

NEW JERSEY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PLANNING COUNCIL

Minutes

September 10, 2025, 10:00 am

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

Microsoft Teams meeting

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

Notices of the meeting were sent to the Asbury Park Press, The Times (Trenton), Bergen Record, The Press (Pleasantville), and the Courier-Post (Cherry Hill).

Participants:

Donna Migliorino	Heather Simms (Chair)	Connie Greene (Vice-Chair)
Julia Barugel	Jennifer Rutberg (Aging)	Maurice Ingram
Joe Gutstein	Barbara Johnston	Darlema Bay
Suzanne Smith	Morgan Thompson	Winifred Chain
Stacy Reh (CSOC)	Tatyana Brown (DDD)	Francis Walker (JJC)
Kurt Baker	Jessica Groelly (DoC)	

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

Brielle Easton	David Helfand	Jonathan Sabin(DDS)
Shenal Pugh (DMAHS)	Mark Kruszczyński	Zui Han
Clarence Pearson	Suchartitha Reddy (DMAHS)	

Guests:

Elena Kravitz (DRNJ)	Diane Litterer	Lasheema Sanders-Edwards
Abigail Lewis	Joni Dolce	Serena Zuppardo (CSP NJ)
John Tkacz	Tiffay Berryman	Christina Nicodemus (DoC)
Mike Santillo (NJ-CARS & Prevention Links)		
Cindy Marie Dix (NJ-CARS & Prevention Links)		
Rachel Clapsis (NJ-CARS & Prevention Links)		

I. Administrative Issues/Correspondence (Heather Simms)

- A. Attendance, 17/35, 48.5% attendance, quorum *exceeded*.
- B. Review of Minutes of August 13th 2025 meeting. Approved with minor edits.

II. DMHAS Request for Proposals (RFP) Process (Dave Helfand, DMHAS)

- A. Dave Helfand, DMHAS administrator with 25+ years of experience
- B. Overview of the RFP Process
 - 1. RFPs are posted on DMHAS website, providers must monitor that website.
 - a. Advice is to look on a weekly basis.
 - 2. Steps
 - 3. Families, peers, consumers and DMHAS staff review RFPs

4. There is an appeal process (ORPA requests are necessary to receive documents).
5. If an organization is given a preliminary award then a negotiation meeting between DMHAS and the presumptive awardee is held. Small sensible adjustments are discussed.
6. Monitoring for awardees via QCMR, looking at data of agencies whom have also received support.
7. DMHAS meets with providers to discuss service utilization and quality of programming.

C. Q&A

1. Q: How do you make sure that client outcomes are being achieved (Joe G.)?
A: Good and tough questions. Some programs (i.e., PACT) have EBPs, and some programs have more quantifiable measures. MK: DMHAS does systematically collect consumer data on social connectedness (as well as in other domains) via the DMHAS Annual Consumer Perception of Care Survey. Those results are shared in the aggregate with the BHPC.

Comment (HS): DMHAS Program Analysts and the Ombudsman are good resources.

2. Q: How can caregivers and consumers become a part of the RFP and program reviews. A: There are options for members of the public to take part in the process. There are stringent conflict of interest and ethics guidelines that must be adhered to. Years ago consumers and families took part in licensing reviews, but that was years ago.
Morgan Thompson: "Many contracts are also reviewed by local mental health boards and LACADAs which are always seeking people with lived experience to sit on those committees.
3. Q: Who is the Ombudsman?
A: Suzanne Mills is the DMHAS Ombudsman and DMHAS took effort to promote her presence. Elena Kravitz: Verified that Suzanne Mills is active and engaged in the community.
See:
<https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dmhas/home/Ombudsman%20flyer%20October%202019.pdf>

III. **Coalition for Addiction Recovery Supports** (Mike Santillo, Prevention Links, NJ Cars, Cindymarie Dix, NJ-CARS, Rachel Lapsis, NJ-CARS)

- A. See PowerPoint, shared with the BHPC via email 09/10/25.
- B. Staff:

1. **Rachel Lapsis**, NJ-CARS Project Coordinator,
rlapsis@preventionlinks.org
2. **Michael Santillo** LCADC Chief Operating Officer:
msantillo@preventionlinks.org
3. **Cindymarie Dix**, Director of Recovery Support & NJ-CARS Co-Chair: cdix@preventionlinks.org

C. Workforce Survey: <https://forms.gle/A9gftcvQQV6ikTz69>

D. Register for September 24th Quarterly Meeting Listening Session:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/register/w6MygelCQomKPc7MS9n2NQ>

E. Register for October 3rd GSARR Membership Meeting (hybrid):
<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/register/FV4YLfUVQXCFCB8HCILIWw>

F. Join NJ-CARS:

As an individual: <https://nj-cars.org/membership/membership-for-individuals/>

As an Organization: <https://nj-cars.org/membership/membership-for-organizations/>

G. Join GSARR:

As an Individual: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfGq-tsh4rc4H4NRSr4cY5D81Xxbj7At89D3IQ7m19gnZs1sg/viewform>

H. As an Organization:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdQy7Idp9jhjeagNi3qGiAHIS133xyJgYeJXKO5kjXZ6_6SVg/viewform

I. Q: How is recovery defined? A: People define recovery for themselves. The concept of “recovery capital” may be very helpful.

IV. State Medicaid Office (DMAHS): Behavioral Health Integration (Shanique McGowan, Irina Stuchinsky, NJ DMAHS)

A. Tabled until a subsequent meeting

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 (Donna Migliorino, DMHAS).

1. Donna discussed the following press release regarding NJ's PRWORA Actions in response to recent inquiries from the BHPC.

a. Starting on July 10, the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS), Education (ED), Labor (DOL), and Justice (DOJ) issued a coordinated set of rules that suddenly reinterpret the

Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA).

- b. The agencies' new interpretation restricts states from using federal funds to provide services to individuals who cannot verify immigration status which is a major shift from decades-long federal practice. The rules took effect immediately, with minimal notice and affect not only undocumented immigrants, but also some lawful visa holders and, in practice, even U.S. citizens who lack access to formal documentation.
- c. Programs that are impacted in NJ include community mental health clinics and substance-abuse prevention and treatment programs; programs that help kids, including Head Start, career and technical education funding for students, and youth job development programs; and community organizations that serve those in crisis – such as domestic violence intervention programs and soup kitchens.
- d. Joining NJ in filing this lawsuit, was New York, Washington, Rhode Island, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia.
- e. A link to the press release can be found here: [Attorney General Platkin Files Lawsuit to Block Federal Restrictions on Crucial Health, Education, and Workers' Programs | New Jersey Office of Attorney General](#)
- f. [Addendum: On the afternoon of 9/10/25 DMHAS was notified by the New Jersey's Attorney General's Office that the court has ruled in the PRWORA litigation.

The decision enjoined enforcement and implementation of the USDOJ, US HHS, USED and USDOL PRWORA notices in the plaintiff states, including New Jersey. Therefore, the stay that had been in place through today essentially continues, and we do not need to comply with the PRWORA notices until further order of the court.]

- 2. Donna responded to recent inquiries from the BHPC regarding the 2025 MHBG supplemental grant notice based upon the following Executive Order: [Ending Crime and Disorder on America's Streets – The White House](#) .

- a. Application for the \$557,055 was made and notification was received that application was approved but no formal notice of award (NOA) was received as of yet.
 - b. Once NJ receives the NOA, it will be reviewed at all levels to look at what the terms are of the grant and make a determination about accepting the award.
 - c. The grant cannot be used for housing, but rather outreach to local housing authorities. The grant would also be used for outreach to homeless shelters, enhancing coordination with IOC providers, screening, emergency rooms, law enforcement, etc.
- B. Children's Systems of Care (Stacy Reh, DCF CSOC). No update was provided.
- C. Division of Developmental Disabilities (Jonathan Sabin)
 - 1. On August 6, DDD issued an updated Request for Proposals titled To Support the Development of Homes for People with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities Transitioning from Nursing Facilities and other Qualified Institutions. The purpose of this RFP is to develop residential opportunities to support people in moving from nursing facilities into community-based residential homes. Funds will be able to be used for new sites or to enhance existing locations to provide accessibility and other modifications. For more information see the NOFA - Updated SNF NOFA 3rd Release.pdf. Deadline to submit proposals is 4pm on October 1, 2025.
 - 2. The transition of the Division of Developmental Disabilities' (DDD) Vendor Fiscal/Employer Agent (VF/EA) Self-Direction Model to Acumen Fiscal Agent (Acumen), is continuing. All individuals currently receiving services paid through the former agency Public Partnerships Limited have been assigned to Acumen Cohorts (groups), which are being transitioned on a staggered schedule. For more detailed information regarding this transition please visit:
<https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/community/selfdirected/acumentransition.shtml>
 - a. RFP homes for people with DD moving from nursing facilities into community-based housing
 - b. Transition of DDD employer agency, from Public Partnerships Limited Acumen
- D. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (Tatyana Brown): No update provided
- F. Department of Education (Maurice Ingram):

1. See <https://www.nj.gov/education/broadcasts/2025/sep/3/NJDCFYouthSuicidePreventionAdvisoryCouncilYouthMentalHealthResources.pdf>
 2. See <https://www.nj.gov/education/broadcasts/2025/aug/27/SuicidePreventionResponsibilitiesandResources.pdf>
 3. Two upcoming in-person mental health workshops on intervention referral pathways and a tier-2 intervention called the POWER Program. Additional details and registration can be found in this link: Date Broadcast Memo. See <https://www.nj.gov/education/broadcasts/2025/aug/20/EnhancingSchoolMentalHealthServicesProjectStatewideTrainings.pdf>
- E. Division of Aging (Jennifer Rutberg): No updates from Division of Aging Services
- F. Youth Justice Commission, NJ Dept. of Law & Public Safety: (Francis Walker)
1. YJC is having their recovery walk Sept 18th. September is recovery month.
- H. Department of Corrections (K. Connelly): No update provided
- I. NJ Div. of Medical Assistance and Health Services (NJ Family Care/State Medicaid) (Shenal Pugh). No update provided
- J. Department of Health: (Betsey Weiss, Not present): No update provided
- K. Division of Family Development (Jennifer Gietka, not present): No update provided.
- L. Supported Housing Association (Kate Kelly, not present): No update provided.
- M. NJ County Mental Health Administrators Association (Elisabeth Marchese, not present). No update provided.
- N. NJ Hospital Association (Deena Tampi, not present). No update provided.
- O. NJ Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJ HMFA), (Donna Spencer, not present). No update provided.

IV. Open Public Comment and Announcements:

- A. Public Comment
1. Possible discussion on US HUD Policies and possible impact on NJ housing.
 2. Desirability of having the DMHAS Ombudsman speak before the Planning Council at an upcoming meeting.

B. Announcements:

1. SAMHSA \$19M Housing Capacity Funding (August 27, 2025)
SAMHSA announced \$19 million in supplemental block grant funding to expand housing supports for people experiencing homelessness and serious mental illness (SMI). - The funds emphasize cross-system partnerships between mental health, housing, and justice systems. - A key component includes support for Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT), raising concern among advocates about conflicts with Housing First – an evidence-based practice emphasizing voluntary supports. - Opportunity for NJ: Consider how these dollars could be leveraged for peer-led housing supports, wellness respites, and voluntary services – rather than coercive approaches. Key Question: Is New Jersey applying for or expecting to receive any of these funds? If so, how will they be allocated and implemented?
2. DHS/FEMA Restrictions on Aid to Undocumented Immigrants (Washington Post, Aug. 2025) - DHS issued new rules requiring federally funded disaster aid groups to exclude undocumented immigrants and cooperate with immigration enforcement. - This affects major organizations (e.g., Red Cross, Salvation Army) that have historically served all individuals regardless of immigration status. - Experts warn this may undermine disaster relief efforts, create barriers for vulnerable populations, and raise ethical and constitutional concerns. - For NJ: With a diverse population and frequent climate emergencies, this policy could impact equitable disaster recovery, especially for marginalized communities. Key Question: How might this affect behavioral health and housing supports in NJ during emergencies? What contingency planning exists to ensure no one is left behind?

Both issues highlight the importance of equity, access, and rights-based approaches. The Council may consider advocating for peer-informed, non-coercive solutions in response
3. Burlington County NAMI Walks Saturday, October 4, 2025 9:30a.m.-12:00 p.m. Pennington Park, 801 Creek Road, Delanco NJ
4. NJPN is hosting the 9th Annual Peer Summit: Advancing Recovery: Peer-Led, People Centered being held this Friday, September 12. at Brookdale community College- Register for free @ <https://www.njpn.org/2025-peer-summit>
5. NAMI NJ GALA Thursday Nov 20, Westin Princeton 6:00pm.
6. Supportive Housing Association of NJ will be opening registration for our Nov. 14th Conference in the next few weeks. More details available here: <https://www.shanj.org/conference-2025/>

7. Supported Housing Association (NJ SHA) Conference, 11/14/25
<https://www.shanj.org/conference-2025/>
8. Saturday, September 13, 2025. Location: Unami Park, 172 Hillcrest Ave., Cranford! <https://www.mhanj.org/ready-set-walk-with-mhanj-18th-annual-walk-for-wellness-and-recovery/>

V. Adjournment: Heather Simms: Time: 11:45:am.

A. Next meeting 10/8/2025 10:00 am –noon.

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B. Future Agenda Items/Additional Items for Meetings in 2025

1. DMHAS Ombudsman
2. Quality Improvement Plan (QIP): (Connie Greene)
3. NJ DoE Threat Assessment Protocols
4. Overview of CSS (Harry Reyes, DMHAS)
5. Pretrial Services in Camden County
6. JJC Discussion (Filomena DiNuzzo)
7. DVR (Tatyana Brown)
8. Presentation on SUD prevention efforts at County Jails?
9. Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) (Suzanne B.)
10. AIR, Youth Suicide Prevention (kurt@air.ngo)
11. SUD and the JJC (Francis Walker, JJC)
12. Experiences of Consumers in SUD Crisis