

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

Meeting Minutes

March 18, 2026

9:30 - 11:00 am

Date of meeting: Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Start time: 9:30 am

End time: 11:00 am

Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

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

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

APPROVED

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Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Approval of 2/25/2026 Meeting Minutes
3. Continued Discussion of Challenges and Recommendations Workgroup
4. Report-out from Single Agency Workgroup
5. Interagency Review Team Overview
6. Next Steps

Proceedings

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

Vote 1 to approve the 2/25/2026 meeting minutes: Undersecretary Rosenthal requested a motion to approve the minutes from the Commission's previous meeting on 2/25/2026. Paul Hyry-Dermith introduced the motion, which was seconded by Carmel Craig and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

At 9:40 am, Rachel Gwaltney joined the meeting.

Undersecretary Rosenthal summarized the previous meeting's presentations, which included a presentation from the workgroup focused on reviewing the challenges to accessing behavioral health services and proposed recommendations outlined in prior reports. She noted that the group identified challenges in six key areas:

1. Access, Entry, & Navigation
2. Coverage, Affordability, Administrative Barriers & Financing/Sustainability
3. Workforce Capacity, Stability & Training
4. System Design, Fragmentation & Coordination
5. Equity & Population-Specific Gaps
6. Service Capacity, Wait Times & Crisis Dependence

Workgroup member Leigh Simons noted that given the sheer number and overlapping/cross-sector nature of the challenges identified, the workgroup's members did not want to take the liberty of paring down the comprehensive list of recommendations without consulting with the broader Commission.

Undersecretary Rosenthal introduced the members of the workgroup focused on exploring the feasibility and potential impact of creating a single integrated children's behavioral health agency (Lee Robinson, Paul Hyry-Dermith, Lisa Morrow, and Jesenia Collado (filling in for her DCF colleague, Lauren Almeida)), who presented an update on their work. In their presentation, the workgroup members explained that they focused their review on three states – New Jersey, Connecticut, and Colorado – which have each established versions of unified, children's behavioral health agencies. In their overviews, they highlighted the different approaches that each state has taken, stressing the effort and resources needed need to implement the integration of services into a single behavioral health agency, frequently undertaken in a staged roll-out. For additional details, refer to the Single Agency Workgroup's presentation on the Commission's [Meeting Materials webpage](#).

At 10:00 am, Carmel Craig left the meeting.

In the discussion following the presentation, Commission members noted the importance of establishing a clear, single point of entry to accessing services, which in other settings have introduced consistency and improved communication between agencies. Additionally, members noted the importance of integrating

services for high-acuity patients, as well as improving access to respite care. Additionally, they highlighted the potential benefit to expanding existing services like the Behavioral Health Help Line. In summarizing next steps, Undersecretary Rosenthal noted that members should send any additional questions for the Workgroup to Commission staff.

Kim Irving, Director of Complex Case Management at EOHHS, provided an overview of the work of the Interagency Review Team (IRT) for Complex Cases. In her presentation, she noted that the team collaborates to review and issue determinations for complex cases for youth and young adults under 22 years of age. Following the presentation, members asked about data collection related to the youth receiving services, which Director Irving noted her team was in the process of compiling. For additional details, refer to the IRT presentation on the Commission's [Meeting Materials webpage](#).

In closing, Undersecretary Rosenthal noted that the Commission's next meeting is scheduled for April 29 and would include an in-depth discussion of the Commission's proposed recommendations, particularly focused on prioritizing what initiatives or recommendations might be feasible given the federal funding climate.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 am.

Meeting Materials

1. Draft 2/25/2026 meeting minutes
2. Workgroup 3 presentation – Single Children's Behavioral Health Agency
3. Interagency Response Team overview