



State of New Jersey

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

P. O. Box 345

TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0345

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

January 21, 2025

Attendance: Neil Van Ess (Chairman), Celina Levy (Executive Director), John Armato (Public Member), Gregg Benson (Public Member), Donna DeStefano (Public Member), Sweta Kansagra (Public Member), Cornell Williamson (AOC), Jeff Carrick (DCF), Michelle Graham-Lyons (DCA), Adam Cortes (DOC), Lu Pereira (DOE), Lashunda Omida (DOH), Don Hallcom (DHS), Rebecca Glinn (DOL), Tiffany Wilson (LPS)

Call to Order

The three hundred and eighty-ninth regular meeting of the Governor's Council on Substance Use Disorder was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Executive Director Celina Levy.

Open Public Meetings Act Statement

Ms. Levy 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, Ms. Levy 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.

Election of Officers

Executive Director Celina Levy asked for nominations for the Vice Chair of the Governor's Council. Gregg Benson nominated Neil Van Ess and this was seconded by Donna DeStefano. After a vote, Mr. Van Ess was elected Vice Chairman. (Y-13; N-0; ABS-0).

Mr. Van Ess asked for a nomination for second Vice Chair. Gregg Benson was nominated by Donna DeStefano and this vote was seconded by John Armato. After a vote, Mr. Benson was elected second Vice Chair. (Y-12; N-0; ABS-0)

Approval of Minutes

After a brief discussion, the minutes for November and December of 2024 were approved.

November (Y-12; N-0; ABS-1)

December (Y-10; N-0; ABS-3)

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Celina Levy shared that she and Deputy Director Rebecca Alfaro are finalizing the request for input to the Master Plan from the GCSUD public members and that they should expect this request by February 3rd.

Ms. Alfaro is closing out the process for the DMHAS funding and updates will be provided once that process is complete.

Deputy Director Rebecca Alfaro shared that GCSUD will be holding a New Jersey Prevention Science Training Series for the Alliances. These webinars will consist of virtual trainings, peer sharing calls, technical assistance as well as a Leadership Intensive.

Director of Prevention and Planning, Sara Thode shared with the Council that FY26 plans and budget modifications are currently being developed in MAGS. Program evaluations and site visits should be developed in MAGS by the spring.

Ms. Thode also reminded Council members to complete their ethics briefing and to send the completed receipt to her email.

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 11:08.

Public Comment

**** FROM ****

Brandon Russell
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Country: US

E-mail: brandonrussell19@gmail.com

**** AFFILIATION ****

Group: N/A
Relationship: N/A

**** MESSAGE ****

SUBJECT: Public comment: submitted at 1.21.25 GCSUD Business Meeting

Hello, my name is Brandon Russell and this is likely my 3rd or 4th time submitting comments to be considered by the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse Disorder.

I grow more disappointed every time I watch these meetings because I see how difficult it is for this body to even reach a quorum.

I am even more disappointed in the fact that my local municipality continues to prevent me from getting involved in our local Municipal Alliance.

The explanations given to me by Executive Director Celine Levy have been dismissive and insulting. As a human being, member of the addiction community, and dedicated advocate - I believe this Council continues to fail our State.

The practice of allowing members to serve on this board while not expecting them to show up to these meetings on time or at all are insulting to the addiction community.

The practice of allowing local governing bodies to prevent citizens like myself from being involved in their local groups is illegal or unethical at best.

I expect/hope this Council will acknowledge and embrace its oversight duties with more actionable efforts going forward.