

Community Behavioral Health Promotion and Prevention (CBHPP) Commission

Meeting Minutes
October 9, 2025
3:00 - 4:30 pm

Date of meeting: Thursday, October 9, 2025

Start time: 3:00 pm

End time: 4:30 pm

Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

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

APPROVED

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Proceedings

Eliza Lake, Director of Health Policy and Strategic Initiatives at the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm. She welcomed members and explained that Secretary Mahaniah had designated her as Acting Chair of the Commission. She reminded members that the Commission is subject to the Open Meeting Law, noting that all votes taken during the meeting would be conducted via roll call.

Vote 1 to approve the 8/7/2025 minutes: After a round of introductions, Director Lake called for a vote to approve the minutes from the Commission's previous meeting on 8/7/2025. Ms. Allen Scannell introduced the motion, which was seconded by Director Blodgett and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

Funmi Aguocha, Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Behavioral Health Promotion and Prevention (OBHPP), shared updates from the OBHPP's ongoing initiatives. She highlighted the recent posting of the Office's Request for Applications (RFA) for a multi-year grant opportunity, which would award approximately \$3 million annually to community-based organizations statewide to develop new programs or expand existing programs that address one or more of the OBHPP's seven priority areas that OBHPP has deemed underfunded and/or underrepresented in state-wide initiatives:

1. Reducing loneliness and social isolation;
2. Reducing family stress and supporting caregiver well-being;
3. Promoting infant, early childhood, and maternal mental health;
4. Reducing psychological distress in immigrant populations;
5. Promoting early intervention with youth and young adults;
6. Reducing family and intimate partner violence; and
7. Promoting population well-being through education, training, and skills development.

Assistant Commissioner Aguocha explained that the grants would be structured in three tiers, each with different funding amounts:

- Tier A: Design and development support for emerging programs (\$100,000 - 150,000/year)
- Tier B: Implementation support to launch or scale ready-to-implement programs (\$150,000 - 250,000/year)
- Tier C: Scaling and sustainability support (\$250,000 - 350,000/year)

In addition, she highlighted key dates and deadlines related to the grant applications:

- RFA posted – October 3, 2025
- Virtual Bidder's Conference – October 17, 2025
- Deadline to submit questions – October 24, 2025 @ 3pm
- Deadline for posting applications – November 17, 2025 @ 3pm
- Anticipated review period (to be confirmed) – between November 24 - December 5, 2025
- Anticipated start of grants – January 1, 2026

Assistant Commissioner Aguocha invited interested Commission members to contact her team directly to provide feedback on the process and/or participate in a grant review committee. She emphasized that the current grant opportunity is the first round of hopefully many in the coming year. In response to members' questions, she clarified that the priority areas may be updated based on the grant applications received, eg, if a specific area or sector was underrepresented. She also noted that the grant materials included a clear

definition of “promotion and prevention,” and that an evaluation rubric would be shared with the Commission once finalized.

As part of the OBHPP updates, OBHPP Program Director Sarah Mughal summarized the statewide behavioral health awareness campaign that their office has been developing and expects to launch in the coming months. She explained that the campaign would be multi-lingual and multi-cultural, and the theme would be “*What’s on your mind?*” She noted that it would be aimed at promoting the importance of behavioral and mental health wellness; reducing the stigma surrounding mental health; and increasing health equity by focusing campaigns within prioritized communities as identified by the Advancing Health Equity in Massachusetts (AHEM) Initiative.

For additional details, refer to the OBHPP presentation available on the Commission’s [Meeting Materials webpage](#).

Yaminette Diaz-Linhart presented an overview of artificial intelligence (AI) in the behavioral health (BH) promotion and prevention sector, with the goal of generating dialogue amongst the Commission’s members in preparation for a more comprehensive presentation on the topic at a future Commission meeting. In her presentation, she touched on key definitions, examples of AI being used currently in BH, as well as ethical concerns. In the discussion, members suggested the following topics: the reliability of current AI-based BH tools; the lack of an overarching body regulating AI-based BH tools; the need for greater “social literacy” among youth, and even among the elderly, to differentiate between real vs. AI-based companionships; issues around data privacy and the information being syphoned up by AI models. For additional details, refer to the AI in Behavioral Health Promotion and Prevention presentation available on the Commission’s [Meeting Materials webpage](#).

Members shared a few recommendations for presenters that the Commission could invite to facilitate or formally present at the December meeting. In summarizing next steps, Director Lake asked that members share any additional recommendations with her staff ahead of the Commission’s next meeting scheduled for Thursday, December 11.

Vote 2 to adjourn: Director Lake requested a motion to adjourn. Ms. Allen Scannell introduced the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Vetter and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 pm.

Links shared in the Chat during the discussions:

- <https://www.mass.gov/whats-on-your-mind>
- Article from the American Psychological Association on teens turning to AI chatbots for friendship and emotional support - <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2025/10/technology-youth-friendships>

Meeting materials:

1. Draft 8/7/2025 meeting minutes
2. OBHPP presentation
3. AI in Behavioral Health Promotion and Prevention presentation