mobile app
[Click here to join the meeting](#)
Or call in (audio only)
[+1 609-300-7196](tel:+16093007196), PIN# 306216820#

- B. Future Agenda Items/Additional Items for Meetings in 2025
1. Use of psychedelics / psilocybin for mental health disorders (Connie Greene's suggestion made 12/10/25)
 2. Housing Resources (Suggestion made by HS 12/10/25)
 3. Quality Improvement Plan (QIP): (Connie Greene)
 4. NJ DoE Threat Assessment Protocols
 5. Overview of CSS (Harry Reyes, DMHAS)
 6. Pretrial Services in Camden County
 7. JJC Discussion (Filomena DiNuzzo)
 8. DVR (Tatyana Brown)
 9. Presentation on SUD prevention efforts at County Jails?
 10. Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) (Suzanne B.)
 11. AIR, Youth Suicide Prevention (kurt@air.ngo)
 11. SUD and the JJC (Francis Walker, JJC)
 13. Experiences of Consumers in SUD Crisis