



# State of New Jersey

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

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PHILIP D. MURPHY  
*Governor*

TAHESHA L. WAY  
*Lt. Governor*

NEIL VAN ESS  
*Acting Chairman*

CELINA LEVY  
*Executive Director*

## **MINUTES**

### **Governor's Council on Substance Use Disorder**

**February 18, 2025**

**Attendance:** Neil Van Ess (Chairman), Celina Levy (Executive Director), John Armato (Public Member), Donna DeStefano (Public Member), Eileen Fishman (Public Member), Sweta Kansagra (Public Member), Gisele Pemberton (Public Member), Cornell Williamson (AOC), Jeff Carrick (DCF), Herb Kaldany (DOC), Lu Pereira (DOE), Don Hallcom (DHS), Tiffany Wilson (LPS), Noelle Lee-Turner (DMAVA), Allison Samay (President's Council)

### **Call to Order**

The three hundred and nintieth regular meeting of the Governor's Council on Substance Use Disorder was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Acting Chairman Neil Van Ess.

### **Open Public Meetings Act Statement**

Mr. Van Ess announced that notice of this meeting was provided in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 – 10:4-21). In addition, Mr. Van Ess stated that public comments were to be provided electronically, through the GCSUD website contact portal between the hours of 10am and 1pm on the day of the meeting and must state "Public Comment" in the subject line.

### **Roll Call**

Katelyn Assenheimer called the roll. Members present and absent were noted for the record.

### **Approval of Minutes**

After a brief discussion, the minutes for January were approved. (Y-10; N-0; ABS-3)

### **Presentation: "NJ Department of Children and Families Initiatives for 2025 and Beyond"**

Jeff Carrick, Deputy Director, Children's System of Care of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) gave an overview of some initiatives the Department is working on.

DCF consists of two transformational offices; the Office of Resilience, which advocates for community-developed solutions that are grounded in positive and adverse childhood experiences and the Office of Staff Health and Wellness, which prioritized staff recruitment, retention, well-being and morale.

Within the Children's System of Care, the Traumatic Loss Coalition was established to provide outreach, support and education to schools and other youth-serving organizations after experiencing a traumatic incident. In 2024, the Coalition was expanded to offer support to families who have lost a youth aged 21 or older to suicide.

2NDFLOOR is a confidential call/text helpline and message board available to help with daily issues and stressors for youth. In 2024, 2NDFLOOR received 5,793 calls and 3,603 text messages through the helpline.

The Youth Suicide Prevention Advisory Council was established to examine existing needs and services within the state as well as to make recommendations for youth suicide reporting. An annual mandated report was compiled showing NJ youth suicide data and currently 2017-2019 data is available online.

New Jersey Statewide Support Services (NJ4S) consists of 15 regional hubs throughout the state that links students and their families to social, emotional and mental well-being services within their school and community.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director Celina Levy shared that she and Deputy Director Rebecca Alfaro have reached out to the public members of the Council for their input to the Master Plan.

Deputy Director Rebecca Alfaro shared that GCSUD New Jersey Prevention Science Training Series is underway. These webinars consist of virtual trainings, peer sharing calls, technical assistance as well as a Leadership Intensive.

The FY26 planning process in MAGS is currently in production and FY25 data has been rolled over into the system.

Ms. Levy thanked the Council members for their support and input, County Coordinators and Alliances for their commitment to New Jersey communities, to GCSUD for going above and beyond to ensure the work of the Council moves forward and to Neil for his leadership and commitment to the Council.

### **Adjournment**

Chairman Van Ess adjourned the meeting at 11:23.