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

Meeting Minutes
December 17, 2025
9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Date of meeting: Wednesday, December 17, 2025
Start time: 9:35 a.m.
End time: 10:51 a.m.
Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Member Votes		Present	Vote 1*	Vote 2*
1	**Lauren Almeida**, Director of Mental Health, DCF	X	X	X
2	**Kevin Beagan**, Deputy Commissioner, DOI	X	X	X
3	**Carmel Craig**, Vice President for Child, Youth and Adult Mental Health Services, ABH	X	X	X
4	**Kelly English**, Chief Innovation Officer, MSPCC / Eliot Community Human Services *(representative from the CMHC)*	X	X	X
5	**Rachel Gwaltney**, Executive Director, Children's League of Mass	X	X	X
6	**Paul Hyry-Dermith**, Director of Bridge Resilient Youth in Transition, Brookline Center for Community Mental Health *(designee of Chair Domb)*	X	X	X
7	**Senator Robyn Kennedy** *(or Carole Meehan Oyama, Chief of Staff, or Bryan Bates, Legislative Director) (designee of Chair Velis)*	X	X	-
8	**Jessica Larochelle**, Co-Director of Public Policy and Government Relations, MAMH	X	X	X
9	**David Matteodo**, Executive Director, MABHS	X	X	X
10	**Kristen McKinnon**, Assistant Director, Student and Family Support, DESE	X	X	X
11	**Lee Robinson**, Medical Director for Behavioral Health, MassHealth	X	X	X
12	**Pam Sager**, Executive Director, PPAL	X	X	X
13	**Leigh Simons**, Senior Director for Healthcare Policy, MHA	-	-	-
14	**Aimee Smith-Zeoli**, Behavioral Health Supervisor, EEC	X	X	X
15	**Charlene Zuffante**, Deputy Commissioner for Children, Youth, & Families, DMH	X	X	-
16	**Amy Rosenthal**, EOHHS, Chair *(designee of Secretary Mahaniah)*	X	X	X

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

Proceedings

1. Overview of charges
2. Upcoming Work and Schedule
3. Review of Challenges
4. Discussion: Gaps & Recommendations
5. Proposed next steps

Undersecretary Rosenthal called the meeting to order at 9:35 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.

<u>Vote 1 to approve the 11/19/2025 meeting minutes:</u> Undersecretary Rosenthal requested a motion to approve the minutes from the Commission's previous meeting on 11/19/2025. Ms. Craig introduced the motion, which was seconded by Ms. English and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

Undersecretary Rosenthal provided a summary of the group's first meeting, which included level setting through a review of Commission's charges, a discussion of members' expectations for the Commission's work and the specific topics members would like to be covered at future meetings. Additionally, this summary included these meetings proposals for how to accomplish the work of the Commission, as well as begin discussion of reviewing challenges.

Commission staff proposed an approach for completing the Strategic Plan that would align with legislative requirements within the remaining three-month timeframe. Given the complexity of the work and need for appropriate due diligence, particularly around the feasibility analysis, it was noted that integrating the feasibility analysis directly into the Strategic Plan represents the most realistic and compliant path forward. Staff proposed Commission members self-select into three small working groups: **Landscape & Funding, Challenges & Policy Recommendations, Strategic Plan & Feasibility.** Each group would meet offline between Commission meetings reporting back to the full Commission. Members expressed general agreement with this structure;

Staff then presented a synthesized summary of challenges drawn from member-reported reviews of materials identified during prior meeting. Commission members noted that system fragmentation and lack of coordination remain central issues, particularly around where children actually receive services and how families navigate access across agencies, payors, and settings, including schools. Members emphasized that service delivery sites, referral pathways, and payment structure should be more explicitly reflected in the Strategic Plan. Commission members also discussed more details about potential problem statements to help continue framing the challenges the report will reflect.

The Commission then discussed the importance of framing clear problem statements to guide policy recommendations and signal urgency. System design and fragmentation emerged as the most frequently cited challenges, followed by equity, access, coverage, and workforce challenges. Staff confirmed next steps, including circulating meeting notes, coordinating group logistics, and supporting offline work ahead of future Commission discussions.

In closing, Undersecretary Rosenthal highlighted next steps for the Commission. Copies of meeting materials and approved minutes are posted on Mass.gov (LINK). She noted that the Commission's next meeting on January 21 will include the initial report out from the first Working Group and that if anyone in the Commission has ideas for future speakers to please send ideas to EHS staff.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 10:51am.

<u>Meeting Materials</u>

1. Draft 11/19/2025 meeting minutes