

Meeting Minutes: Behavioral Health Planning Council

Date: 04/06/2026

Minutes prepared by: Heather Ites

Meeting Location: Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS)
Elmer L. Andersen Building
540 Cedar Street, St. Paul, MN 55101; Room C2222

Attendance

- Present: Charlie Mishek, Anessa DeGroat, Sarah Costello-Fedje, Christen Donley, Marissa Lang, Ellie Skelton, Krysia Weidell, Tom Delaney, Mary Rogers, Aubrey Haddican, Kristine Preston, Kari Irber, Heather Ites, Keith Koegler, Johanna Hernandez, Lauren Webber, Lori Thorpe

Agenda items and minutes

Welcome, Charlie Mishek, Chair

- Charlie Mishek provided a welcome and introduction.

Roll Call, Charlie Mishek, Chair

Charlie Mishek took the roll call, and the following members were present:

- Charlie Mishek - Chair, Representing Parents/Guardians of a Child/Youth/Young Adult in Recovery from or at Risk of Substance Use Disorder
- Sarah Costello-Fedje– Representing Advocacy Organizations: Substance Use Disorder
- Anessa DeGroat – Representing Peer-Led Substance Use Recovery Community Organization (RCOs)
- Christen Donley- Family Member of an Adult in Recovery from or At-Risk of Substance Use Disorder #1

- Marissa Lang- Parents/Guardians of Child/Youth/Young adult in recovery from or at risk of SUD
- Melody Garcia- Peer-Led Mental Health Consumer/Survivor Organizations
- Krysia Weidell – Representing Family Members of an Adult with Lived Experience of Mental Health #1
- Ellie Skelton- Family Member of an Adult in Recovery from or At-Risk of Substance Use Disorder #2
- Lori Thorpe- State Economic Development Authority (DEED)
- Lauren Webber- State Criminal Justice Authority
- Mary Rogers – Representing the Minnesota Office of Ombudsmen
- Aubrey Haddican – Representing the Minnesota State Child Welfare Authority
- Tom Delaney – Representing the Minnesota Department of Education

Introductions

The following non-members introduced themselves:

- Kari Irber – Minnesota Department of Human Services, BHA
- Kristine Preston – Minnesota Department of Human Services, BHA, Deputy Assistant Commissioner
- Heather Ites – Minnesota Department of Human Services, BH Planning Council Lead
- Keith Koegler – Minnesota Department of Human Services, BHA

The following non-members were also in attendance:

- Johanna Hernandez – Minnesota Department of Human Services, BHA
- Andrea Abel- Minnesota Department of Human Services
- Nicholas Carideo- Minnesota Department of Human Services
- Tai Do- Minnesota Department of Education
- Molly Meyer- Minnesota Department of Health

Behavioral Health Administration Update

Presenter: Kristine Preston, Deputy Assistant Commissioner (presenting on behalf of Assistant Commissioner Theresa Steinmetz)

Key Updates and Context:

Kristine noted that DHS and BHA is doing the following in regard to program integrity:

- Acknowledging ongoing **system-wide challenges** impacting DHS, providers, and communities

- Emphasizing **program integrity as a top priority by:**
 - Strengthening oversight and internal controls
 - Improving accountability for use of public funds
 - **Enhancing grant management processes** and compliance with federal/state requirements

- Recognizing that increased oversight may create **operational challenges for providers**

- Committing to **balancing accountability with access to services**

- Focusing on ensuring individuals receive:
 - The right services
 - At the right time
 - From qualified providers

- Continuing work to improve:
 - Administrative systems
 - Data tracking and reporting
 - Cross-agency coordination

- Emphasizing **equity and access**, including:
 - Addressing rural service gaps
 - Supporting culturally responsive services

- Reinforcing commitment to:
 - Transparency
 - Continuous improvement
 - Maintaining public trust in behavioral health systems

Detailed Synopsis

Kristine provided an expanded update on behalf of the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA), outlining current priorities, system challenges, and ongoing program integrity efforts within the Department of Human Services (DHS).

She reported that DHS continues to prioritize strengthening program integrity across behavioral health programs, particularly in response to recent internal reviews and external scrutiny. Efforts are focused on enhancing oversight, improving internal controls, and ensuring that public funds are used appropriately and in alignment with federal and state requirements. This includes continued evaluation of grant management processes and reinforcing accountability mechanisms for funded providers.

Kristine emphasized that these integrity efforts are being implemented alongside a commitment to maintaining access to critical behavioral health services. DHS is working to balance the need for stronger oversight with the operational realities faced by providers, particularly those serving high-need and underserved populations. She acknowledged that increased scrutiny and policy changes may create challenges for providers, but noted that these actions are necessary to ensure long-term system sustainability and public trust.

She also highlighted that DHS is continuing to refine administrative processes and infrastructure to support more effective program implementation. This includes strengthening coordination across divisions, improving data tracking and reporting systems, and aligning program activities with federal expectations tied to block grant funding.

In addition, BHA is focused on ensuring that services are delivered equitably and effectively across the state. This includes attention to geographic access, particularly in rural areas, and ensuring that culturally responsive services remain a priority within the system.

Overall, the update reinforced DHS's commitment to continuous improvement, transparency, and accountability, while maintaining a strong focus on delivering timely and appropriate behavioral health services to Minnesotans.

Discussion:

Council members engaged in brief discussion and asked clarifying questions related to program integrity efforts and provider impacts.

Review of Block Grant Budgets

Presented by: BHA Federal Grants Team

Synopsis

- Overview of Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2026 block grant award proposed budget (Oct 1, 2025 – Sept 30, 2027)
- Budgets developed with flexibility due to overlapping funding cycles and historical underspending

Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG) Highlights

- Funding supports:
 - Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC) for first episode psychosis
 - Mobile crisis response expansion
 - American Indian mental health services
 - Services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals
 - Individual Placement and Support (ICS)
 - Mental Health Provider Training and Consultation
 - Cultural and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure Grant (CEMIG)
 - Community Alternative Response Team
 - Community Support Services; Education and Support Groups and Behavioral Health Planning Council
 - Mental health warmline
 - Model Jails
- Funding for grant oversight and implementation, support evidence-based practices, develop new services, administrative support for the grants such as fiscal staff, the BHA federal grants team, contract staff, and indirect costs.

Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services Block Grant (SUPTRS BG)

- Major investments include:
 - Treatment services for low-income individuals
 - Programs for pregnant women and women with dependent children (set-aside)
 - Primary prevention (minimum 20% required)
 - Culturally specific services and workforce development
 - Naloxone distribution
 - Tobacco prevention (Synar)
 - Future pilot and innovation projects
- Funding for grant oversight and implementation, support evidence-based practices, develop new services, administrative support for the grants such as fiscal staff, the BHA federal grants team, contract staff, and indirect costs.

Discussion

- Council members invited to provide feedback on budget priorities including funding distribution, program impact, and need for additional detail.

Primary Prevention Services

Presenter: Andrea Abel, Prevention and Recovery Services Team Supervisor

Synopsis

- Overview of statewide primary prevention strategy funded through SUBG
- Federal requirement: minimum 20% of SUPTRS BG allocation toward primary prevention

Key Focus Areas

- Reduce youth substance use through education and awareness
- Build community capacity and protective factors
- Reduce disparities and improve access to prevention resources
- Support sustainable, long-term prevention efforts

Prevention Infrastructure

- **Minnesota Prevention Resource Center (MPRC):**
 - Provides training, technical assistance, and statewide resources
 - Hosts conferences and prevention education
- **Regional Prevention Coordinators:**
 - Provide localized support across seven regions
 - Assist communities in planning and implementing prevention strategies
- **Community Coalitions:**
 - Locally driven groups addressing substance use issues
 - Typically include cross-sector stakeholders (schools, law enforcement, community members)

Additional Initiatives

- Statewide data access through Substance Use in Minnesota (SUMN) website
- Implementation of school-based prevention curriculum aligned with recent legislation- Bright Bound
- Transition away from Positive Community Norms Framework due to funding and scalability challenges

Minnesota Student Survey (2025 Results)

Presenters: Tai Do-Minnesota Department of Education & Molly Meyer-Minnesota Department of Health

Synopsis

- Overview of statewide student survey conducted every three years
- 2025 participation: approximately 45% of eligible students and 61% of districts

Key Findings

Mental Health

- Overall improvement since 2022
- Girls report higher rates of depression, anxiety, and long-term mental health concerns
- Decrease in suicidal ideation and slight decrease in attempts
- Fewer students reporting long-term mental health issues

Substance Use

- Continued decline in alcohol, tobacco, vaping, and marijuana use

School & Social Indicators

- Stable perceptions of safety
- Increased sense of care and support from adults
- Increase in school absenteeism
- Girls more likely to report strong academic performance and post-secondary plans

Social Media

- Use increases with age
- Higher concern among students about excessive use
- Frequent use associated with lower mental wellbeing

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- Decreasing overall
- Strong correlation between ACEs and lower mental wellbeing

Key Themes

- Mental health trends improving but disparities persist

- Social connectedness and support remain critical protective factors
- Ongoing need for targeted supports for high-risk populations

Council Updates: Membership and Opening Seats, Heather Ites, Planning Council Coordinator

- Heather informed the Council that the Per Diem process has changed and that anyone with outstanding invoices should reach out to her.
- Please update contact information on Secretary of State website. Most personal information is no longer listed on the public website. Information about you that is still listed on the public website includes first and last name, county of residence, legislative districts, gender*, political party*, disability status*, race* (*those with asterisk listed if you disclosed these during application)
- Membership Applicants are in the final review process.

Closing and Adjourn

Charlie Mishek asked if there were additional questions, gave a brief closing statement, and ended the meeting.

Next Meeting

Date: June 1st, 2026

Time: 1:00-3:00 PM

Location: **In person** meeting is at Minnesota Department of Human Services, Elmer L. Andersen Building, 540 Cedar Street, St. Paul, MN 55101 Room C2222 and **virtually via Teams**