



State of New Jersey

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE
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Governor

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Lt. Governor

NEIL VAN ESS
Acting Chairman

CELINA LEVY
Executive Director

MINUTES

Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse

May 18, 2021

Attendance: Celina Levy (Executive Director), Gregg Benson (Public Member), Betty Ann Cowling-Carson (Public Member), Frank Greenagel (Public Member), Gisele Pemberton (Public Member), Jeff Carrick (DCF), Kate Butler (DCA), Adam Cortes/Herb Kaldany (DOC), Annette Riordan (DHS), Holly Low (DOL), Craig Sashihara (LPS), Liz Schofield (DMAVA)

Call to Order

The three hundred and forty eighth regular meeting of the Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by 2nd Vice Chair Gregg Benson.

Open Public Meetings Act Statement

Mr. Benson announced that notice of this meeting was provided in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 – 10:4-21). In addition, Mr. Van Ess stated that public comments were to be provided electronically, through the GCADA website contact portal between the hours of 10am and 1pm on the day of the meeting.

Roll Call

Katelyn Assenheimer called the roll. Members present and absent were noted for the record. Mr. Benson informed the Council that this meeting would be for informational purposes only due to the lack of quorum.

Mental Health Awareness Month Resolution

Executive Director Celina Levy read a resolution recognizing May as Mental Health Awareness Month in New Jersey. This resolution will be voted on at the next meeting.

Presentation: “The New Jersey Medication-Assisted Treatment Centers of Excellence”

Erin Zerbo, M.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School Director, Northern NJ-Medication Assisted Treatment Center of Excellence (COE) and Kaitlan Baston, M.D., MSc, DFASAM, Division Head, Addiction Professor of Medicine, Cooper Medical School of Rowan University Director, Southern NJ Medication-Assisted Treatment Center of Excellence (COE) gave an overview of the work the Centers of Excellence have been doing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Zerbo and Dr. Baston shared that the purpose of the Medication-Assisted Treatment Centers of Excellence (COE) is to increase medication assisted treatment and recovery support services for patients with opioid use disorders in New Jersey. Drug overdoses and deaths had increased during the beginning of the pandemic due to less access of care along with social isolation, however these numbers decreased in the summer of 2020 due to the increased availability of Telehealth options. Prescribers were able to prescribe buprenorphine to new and existing patients either by phone or internet rather than a visit to a doctor’s office. The benefits of Telehealth include increased treatment flexibility, the ease of patients overcoming barriers such as transportation and also gave the prescriber greater insight into the patient’s home environment.

The COE also provides a 24-hour MAT provider hotline where providers can call for advice on prescribing as well as technical assistance for new and established MAT practices and trainings on evidence-based practices for healthcare providers, pharmacies and community groups.

Executive Director’s Report

Executive Director Celina Levy shared that the DEDR funds remain stable and that she and Deputy Director Rebecca Alfaro continue to have positive discussions with the administration about how funds can be built up and how to attain long term sustainability.

Director of Prevention and Planning, Sara Thode shared with the Council that the FY2022 County Plans will be presented to the Council for conditional approval in June. The Council Review Team will meet on June 8th to review the plans before they are voted on by the Council.

Ms. Levy thanked co-2nd Vice Chair Gregg Benson for stepping in for Chairman Van Ess, the Council Members for their guidance and support, the County Coordinators and all the Alliances for the good work in the face of great challenges, GCADA staff for their dedication to providing technical support throughout the process and recognized and Mr. Van Ess for his ongoing dedication and support.

Adjournment

Mr. Benson adjourned the meeting at 11:41.