

NEW JERSEY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PLANNING COUNCIL

Minutes

January 14, 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 sent to the Asbury Park Press, The Times (of Trenton), and the Bergen Record.

Participants:

Heather Simms (Chair)	Donna Migliorino (DMHAS)	Suzanne Borys (DMHAS)
Jennifer Rutberg (DoA)	Michael Ippolitti	Kurt Baker
Harry Coe	Darlema Bey	Morgan Thompson
Jonathan Sabin (DDD)	Francis Walker (YJC)	Jessica Groelly (DoC)
Elisabeth Marchese	Chris Morrison (DoH)	Joe Guttstein
Wyndee Davis (CSOC)	Tatyana Brown (DoL)	Karen Howland (NJAMHAA)
Shawn Buskirk (CDADA)	Abby Lewis	

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

Yunqing Li	Brittany Thorne	Clarence Pearson
Limei Zhu	Susannah Combs	Sucharitha Reddy (DMAHAS)
Mark Kruszczyński	Nancy Edouard (DoA)	Helen Staton
Shenal Pugh		

Guests:

Rachel Morgan	William Cole	Adam Chrono
Nina Smuklavskaya	Elena Kravitz	Lynn Blecher-Vicari
Mya Caba	Janet Martinez	Lasheema Sanders-Edwards
Michelle Jeneby (Glocester County Prosecutors Office)		Anne Smullen-Theiling
John Tkacz		

I. Administrative Issues/Correspondence (Heather Simms)

- A. Attendance, 20/34, 58.8% attendance, quorum *exceeded*.
- B. Minutes of December 10, 2025 meeting, approved.

II. BHPC Reorganization: Volunteers for the Membership, By-Laws, and Block Grant Committee (Heather Simms)

- A. Membership (interested persons)
 - 1. Darlema Bey
 - 2. Morgan Thompson
 - 3. Francis Walker
 - 4. Harry Coe
 - 5. Michael Ippoliti
 - 6. Gbrown@cspnj.org
 - 7. Kurt Baker
 - 8. Morgan Thompson
- B. By-Laws (interested persons)

1. Darlema Bey
 2. Gbrown@cspnj.org
 3. Harry Coe
- C. Block Grant (interested persons)
1. Chris Morrison
 2. Morgan Thompson
- D. General Interest
1. Anna Guida, NAMI Gloucester Co. president.... namigc@comcast.net
 2. Gerard Brown , Gbrown@cspnj.org (848).336.6045
 3. tatyana.brown@dol.nj.gov
 4. William Cole, wcole@northwestessex.org

III. Future Presentations of BHPC Members (H. Simms)

- A. There is an expectation that all voting members of the Council present at least once each year. Volunteers
1. DOH – Chris Morrison
 2. NAMI – NJ Darlema Bey
 3. NJHMFA , Karen Howland
 4. Anna Guida expressed interest in collaborating w/others on presentation topics based on my experience as an educator
 5. Jen Rutberg (DoA)
 6. DRNJ is willing to bring our expert on DDD and the work we do in the DDD arena
 7. Kurt Baker (AIR)
 8. CSOC could share information on supports for youth with dual diagnosis, for instance the work being done with CCIS and supporting youth with dual diagnosis needs. (Wyndee Davis), Spring or Summer 2026

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).
1. Block Grant Revision Requests (Suzanne B.)
 - a. Two have been submitted.
 - b. Response from SAMSHA is not clear.
 - c. SUPTRS meeting with DMHAS
 - i. Environmental factor 10 was under review.
 - ii. Innovation grant for housing first, the term “housing first” is a forbidden term with SAMHSA. Alternates are “recovery housing”
 - iv. The term “Other supplies” was flagged with request for specifics.
 - v. It appears that the SUPTRs revision requests have been responded to.
 2. RLI for Young Adult Recovery Housing is out (\$2.3M)

- a. RLI open to County Alcohol and Drug Directors only.
 - b. 5 – 15 housing slots may be applied to.
 - c. RLI covers 65 slots.
 - d. Rent will be covered by the grant.
4. Q&A: Questions about direct language of approved language.
 5. Recent (01/13/26) notice that federal grants are being cancelled by US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) (Donna M.)
 6. Assistant Commissioner Renee Burawski’s last day with DMHAS was 1-2-26. Renee has worked for DMHAS for 11 years and we will continue to feel the positive impact of her contributions and commitment to those we serve. (Donna M.)
 7. Commissioner Adelman has announced that her last day as DHS Commissioner will be January 20th. Commissioner Adelman has served NJ residents in state employment for the past 8 years, the past 5 as Commissioner. Governor-elect Sherrill’s commissioner nominee, Dr. Stephen Cha, M.D., has extensive background in federal HHS programs.
 8. It has been announced that the Opioid Advisory Council has dedicated \$15 Million over FY 26 to support access to SUD treatment for uninsured individuals. Other funding from the Opioid Advisory Council that was announced recently by the Governor’s Office includes the items below (Donna M.).

New \$47.84 million allocation including a mix of expansions to evidence-based programs, capital investments to serve more patients, family health-focused innovative programs, and strategic planning initiatives:

- a. Bridge Access to Community-Based Substance Use Treatment – \$15 million to provide access to treatment for uninsured individuals.
- b. Capital Investments for Substance Use Treatment Providers – \$8 million for critical facility repairs, modernization, expansion, and mobile unit investments to improve treatment access.
- c. Housing Continuum Expansion – \$10.5 million over three years to establish new housing and wraparound services for medically complex individuals in Essex County, including 20 housing slots, case management, provider certification and training, and drop-in center capacity building.
- d. Keeping Families Together Expansion - \$4.86 million over three years to support 30 to 35 additional families and address rising housing costs in this nationally recognized Housing First supportive housing model.
- e. Perinatal Centers of Excellence – \$6.2 million over two years to launch a pilot center offering integrated maternity, behavioral health, and wraparound services to address substance use disorder, the leading cause of pregnancy-associated deaths in New Jersey.
- f. Monitoring and Evaluation of State-Level Opioid Settlement Programs – \$3 million over three years to measure program

outcomes and ensure accountability and impact of settlement-funded programs.

- g. Study on Administrative Barriers to Care – \$250,000 to identify policy changes that can improve access to care and advance a public-health-focused, harm-reduction strategy

9. RLI posted on Psychiatry Residency: Community Psychiatry Residency Training Initiative the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) hereby announces the availability of the grant program funds.

- a. Program Name: Community Psychiatry Residency Training Initiative for New Residents Starting July 1, 2026 Purpose: A Request for Letters of Interest (RLI) is issued by the Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) to all fully accredited psychiatry residency programs in New Jersey, that are currently providing four years of training in adult psychiatry (the Program).
- b. This RLI funds up to \$400,000 to support one four-year position for each psychiatry residency program that applies and is selected for funding. Funding is subject to state appropriations for these twelve (12) awards.
- c. For the remaining positions to be funded, DMHAS will consider the application request of psychiatric residency programs demonstrating the ability to support one or two additional four [1] year residency position(s) in their psychiatry residency program.
- d. For these remaining psychiatry residency programs that are awarded, DMHAS will provide the sum of \$400,000 per resident to the awarded psychiatry residency program to support the one or two additional four-year positions.
- e. Funding is subject to state appropriations for the remaining awards. DMHAS will also provide the one-time funds of \$60,000 or more to each psychiatry residency program selected to support dedicated faculty needed to provide supervision and mentorship to the residents. Funding is subject to state appropriations for the twelve (12) awards. If the one-time funds are not fully awarded due to a program(s) not applying, the remaining amount will be divided among the psychiatric residency programs awarded.

10. DMHAS submitted the Block Grant application prior to the 9/1/25 deadline. We received 2 separate rounds of revision requests from SAMHSA. The first set of revision requests has been approved. The second set of requests is pending review and approval from SAMHSA. (Donna M.)

11. DMHAS received notification last night of several grants that are being terminated. We have heard from some providers that they have received notices as well. Since we just received this notification, we have elevated this to our leadership and will need time to look into this. We have heard from our associations that this is happening across all states funded by HHS. (Donna M.)

B. Children’s Systems of Care Wyndee Davis, DCF CSOC). See above

- C. Division of Developmental Disabilities (Jonathan Sabin)
1. A Virtual Statewide Family Networking Session For families that are or are interested in self-directing all or some of their family member’s DDD services will take place on Wednesday, January 27, 2026 from 1 – 2:30 p.m. Register for this Family Networking Session here: [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)
 2. WIN Time virtual sessions provide a standing opportunity for support coordinators, supports brokers, providers and others to learn and ask questions about self-directed services, and network with other professionals. The next WIN Time Session will be on January 21, 2026 from 12 – 1 pm. Register for the Jan. 21st WIN Time Session here: [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)
 3. Transition to Adult Life Winter Welcome Sessions are intended to assist individuals and families with making the transition from school to the adult support system. The next session will be on January 22, 6–7:30 PM. Registration can be found here: [Registration](#)
 4. New Jersey Human Services, in partnership with seven state agencies, announced the release of the New Jersey Direct Care Workforce Strategic Plan, a comprehensive roadmap to support, grow, and stabilize the workforce that provides essential care to older adults, individuals with disabilities, and residents with behavioral health needs. The plan outlines more than 40 data-driven strategies to improve recruitment, strengthen training and career pathways, and support the long-term retention of direct care workers including direct support professionals (DSPs), certified home health aides (CHHAs), personal care assistants, certified nursing assistants (CNAs), peer recovery specialists, youth support professionals, and self-directed employees. To learn more about the plan please visit: https://nj.gov/humanservices/news/publications/DCW%20Strategic%20Plan%20Draft_final%20draft_v6.pdf
- 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: dvrsmentalhealth@dol.nj.gov
<https://njdol.prod.simpligov.com/prod/portal/ShowWorkFlow/AnonymousEmbed/5687dd11-3036-4f7a-b1d6-3b...>
- E. Department of Education (Maurice Ingram): Not present.
- F. Division of Aging (Jennifer Rutberg): Two Grant Opportunities
1. We are happy to have Renee Burawski join in the aging and disabilities network in her new position as executive director of Somerset County Aging and Disability Services
- G. Youth Justice Commission (YJC) (formerly JJC), Francis Walker
1. YJC is working to implement a restorative justice program

- H. Department of Corrections (Jessica Groelly). No updates
- I. NJ Div. of Medical Assistance and Health Services (NJ Family Care/State Medicaid) (S. Pugh).
 - 1. DMAHS-Medicaid issued Newsletter Vol36 No.02 for Behavioral Health Promoting Interoperability Program (milestone based incentive program) for Independent Clinics providing SUD/MH services to implement or upgrade their electronic health record systems with goal of improving care coordination, data sharing, and operational efficiency.
 - 2. See <https://www.njmmis.com/downloadDocuments/36-02.pdf>
- J. Department of Health: (Chris Morrison):
 - 1. Expanding training, BH Simulation Lab.
 - a. Partnering with Rowan U.
 - b. Joint Commission ask DOH publishes their findings.
 - c. Visitors welcome, contact DoH for details.
 - 2. Work with Rutgers U. on Strength Based Positive Psychology
 - 3. Working with CSP NJ on Peer Bridgers
- K. NJAMHAA (Mary Abrams): Not present
- L. Division of Family Development (Jennifer Gietka): Not present
- M. Supported Housing Association (Kate Kelly), not present:
- N. NJ County Mental Health Administrators Association (Elisabeth Marchese).
 - 1. First meeting of the year held on 1/12/26.
 - a. Disaster and Terrorism Branch announced that Crisis Counsellors may be needed for training.
 - i. Gloucester County training is upcoming
 - ii. Virtual trainings available.
- O. NJ Hospital Association (Deena Tampi) not present).
- P. NJ Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJ HMFA), (Ken Howland).
 - 1. Since 2022 NJHMFA has more than doubled the increase of supportive housing units by incentivizing the inclusion of supportive housing units in 3 housing production subsidy programs.
 - 2. Combined these programs have allocated \$535M to fill financing gaps. By the end of 2025 all of the funds have been committed and/ or expended to create or preserve affordable housing.
 - 3. The result of these programs will produce a combined 4,640 new affordable units, 178 workforce units, 82 market rate units and preserve 1,118 units. In other words these programs have created over 6,000 new homes in the state.

VI. Open Public Comment and Announcements:

- A. Public Comment
 - 1. Idea of BHPC authoring a letter to SAMHSA with regard to the cuts of services to NJ agencies announced by SAMHSA on 1/13/26.

B. Announcements:

1. New Jersey Peer Coalition (formerly COMHCO) (E. Kravitz)
Monthly meeting: Thursday, January 15, 2026 1- 3PM
Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86831990806?pwd=u8lbowrxtcI7Ty6oDQVk8blPrurcR3.1>

Meeting ID: 868 3199 0806, Passcode: 709542

One tap mobile: +13092053325,,86831990806# US

Join instructions

https://us06web.zoom.us/join/86831990806/invitations?signature=kcVl3BMnNVkObRBhS3P2c_9nRS7WZwzJ...

2. The 7th Annual Recovery Ecosystems Conference will take place on Thursday, March 5 at Seton Hall University: <https://nj-cars.org/membership/annual-conference/> (Morgan Thompson)

3. START Services

<https://www.yai.org/services/start-services-nj>

- a. START (Systemic, Therapeutic, Assessment, Resources, & Treatment) Services NJ is a proactive, consultative program aimed to mitigate psychiatric emergency and inpatient hospitalization for people who are at-risk. Using a systemic approach, START Services NJ engages with community partners and other stakeholders to provide linkages in the community, psychoeducation, and other trainings to enhance the quality of life for the people and their systems of care.

- b. START Services NJ is a short-term, 12-18 month program targeted for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) who have significant behavioral and/or mental health needs. START Services NJ practices are delivered by multi-disciplinary teams providing personalized, intensive, time-limited consultative services to enrolled individuals. START Services NJ does not replace or duplicate DDD services currently offered in the community.

- c. START Services NJ is available to provide support to people living at home with their families as well as those who reside in residential programs.

- d. START Services NJ aims to create a network better equipped to be able to respond to crisis needs by providing community-based, person-centered supports that enable a person to remain in the community.

V. **Adjournment:** Heather Simms: Time: 11:56: am.

- A. Next meeting: 2/11/26 10:00 am –noon.

Join on your computer or mobile app

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Or call in (audio only)

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- 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
14. Immigration and Mental Health (suggested by A. Lewis, 01/14/26).
15. Grief Counselling for People with Lived Experienced (D. Bey, suggested 1/14/26)
16. Attorney General Office to Speak About Mental Health Courts ((D. Bey, suggested 1/14/26)
17. Having Peer Coalition at the Council (Suggested by Elena Kravitz 1/14/26).
18. Start Services (NJ DDD) consultative service, proactive to mitigate mental health emergencies, short term services ((Suggested by Elena Kravitz 1/14/26).
19. Information for consumers with Dual Diagnosis (DDD and MH/SUD) (Suggested by Janet Martinez 1/14/26)
20. Outcomes for individuals .