

NEW JERSEY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PLANNING COUNCIL

Minutes

May 13, 2026, 10:00 am

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

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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 (Chair)	Connie Greene (Vice-Chair)	
Jennifer Rutberg (DoA),	Kurtis Baker	Maurice Ingram (DoE)
Darlema Bey	Morgan Thompson	Suzanne Borys (DMHAS)
Francis Walker (YJC)	Christina Nicodemus (DoC)	Chris Morrison (DoH)
Joe Gutstein	Tatyana Brown (DoL)	Lisa Frederico
Julia Barugel	Elisabeth Marchese	Winifred Chain
Shawn Buskirk	Susanne Smith	Joseph Christensen (SHA-NJ)
Tonia Ahern	Michael Ippoliti	Jennifer Gietka (DFD)
Angela Calzone	Jennifer Rutberg (DoA)	

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

Susannah Combs	Mark Kruszczyński	Yunqing Li
Ben Magnuson (CSOC)	Helen Staton	Lashema Sanders-Edwards
Jonathan Sabin	Brittany Thorne	James Chen
Vicki Fresolone (DMHAS, presenter)		
Charolotte Sandashige (DMHAS, Presenter)		

Guests:

Jonathan Tkacz	Adam Chrone	Elena Kravitz
Janet Martinez	Jessica Groelly (DoC)	Margie Agudelo (CSOC)
Stefanie Farris (Presenter)	Karen Howland	Abigail Lewis
Rocchina Santini	Mary Abrams	Daniel O'Brien (OPD)
Anna Guida	Anne Smullen-Thieling	

I. Administrative Issues/Correspondence (Heather Simms)

- A. Attendance, 25/34, 73.5% attendance, quorum *exceeded*.
- B. Minutes of April 8, 2026, meeting, approved with no edits

II. BHPC Retreat 050426 (See below)

- A. Roles of BHPCs: Block Grant review, systems Advocacy, & Monitoring and Evaluation

III. System Partner Updates (Heather Simms)

Going forward all system partners are requested to provide the Council with brief, written updates by the Wednesday 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 (Suzanne Borys).

1. Mental health
 - a. SAMHSA has not provided its updates of grants, but they have listed
 - i. Zero Suicide Grant Application from DMHAS, potential partnering with NJ Hospital Association.
Question: Is NJ thinking about alternate plans?
 - ii. SBIRT Grant: It first must be posted for us to apply for it
 - iii. SPIF Rx Discretionary Grant should be posted.
 - b. Crisis Receiving Stabilization Centers (CRSCs) should open in June/July 2026
 2. WebBGas: <https://bgas.samhsa.gov/Module/BGAS/Users>
Username: CitizenNJ
Password: citizen
- B. Children's Systems of Care, Ben Magnusson, DCF CSOC).
1. No updates
- C. Division of Developmental Disabilities (Jonathan Sabin)
1. The Department of Human Services announced the appointment of members to the newly established Disability Mortality and Abuse Prevention Advisory Committee. This key initiative is aimed at strengthening protections and improving outcomes for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The Advisory Committee will conduct in-depth reviews of selected cases involving abuse, neglect, exploitation, or mortality of adults with IDD. Through this work, the Advisory Committee will identify trends, assess systemic responses, and recommend actionable improvements to prevention strategies, reporting processes, and accountability measures.
 2. The 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. The deadline for ALL NCI-IDD Surveys is June 30, 2026. To learn more, visit <https://idd.nationalcoreindicators.org/>.
 3. Transition to Adult Life Webinars and Events are a division service available to people 21 or older who meet all other eligibility requirements. Information about these activities can be found here <https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/transition/transitionevents.shtml>.
 4. Family networking sessions are for family members with a loved one who is self-directing their services or interested in self-direction. Sessions are offered both virtually and in-person. Visit <https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/documents/individuals/family-networking-sessions-spring.pdf> for more information.
- D. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) (Tatyana Brown)
1. DVRS is on its way to meet their goals for rehabs; they exceeded their goals for April 2026.

2. They are looking to partner with outside organizations.
- E. Department of Education (Maurice Ingram):
1. <https://www.nj.gov/education/broadcasts/> Here are the most recent updates within the NJDOE.
- F. Division of Aging (Jennifer Rutberg, present):
1. No updates
- G. Youth Justice Commission (YJC) (formerly JJC), Francis Walker, present
1. No updates
- H. Department of Corrections (Jessica Groelly, Christina Nicodemus, present). No updates
1. No updates
- I. Div. of Medical Assistance and Health Services (NJ Family Care/State Medicaid, Suchartiha Reddy, absent)
1. No updates
- J. Department of Health: (Chris Morrison):
1. Susan Lougherty has been promoted to Deputy Commissioner of DOH's, Care and Treatment Branch
 2. Peer Bridging pilot is ongoing, they are partnering with New York State.
 - a. The first month of data has been released and will be reviewed.
- K. NJAMHAA (Jada Abdulla, not present):
1. No updates
- L. Division of Family Development (Jennifer Gietka):
1. No updates.
- M. Supported Housing Association (Joseph Christensen),
1. www.shanj.org
 2. SHANJ is partnering with Housing Health for Passaic County Seniors Newsletter, probably to be released 05/15/26, to contain housing wait lists.
 3. 2026 Conference Workshop ideas to be discussed / Innovation Stations.
 4. Q&A: Q: Is SHA considering doing anything for housing for mental health consumers in other parts of NJ just the northern region? A: SHA NJ is an advocacy organization to support others in trying to press for housing resources
- N. NJ County Mental Health Administrators Association (Elisabeth Marchese, present).
1. No updates
- O. NJ Hospital Association (Deena Tampi) not present).
1. No updates
- P. NJ Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJ HMFA), (Donna Spencer, present)).
1. No updates

IV. Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers CCBHCs (Vicki Fresolone Charlotte Sandige, DMHAS)

- A. See PowerPoint presentation shared with the BHPC on 5/11/26
- B. For further questions please Contact: charlotte.sadashige@dhs.nj.gov and Vicki.fresolone@dhs.nj.gov

V. Systemic, Therapeutic, Assessment, Resources, and Treatment (START) Program of the NJ DDD (Stephanie Farris)

- A. See PowerPoint presentation shared with the BHPC on 5/11/26
- B. Support the system of care surrounding the consumer, not the consumer themselves
- C. Q&A
 - 1. Q: Do you overlap with MCORTs or other system partners?
A: We do not overlap usurp services, since START does not provide direct care.
- D. For more information on START Services NJ: stephanie.farris@yai.org

VI. Open Public Comment and Announcements:

- A. Public Comment
- B. BHPC Retreat on 5/4/26 at RWJBarnabas Institute for Prevention & Recovery
 - 1. Role of BHPC:
 - a. Creating a mission statement for the BHPC.
 - 2. Monitoring and Evaluation: How does the data relate to the gaps in services. Are programs addressing people's needs?
 - 3. Membership Committee
 - a. Review roster
 - b. Make sure lived experience is present on the council
 - c. Expectations from members
 - 4. Formal Orientation for New Members; Purpose
 - 5. Reviewing the application process.
 - 6. Update the by-law committee and do periodic review every few years?
 - 7. Subcommittees:
 - a. What are their purpose?
 - b. Strong leadership on each committee
 - 8. Revamp timing of meetings
 - a. Proposal is to have bi-monthly meetings (every other month) beginning in January 2027.
 - i. Have very active subcommittees working between the general meetings
 - ii. BHPC general meeting would meet six times a year.
 - 9. Comments of Vice-Chair (C. Greene)
 - a. Great overview of the retreat.
 - b. Outcomes for consumers
 - c. Goal is to be a leading Council in the Country
 - 10. Comments of others
 - a. Meeting in person was long overdue

- b. Question: How would news of goings-on in Trenton be communicated to the Group? A. System partners would still be required to send System Partners Update once a month via email.
- c. How will /what work will committees do? A: Shift direction of meetings; get feedback from individuals/families about outcomes and quality of life.

VII. Adjournment: Time: 12:08 pm.

- A. Next meeting: 6/10/26 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