

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

Meeting Minutes

April 29, 2026

9:30 - 11:00 am

Date of meeting: Wednesday, April 29, 2026

Start time: 9:30 am

End time: 10:35 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	X
5	Rachel Gwaltney – Children’s League of Massachusetts	X	X	X
6	Paul Hyry-Dermith – Bridge Resilient Youth in Transition, Brookline Center for Community Mental Health	-	-	-
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

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Approval of 3/18/2026 Meeting Minutes
3. Updates from Single Agency Workgroup
4. Discussion of Commission's Recommendations
5. 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 3/18/2026 meeting minutes: Undersecretary Rosenthal requested a motion to approve the minutes from the Commission's previous meeting on 3/18/2026. Carmel Craig introduced the motion, which was seconded by Charlene Zuffante and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

Commission member Lee Robinson provided a brief update on the recent work of the workgroup focused on exploring the feasibility and potential impact of creating a single integrated children's behavioral health agency. He noted that the workgroup's members were focusing their review on three states – New Jersey, Connecticut, and Colorado – which have each established some version of a unified, children's behavioral health agency. He explained that they were reviewing the state systems based on a number of factors, including fiscal feasibility, impact on other state agencies, and staff morale. He noted that Commission members had offered helpful suggestions at the March meeting and the workgroup would be presenting a final report-out during the Commission's May meeting. For additional details, refer to the BHAC presentation on the Commission's [Meeting Materials webpage](#).

In the discussion following the presentation, Commission members requested clarification whether Medicare and Medicaid were integrated into the single agencies and stressed the importance of the importance of taking into account families' perspectives, as to whether or not the establishment of a single behavioral health agency was approving access to services for families. Jess Larochelle offered to assist in connecting the workgroup with family advocacy groups in the three states (NJ, CO, CT).

Lee Robinson walked members through a set of draft recommendations, which was based on the original set developed by the Challenges and Recommendations workgroup. He noted that the initial set of recommendations were organized by six challenge 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

He outlined a set of policy areas, under which he organized the recommendations:

1. Family-Centered Design
2. Equity Accountability
3. Workforce
4. Payment Policy
5. State Agency Coordination
6. Front-Door/Navigation

These policy areas consist of two overarching policy goals (family-centered design and equity accountability) that permeate four targeted policy areas (workforce, payment policy, state agency coordination, and front-door access/navigation of care). He explained that he prioritized the recommendations based on his assessment of each recommendation's feasibility and potential impact. In particular, he noted that in the current budgetary climate, which is anticipated to get worse in the coming years as the state gets significantly less federal revenue from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, feasible initiatives will need to be at least budget neutral, though ideally cost saving.

At 10:00 am, Senator Kennedy joined the meeting.

In the discussion following the presentation, members offered specific suggestions for the policy framework and recommendations. Of note, members raised the feasibility of including any of the recommendations in the ongoing 1115 waiver request and the utility of developing a separate set of recommendations or initiatives that the state could potentially implement in a less restrictive budgetary climate.

In closing, Undersecretary Rosenthal summarized that an updated draft of the framework and recommendations would be shared with the Commission in the coming week. Commission staff would then incorporate members' feedback and recirculate a revised draft ahead of the Commission's next meeting scheduled for May 20. She noted that at the upcoming meeting, members would continue discussing 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. Kevin Beagan introduced the motion, which was seconded by Leigh Simons and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

The meeting was adjourned at 10:35 am.

Meeting Materials

1. Draft 3/18/2026 meeting minutes
2. Meeting presentation