

Community Behavioral Health Promotion and Prevention Commission

Meeting Minutes
February 6, 2025
3:00 - 4:30 pm

Date of meeting: Thursday, February 6, 2025

Start time: 3:00 pm

End time: 4:30 pm

Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Commission Members		Present	Vote 1*	Vote 2
1	Kiame Mahaniah – Executive Office of Health and Human Services (<i>chair</i>)	X	X	X
2	Tobin Abraham – Office of Tram Nguyen (<i>designee of Rep. Nguyen</i>)	X	X	X
3	Nancy Allen Scannell – Mass. Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children	X	X	-
4	Lena Asmar – New England Center and Home for Veterans	X	A	X
5	Ruth Blodgett – Department of Public Health (<i>designee of Commissioner Goldstein</i>)	X	X	X
6	Jessica Collins – Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts	X	X	X
7	Georgia Critsley – Trial Court (<i>designee of Chief Justice Briege</i>)	X	X	-
8	Yaminette Diaz-Linhart – National Association of Social Workers – Mass.	X	X	X
9	Lynette Gabrila – Executive Office of Veterans Services	X	X	X
10	Elizabeth Ganz – Association for Behavioral Healthcare	X	A	X
11	Margaret Hannah – Freedman Center at William James College	X	X	X
12	Jacqueline Hubbard – National Alliance on Mental Illness - Mass.	X	X	X
13	Sophie Jean-Felix – Mass. Association of Community Health Workers	X	X	X
14	Jessica Larochelle – Mass. Association for Mental Health	X	X	X
15	Adrian Madaro – Mass. House of Representatives	-	-	-
16	Tom Mahoney – Office of Senator Pavel Payano (<i>designee of Sen. Payano</i>)	X	X	X
17	Danna Mauch – Mass. Association for Mental Health	X	X	X
18	Jocelyn Schafer – Office of Senator Velis (<i>designee of Senator Velis</i>)	X	X	X
19	Emma Schlitzer – CHIA (<i>designee of Executive Director Peters</i>)	X	X	X
20	Noel Sierra – Mass. Organization for Addiction Recovery	X	A	X
21	Stephanie Sladen – Justice Resource Institute (JRI)	-	-	-
22	James Vetter – Social Emotional Learning Alliance for Mass.	-	-	-
23	Charlene Zuffante – Department of Mental Health	X	X	X

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

Proceedings

Undersecretary Mahaniah called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm. He welcomed members and reminded participants that the Commission is subject to the Open Meeting Law, noting that all votes taken during the meeting would be conducted via roll call.

Undersecretary Mahanian introduced the Commission's newest members, explaining that while some were replacing former members who had stepped down, others were joining due to recent changes to the Commission's statute in August 2024:

- Lynette Gabrila, serving on behalf of the Executive Office of Veterans Services
- Lena Asmar, serving as the appointee of the Governor "representing a veterans organization in the Commonwealth"
- Noel Sierra, replacing Denise Pixley as the Mass. Organization for Addiction Recovery (MOAR) representative
- Sophie Jean-Felix, replacing Lissette Blondet as the Mass. Association of Community Health Workers (MACHW) representative

Vote 1 to approve the 12/12/2024 minutes: Undersecretary Mahaniah called for a vote to approve the minutes from the Commission's previous meeting on 12/12/2024. Professor Hannah introduced the motion, which was seconded by Ms. Critsley and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

Undersecretary Mahaniah facilitated a review of the Commission's draft annual report, which the Commission is required to submit to the Legislature each year on March 1. He noted that the draft report was formatted as a letter from the Chair, following a similar format to previous years' reports, summarizing the Commission's activities for the previous year (March 1, 2024 to February 28, 2025). He highlighted that the report included a summary of anticipated spending from the Community Behavioral Health Promotion and Prevention Trust Fund. After members shared specific feedback on the draft, he asked that members share any additional written feedback with Commission staff in the coming week.

Funmi Aguocha, Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Behavioral Health Promotion and Prevention (OBHPP), shared updates on the ongoing efforts to establish her office, including: an initial landscape analysis of ongoing work around promotion and prevention across the various EOHHS agencies; the Request for Information (RFI), which received roughly 50 responses from community groups that will be reviewed over the coming months in collaboration with a consulting group; active postings for the OBHPP Program Director and Project Manager positions; and initial discussions with public relations vendors to begin developing OBHPP public awareness campaigns.

Undersecretary Mahaniah and Assistant Commissioner Aguocha provided additional information on a past proposal considered by the Commission, which was the formation of a small number of workgroups to provide interested members with opportunities to meet informally in between the broader, bi-monthly Commission meetings to discuss the progress of promising research in the field of promotion and prevention, with the goal of potentially advancing initiatives by the Commission. Assistant Commissioner Aguocha shared three proposed topics for the group to consider:

1. Early interventions related to mental health wellness, substance use prevention, suicide prevention, and violence prevention;
2. School-based programming related to promotion and prevention; and
3. Behavioral health campaigns.

Sarah Ruiz, Deputy Director for Strategy & Community Health at DPH's Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS) provided a detailed overview of the primary prevention initiatives BSAS is leading in Massachusetts, emphasizing an equity-centered public health approach. She explained that BSAS supports communities through funding and technical assistance to implement evidence-informed, strength-based strategies that address root causes of substance use. She highlighted initiatives like MassCALL3 and PEC, which involve local coalitions and youth-led projects focusing on prevention education, community norms, family supports, and skill-building. The presentation highlighted data on youth alcohol use and outlined policy proposals such as raising alcohol taxes, with strong public support. She noted that looking forward, BSAS aims to expand programming, increase partnerships with vulnerable populations, and develop a statewide K–12 prevention strategy. For additional details, refer to the BSAS presentation available on the Commission's [Meeting Materials webpage](#).

In summarizing next steps, Undersecretary Mahaniah noted that Commission staff would be contacting members with more information on the proposed workgroups and the Commission's next meeting, tentatively scheduled for early to mid-April, based on the regular bi-monthly cadence.

Vote 2 to adjourn: Undersecretary Mahaniah requested a motion to adjourn. Director Blodgett introduced the motion, which was seconded by Dr. Mauch and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 pm.

Meeting Materials

1. Draft 12/12/2024 meeting minutes
2. BSAS presentation
3. Draft annual report