

COUNTY OF



ALLEGHENY

**Mental Health/Intellectual Disability Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
Microsoft Teams
Tuesday, March 24, 2026**

Present:

Board Members: Aeisha Carter, David Forsyth, Donnesha Slider (Chair), Deborah Jozwiak (Vice Chair), Nev Jones, KP Parham, Julia Vann

DHS Staff: Alex Jutca, Interim Director, DHS; Jewel Denne, Acting Director, OBH; Brenda Bulkoski, Director, ODS; Kathy Davis, ODS; Kathryn Collins, Chief Analytics Officer, ATP; Leah Bailey, Special Projects Project Specialist, OBH; Sarah Bigelow, Special Projects Assistant, OBH; Robert Burack, Consultant, DHS; Natan Abramson, Intern, OEE

I. Welcome

- a. Called to Order at 4:35 pm
- b. Minutes from January approved

II. DHS Interim Director Introduction + Vision for Dual SMI and SUD Clients

- a. Why focus on this group?
 - i. Elevated risk level of adverse outcomes relative to SUD or SMI alone
 - ii. Siloed delivery of services prevents integrated care across substance use, mental health, and physical health
 - iii. Concentrated and cross-sector costs
 - iv. Need for scale solutions that provide in-community care
- b. Among individuals petitioned for involuntary hospitalization, individuals with SUD experience the highest mortality rates
- c. Most deaths of individuals with an SUD in the 2-year crisis window are due to drug overdoses.
- d. A similar picture emerges for clients of residential rehab: clients with dual diagnoses are at higher risk for adverse outcomes.
- e. We have a scale need, but not a scale solution
 - i. >1,000 individuals with co-occurring SMI + SUD existing from Jail, Residential Rehab., Inpatient MH services
- f. Preliminary thoughts on paths forward
 - i. Capacity is an issue; how can we leverage existing services/providers that can form a “behavioral health home” and serve as a point of dispatch
 - ii. Change incentives/expectations/pricing – give large upside

ALEX JUTCA, INTERIM DIRECTOR

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- iii. Engage rapidly during/following crisis
- g. Questions/Feedback
 - i. NJ – Why do we not consider CCBHCs?
 - 1. AJ – We do have Mercy with ICWIC, where there is some shared desire to engage with this model, and your point is well taken.
 - ii. DJ – How do you foresee our advisory board being able to support or reach people to provide you with feedback or educate the community?
 - 1. AJ – I think what we'd be excited to do is provide you with a more full-blown proposal and really continue the conversation. I would love to keep this group engaged as we have more finished products.
 - iii. DS – As a clinician myself, there are a couple of pitfalls that we always fall into. Integrated programs that did exist have been closed down now. There is a difference between a child doctor and an adult-trained psychiatrist in terms of training. There are conditions that are not being treated effectively because of this, like ADHD. There's a lack of third spaces now in Pittsburgh, like Boys and Girls Clubs. A lot of clinicians are moving towards private practice now as well.
 - iv. NJ – With the executive order ending harm reduction and other similar policy changes, it would be helpful for there to be more policy written that enables the county to move towards county-level protections and away from state restrictions. I was going to propose we convene a workgroup on SMI care to provide more time for SMI discussion.
 - 1. AJ – Suppose that group was brought together. Something that would make that group successful would be time-limited discussions around concrete issues. Do you have specific, concrete issues you can see that group discussing?
 - 2. NJ – Treatment engagement, housing, and the quality or the ability to engage people. At the heart of a lot of this is the need for more engagement with services, and what is missing that causes this disconnect from care.
 - 3. AJ – This is very much connected to what we're trying to achieve.
 - 4. NJ – We just need a mechanism now to promote public conversation
 - v. DS – Is DHS already working on this?
 - III. NJ (Chat) – DHS did just bring in Lisa Dixon a few months ago. There has not been enough follow-up on her report.

III. Committee Updates

- a. Goals committee
 - i. Addressing 4 global areas
 - 1. Information – documents, reports, financial information, audits
 - 2. Initiatives for Community Involvement
 - 3. Community Concerns
 - 4. Emerging Concerns

- ii. Goal is to discuss information more openly, support community feedback, and be aware of
 - iii. DJ – I have transparency, meeting the people, and having an effective way to take information back to DHS. We talked about your husband, Dr. Slider, developing a survey to do this.
 - iv. AC – Last week, we talked about revisiting how to reach the people through a questionnaire or documents that we can distribute. We also talked about documents and discussed doing a deep dive to see what was there to share and what wasn't. Once we have that information, we discussed how we'll apply that information to our goals. It all goes back to how to get that questionnaire out to people and how to invite them to these meetings.
 - v. DJ – Yes, the goal was to hear from everybody, the people we are representing and advocating for.
 - vi. SB – Reaching out to the community is also something that the D&A Planning Council has discussed. At the next Provider meeting, we will be providing information about the Board and Council and doing some introductions.
 - vii. NJ – A survey is not the right way to reach people with SMI. There are social justice implications.
 - 1. DJ – It's just one way to reach out to people.
 - viii. NJ motioned, AC seconded, and all votes were positive to create an SMI Committee. NJ will be on that committee; DJ is interested in joining to learn more.
 - ix. DS – Our job is to bring up the idea, but we don't have the capacity to do that work.
- b. Bylaws Committee
- i. NJ – Something we struggled with was trying to understand that there is a different interpretation by the county council of review that we aren't doing. The bylaws are a translation of the state statute. Our meeting infrequency is also because of the bylaws.
 - ii. DF – I provided some recommendations about doing an executive session, where is that at?
 - 1. SB- As far as I remember, all feedback was accepted; it's just a matter of getting through county legal.
 - 2. DF - I also had a request about doing an NDA for all of us members to jump over some of these hurdles. Are there any NDAs for us to review and sign at this time? When will we see an NDA? It seems pretty important?
 - a. SB – I can follow up with the Executive Office, no timeline as of now.
 - b. DF – We should give the county a date we need an NDA, like two weeks prior to the next meeting. Motion to do this, NJ seconded.
 - iii. NJ – I had a 45-minute phone call with Erin.

- iv. DJ – We can put something together for county council. We need the request to include what documents we want and what we'll do with them once we have them.
- v. DF – The motion is that two weeks prior to the next meeting, May 12th, the City Council legal department will provide an NDA that will allow board members to access documents on MH/ID that will allow us to advise them.
 - 1. AC – Second, vote – all in favor, motion passed, Julia abstained.
 - 2. KP – I would like more info on NDA before I commit
 - 3. DF – We need mailed out documents to sign.
 - 4. DS – Motion to get some more education about NDAs first, so we can make informed decisions so put it on the next agenda.

IV. Community Connections

- a. First Allegheny County Coalition for Recovery Seeds of Wellness Event –
 - i. May 15th, 11 am – 3 pm, Allegheny Commons, email Angela Elliston with any questions or interest in tabling
- a. DJ – Next meeting's agenda – make a recommendation for judges and county clerk to discuss their diversion program, have someone from Allegheny County Jail come in
- b. KP – We can connect with people at conferences.

V. Adjournment

- a. The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

VI. Next Public Meeting

Per the meeting schedule, the next public MH/ID Advisory Board meeting will be on **Tuesday, May 26**, from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. on Microsoft Teams.

Sarah Bigelow will send out the Teams invite for this meeting the week before. There is also a link posted on the DHS advisory board webpage.