

# Special Commission on Access to Behavioral Health Services for Children and Families

Meeting Minutes  
January 21, 2026  
9:30 - 11:00 am

Date of meeting: Wednesday, January 21, 2026  
Start time: 9:30 am  
End time: 11:00 am  
Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

| Member Votes |                                                                                                                        | Present | Vote 1* | Vote 2* |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1            | <b>Amy Rosenthal</b> – Executive Office of Health and Human Service (Chair)                                            | X       | X       | X       |
| 2            | <b>Lauren Almeida</b> – Department of Children and Families (DCF)                                                      | X       | X       | X       |
| 3            | <b>Kevin Beagan</b> – Division of Insurance (DOI)                                                                      | -       | -       | -       |
| 4            | <b>Carmel Craig</b> – Association for Behavioral Health (ABH)                                                          | X       | X       | X       |
| 5            | <b>Kelly English</b> – Mass Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (MSPCC) / Eliot Community Human Services | X       | X       | X       |
| 6            | <b>Rachel Gwaltney</b> – Children’s League of Massachusetts                                                            | X       | X       | X       |
| 7            | <b>Paul Hyry-Dermith</b> – Bridge Resilient Youth in Transition, Brookline Center for Community Mental Health          | -       | -       | -       |
| 8            | <b>Robyn Kennedy</b> – Mass Senate, Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use, and Recovery (MHSUR)              | X       | X       | -       |
| 9            | <b>Jessica Larochelle</b> – Mass Association for Mental Health (MAMH)                                                  | X       | X       | X       |
| 10           | <b>David Matteodo</b> – Mass Association of Behavioral Health Systems (MABHS)                                          | X       | X       | X       |
| 11           | <b>Kristen McKinnon</b> – Student and Family Support, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)          | -       | -       | -       |
| 12           | <b>Lee Robinson</b> – Office of Accountable Care & Behavioral Health, MassHealth                                       | X       | X       | X       |
| 13           | <b>Pam Sager</b> – Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL)                                                          | X       | X       | X       |
| 14           | <b>Leigh Simons</b> – Mass Health and Hospital Association (MHA)                                                       | X       | A       | X       |
| 15           | <b>Aimee Smith-Zeoli</b> – Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)                                                | X       | -       | X       |
| 16           | <b>Charlene Zuffante</b> – Child, Youth, & Family Services, DMH                                                        | X       | X       | X       |

\* (X) Voted in favor; (O) Opposed; (A) Abstained from vote; (-) Absent from meeting or during vote

## **Agenda**

1. Welcome
2. Overview of working group process
2. Working group updates & discussion
3. Discussion: Commission deliverables
5. Next steps

## **Proceedings**

Undersecretary Rosenthal called the meeting to order at 9:30 am. She welcomed members and informed them that the Commission meeting is subject to the Open Meeting Law and that any votes taken during the meeting would be conducted via roll-call vote.

**Vote 1 to approve the 12/17/2025 meeting minutes:** Undersecretary Rosenthal requested a motion to approve the minutes from the Commission's previous meeting on 12/17/2025. Ms. Craig introduced the motion, which was seconded by Ms. Almeida and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

Undersecretary Rosenthal introduced Commission staff member, Arianne Henry, to outline procedural items for working groups related to the Open Meeting Law. Members were reminded that Open Meeting Law requirements apply to all working groups, including advance posting of meetings at least 48 hours in advance, maintaining meeting minutes, and avoiding collaborative drafting within shared documents during meetings. Staff outline expectations for document management through SharePoint and offered additional support, including a potential walkthrough of available Strategic Plan materials.

Undersecretary Rosenthal confirmed working group reporting structure and transitioned to a presentation from the Landscape & Funding workgroup. The workgroup provided an update on its review of services for children and adolescents, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD), substance use disorder, and behavioral health. The working group described its development of an inventory of services organized by service type, population served, responsible state agency, and funding source.

Commission members discussed persistent access challenges despite the breadth of available services, particularly for children with complex needs, such as ASD, aggressive presentations, and significant medical comorbidities. Members identified system fragmentation, workforce constraints, funding complexity, and navigation barriers as key contributing factors. Members noted ongoing budget considerations and identified challenges related to service duplication, program capacity, and alignment of services for children with complex needs. Equity considerations, including culturally competent care and access for LGBTQ+ communities and communities of color were also discussed.

The Single Agency Feasibility workgroup provided an update on preliminary discussions regarding cross-agency coordination, consolidation and scope considerations, which they will bring to the entire group for further discussion. Staff reviewed examples of prior special commission reports to inform development of the Commission's final deliverable and requested members to review ahead of a future discussion.

Staff then confirmed next steps, including updating the upcoming Commission meetings, process for scheduling future working group meetings (alerting Commission staff of date/time of meetings so they can be posted 48 hours in advance of their meeting), and how to engage in the work presented today by the Landscape & Funding workgroup. The next Commission meeting will include workgroup updates and continued discussion of the strategic plan & feasibility analysis.

In closing, Undersecretary Rosenthal thanked the Commission for their hard work and reminded members that copies of meeting materials and approved minutes are posted on the [Commission's Mass.gov webpage](#).

She noted that the Commission's next meeting on February 25 will include updates from the Challenges & Recommendations workgroup.

**Vote 2 to adjourn the meeting:** Undersecretary Rosenthal requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Simons introduced the motion, which was seconded by Ms. Gwaltney and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 am.

### **Meeting Materials**

I. Draft 12/17/2025 meeting minutes