

NEW JERSEY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PLANNING COUNCIL

Minutes

April 8, 2026, 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 announced to the public online via NJ. Com, the Newark Star-Ledger's online site and on the DMHAS website.

Participants:

Heather Simms	Jennifer Rutberg (DoA),	Kurtis Baker
Darlema Bey	Morgan Thompson	Suzanne Borys
Francis Walker (YJC)	Christina Nicodemus (DoC)	Chris Morrison (DoH)
Joe Gutstein	Tatyana Brown (DoL)	Jada Abdullah (NJAMHAA)
Julia Barugel	Elisabeth Marchese	Winifred Chain
Shawn Buskirk	Susanne Smith	Joseph Christensen (SHA-NJ)

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

Clarence Pearson	Susannah Combs	Mark Kruszczyński
Nancy Edouard (DoA)	Yunqing Li	Suchartiha Reddy
Ben Magnuson (CSOC)	Helen Staton	Lashema Sanders-Edwards
Jonathan Sabin		

Guests:

Becky DiLiscandro	Nina Smuklawsky	Jonathan Tkacz
Roquina Santini	Rachel Morgan	Janet Martinez
Andrea Baktun	Bill Cole	Adam Chrono
Elena Kravits	Emily Depascale	Janet Martinez
Park Ave Community Wellness Center		
Shalanda Tudor (RWJBH, Guest Speaker)		
Patrick Conley (RWJBH, Guest Speaker)		

I. Administrative Issues/Correspondence (Heather Simms)

- A. Attendance, 18/34, 53% attendance, quorum *exceeded*.
- B. Minutes of March 11, 2026, meeting, approved with no edits

II. System Partner Updates (Jennifer Rutberg)

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 (Yunqing Li).
 - 1. Mental health
 - a. FY 2027 Block Grant Mini Application
 - i. Mini application due 9/1/2026
 - ii. We have received guidance from SAMHSA

- iii. Application is in WebBGAS
- iv. Discussion of required fiscal MH and SUPTRS Tables
- v. Environmental Factors
- vi. Planning Council Input required
- vii. Advisory Council by Membership Type
- viii. Fiscal information is required.
- b. For SUD portion, a discussion of BHPC membership is required. WebBGas requires what BHPC members represent SUD issues.
- c. BHPC Block Grant Committee will reconvene to discuss the mini-application
- 2. WebBGas: <https://bgas.samhsa.gov/Module/BGAS/Users>
Username: CitizenNJ
Password: citizen
- 3. RUBHC Crisis Receiving Stabilization Center is due to open soon pending CRSC certification, see link:
<https://www.rutgers.edu/news/new-jersey-and-rutgers-launch-first-five-planned-crisis-centers>

B. Children's Systems of Care, Ben Magnusson, DCF CSOC).

- 1. 3/30/2026: Symposium on Infant Mental Health at Mercer County Community College. Keynote Speaker, Dr. Barbara Stroud
- 2. Onboarding 20 new Applied Behavioral Analysts (ABA); Providers for young people with autism.
- 3. See www.birthtofivenavigator.org

C. Division of Developmental Disabilities (Jonathan Sabin)

- 1. The New Jersey Department of Human Services' Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) participates in every survey cycle with National Core Indicators® - Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (NCI®-IDD), a national effort to measure and improve the performance of public developmental disabilities agencies through the use of surveys. DDD strongly encourages providers to complete the State of the Workforce Survey. If your agency did not receive the invitation email, please contact NCI.DDD@dhs.nj.gov. NCI Family Surveys - are voluntary and confidential.
 - a. Adult Family Survey – for family members who have an adult, 21 or older, who lives in the family home and receives at least one DDD-funded service in addition to Support Coordination.
 - b. Family/Guardian Survey – for family members/guardians who have an adult, 21 or older, who lives outside of the family home and receives at least one DDD-funded service in addition to Support Coordination.
- 2. The DDD Office of Transition to Adult Life & Employment offers quarterly virtual welcome sessions and monthly webinars for students and their families and school personnel. For a complete schedule, visit the Transition to Adult Life Webinars and Events page.

3. DDD Office of Education on Self-Directed Services (OESD)
 - a. Family Networking Sessions are in-person and virtual sessions for family members who have a loved one with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities who is self-directing all or some of their DDD-funded services or who is interested in learning about self-direction. Register for Spring 2026 Family Networking Session Meeting Registration - Zoom
 - b. Peer-to-Peer Networking Sessions are virtual sessions for adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities who are self-directing all or some of their service or are interested in learning about self-direction. Register for Spring 2026 Peer-to-Peer Networking Session Meeting Registration - Zoom

- D. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) (Tatyana Brown)
 1. We are currently seeking licensed psychiatrists, psychologists, and Substance Use Disorder (SUD) specialists to join our growing provider network. Additionally, we are especially interested in professionals who are proficient in American Sign Language (ASL) to better serve our deaf and hard-of-hearing consumers. Together, we can expand access to care and improve outcomes for the communities we serve.
 2. Please have any interested parties contact me for additional information: dvrsmmentalhealth@dol.nj.gov

- E. Department of Education (Maurice Ingram): Not Present.

- F. Division of Aging (Jennifer Rutberg, present):
 1. Building Solutions Workshop: May 7 Training in Vineland NJ <https://rutgers.cloud-cme.com/course/courseoverview?P=0&EID=32584>
 2. Virtual training on May 9 & 10. <https://rutgers.cloud-cme.com/course/courseoverview?P=0&EID=32585>
 3. Upcoming training for Medicare's State House Information Program (SHIP) counsellors.
 - a. Eight sessions, four are virtual and four are in-person.
 - b. MOA and Background check is required for new counsellors.

- G. Youth Justice Commission (YJC) (formerly JJC), Francis Walker, present
 1. No updates at this time.

- H. Department of Corrections (Jessica Groelly, Christina Nicodemus, present). No updates
 1. Upcoming census on incarcerated veterans, to better connect incarcerated veterans.
 2. See <https://www.nj.gov/corrections/pages/PressRelease/NJDOCLaunchesGroundbreakingReentryInitiativeForIncarceratedVeterans.html>

- I. NJ Div. of Medical Assistance and Health Services (NJ Family Care/State Medicaid) Suchartiha Reddy.
 1. No updates at this time.

- J. Department of Health: (Chris Morrison):
 1. No updates at this time.

- K. NJAMHAA (Jada Abdulla, Brian Harris, preset):
 - 1. Upcoming 75th Anniversary and Spring Conference
- L. Division of Family Development (Jennifer Gietka, not present): No updates.
- M. Supported Housing Association (Joseph Christensen):
 - 1. 4/22/26: Lecture, from Target to Takeover: Cybersecurity
- N. NJ County Mental Health Administrators Association (Elisabeth Marchese, present).
 - 1. No updates
- O. NJ Hospital Association (Deena Tampi) not present).
- P. NJ Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJ HMFA), (Donna Spencer, present)).

III. **Narcan Distribution: Overview of RWJBarnabas Health** (Patrick Conley, Shalanda Tudor)

- A. See PowerPoint presentation shared with the BHPC on 4/2/26
- B. If your agency is interested in receiving wellness bags, please let us know by completing a short survey using here attached to this email. Wellness bags include:
 - 1. Naloxone kit HCI Nasal Spray 4mg
 - 2. Xylazine Test Strips
 - 3. Nitrile Exam Gloves
 - 4. Handwarmer
 - 5. Clear Emergency Poncho
 - 6. Pair of Crew Socks
 - 7. 1 Safe Travels First Aid Kit
 - 8. Harm Reduction Card
 - 9. Hygiene items (body wipes, travel deodorant, lip balm travel toothbrush, toothpaste, and 2 condoms)
 - 10. Thank you for your commitment to community health and safety. We look forward to partnering with you in this effort.
- C. For more information on the program contact shalanda.tudor@rwjbh.org
 - 1. See here for the link!
[https://urldefense.com/v3/https://rwjbhinstitute.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2s2Lzesu_zvO35n8_!!KU82p_qNqnQ!5Jhp74vX6AR8uWgUQOVWzDB3s5I4ze4ZNzt5vpk3RzqQEGK1hzIJOS6iufsA0VXn1Aq4GX3xEsZB2Tot5B3SYPWCMT2Rf8dEjWiCKlIU\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://rwjbhinstitute.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2s2Lzesu_zvO35n8_!!KU82p_qNqnQ!5Jhp74vX6AR8uWgUQOVWzDB3s5I4ze4ZNzt5vpk3RzqQEGK1hzIJOS6iufsA0VXn1Aq4GX3xEsZB2Tot5B3SYPWCMT2Rf8dEjWiCKlIU$)

- D. Conversation
 - 1. Use term “Overdose reduction” not “harm reduction”

VI. **Open Public Comment and Announcements:**

- A. Public Comment
- B. Announcements:
 - 1. New Jersey Peer Coalition 2026 Conference April 14, 2026 9-3 For more information chairperson@njpeercoalition.org or 732-519-2419.
 - a. Goal of breaking down silos of care.

2. Note of the Passing of Peer Advocate/champion: Judy Baynes

V. Adjournment: Time: 11:50: am.

A. Next meeting: 5/13/26 10:00 am –noon.

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B. Future Agenda Items/Additional Items for Meetings in 2026

1. Use of psychedelics / psilocybin for mental health disorders (Connie Greene's suggestion made 12/10/25)
3. Quality Improvement Plan (QIP): (Connie Greene)
4. NJ DoE Threat Assessment Protocols
5. Pretrial Services in Camden County
7. JJC Discussion (Filomena DiNuzzo)
6. DVR (Tatyana Brown)
7. Presentation on SUD prevention efforts at County Jails?
8. Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) (Suzanne B.)
9. AIR, Youth Suicide Prevention (kurt@air.ngo)
10. SUD and JJC (Francis Walker, JJC)
11. Experiences of Consumers in SUD Crisis
12. Immigration and Mental Health (suggested by A. Lewis, 01/14/26).
13. Grief Counselling for People with Lived Experienced (D. Bey, suggested 1/14/26)
14. Attorney General Office to Speak About Mental Health Courts (D. Bey, suggested 1/14/26)
15. Having Peer Coalition at the Council (Suggested by Elena Kravitz 1/14/26).
16. Start Services (NJ DDD) consultative service, proactive to mitigate mental health emergencies, short term services (Suggested by Elena Kravitz 1/14/26).
17. Information for consumers with Dual Diagnosis (DDD and MH/SUD) (Suggested by Janet Martinez 1/14/26)
18. Outcomes for individuals.
19. NJ Start (DD), See <https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/news/pressreleases/2025/approved/20251222.shtml#:~:text=START%20Services%20NJ%20is%20a,and%20community-based%20residential%20programs>.
20. Request about advocacy methods (see NAMI NJ)
21. Family AND consumer voice. Especially now with Medicaid changes for 51/49 for outpatient services for state licensed providers. 51% In-person and 49 % telehealth. How that impacting consumers? (RM). See <https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/news/pressreleases/2025/approved/20251222.shtml>
22. NJ State Budget Presentation