



**State of New Jersey**

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE  
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PHILIP D. MURPHY  
*Governor*

SHEILA Y. OLIVER  
*Lt. Governor*

NEIL VAN ESS  
*Acting Chairman*

CELINA LEVY  
*Executive Director*

**MINUTES**

**Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse**

**November 16, 2022**

**Attendance: Neil Van Ess (Chairman), Celina Levy (Executive Director), John Armato (Public Member), Donna DeStefano (Public Member), Gisele Pemberton (Public Member), Jeff Carrick (DCF), Michelle Graham-Lyons (DCA), Herbert Kaldany (DOC), Lashunda Harden (DOH), Annette Riordan (DHS), Holly Low (DOL), Craig Sashihara (LPS), Chuck Robbins (DMAVA), Allison Samay (NJ President's Council)**

**Call to Order**

The three hundred and sixty fifth regular meeting of the Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Acting Chairman Neil Van Ess.

**Open Public Meetings Act Statement**

Mr. Van Ess 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.

**Approval of Minutes**

After a brief discussion, the minutes for October were approved. (Y-14; N-0; ABS-0)

## **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Van Ess welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the members for attaining quorum. He shared that the yearly meeting recognizing Veterans Day was personal for him, not only as a Purple Heart Veteran and member of the Governor's Veterans Council, but also as a GCADA member and the work the Council does to address mental health and substance disorders, issues that have always affected military, Veterans and their families.

## **Veterans Day Resolution**

Executive Director Celina Levy read a resolution recognizing November 11<sup>th</sup> as Veterans Day. After a vote, the resolution was approved. (Y-14; N-0; ABS-0)

Presentation: "NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMAVA)"

Chuck Robbins, Veterans Outreach Coordinator and Col. (Retired) Walter Nall, Acting Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs of the NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs gave an overview of the Department and the programs that are provided to the Council.

Brigadier General Lisa J. Hou is the Adjutant General and Commissioner of the DMAVA. She commands more than 8,400 soldiers and airmen of the NJ National Guard. She also leads, directs, and manages the DMAVA in the execution of federal and state missions. In addition, she also manages all state veteran's programs, commissions, and facilities in NJ.

The NJ DMAVA is tasked with the "Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Members, Veterans and their Families". This is an interagency team of military and civilian leaders tasked with developing a plan to prevent suicide among veterans by implementing evidence-based practices and enhancing local and state-wide suicide prevention efforts.

## **Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director Celina Levy informed the Council members that the public comment period for how the opioid settlement funds should be spent ended on October 31<sup>st</sup>. A proposal was sent to the Governor's office about the role the Alliance program should play in prevention efforts funded by the settlement monies. Updates will be provided when they are received.

Ms. Levy shared that she and Deputy Director Rebecca Alfaro had a call with Department of Health designee, Lashunda Harden and the new Director of Opioid Response Policy, Michele Calvo, regarding collaborative opportunities and creating new partnership opportunities. There will be future conversations about next steps to engage GCADA and the Alliance program to educate NJ communities about harm reduction, providing programming that combats stigma and dispels the myths and misinformation surrounding harm reduction.

An upcoming event “Best Practices in Overdose Prevention: Leveraging Strategic Partners” which is sponsored by the Department of Health will be held on December 6<sup>th</sup> at the conference center at the Holiday Inn at East Windsor.

Director of Prevention and Planning, Sara Thode informed the members that Rutgers and the PTTC held a webinar on November 9<sup>th</sup> with over 60 people in attendance. An additional webinar has been scheduled for December 6<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Thode also reminded the Council that we would be honoring the 2022 Volunteers of the Year at the December 13<sup>th</sup> Council meeting.

Ms. Levy thanked the Council members for their input and support, the County Coordinators and Alliances for their good work despite the continued challenges and GCADA staff for their strong work ethic, and to Neil Van Ess for his ongoing leadership.

### **Adjournment**

Chairman Van Ess adjourned the meeting at 11:08.